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*Berean Bible Society* is preparing to publish a booklet for new believers to introduce them to the basic Biblical principles of the Christian life, and in so doing encourage and establish them in their newfound faith. The following is the first installment of this introductory work.

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# Now That I Believe

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

## INTRODUCTION

Someone has just introduced you to the Lord Jesus Christ, and you have been saved from your sins. Naturally you are very excited and filled with joy, but you are not sure exactly what has happened to you, nor what is expected of you now that you believe. This article will serve as a helpful primer for you as a new Christian. In it, we will answer the following questions:

- What did I believe?
- What happened to me when I believed?
- Why should I serve the Lord now that I believe?
- How should I serve the Lord now that I believe?
- How do I deal with sin now that I believe?
- How do I deal with adversity now that I believe?
- What does the future hold for me now that I believe?

## What did I believe?

Every true Christian was saved from his sins by believing a few simple Bible truths:

### 1. I'm a sinner.

The Bible says that *"all have sinned"* (Romans 3:23), and that *"there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not"* (Ecclesiastes 7:20). It only takes one murder to make a man a murderer, and it only takes one sin to make a man a sinner.

### 2. There are eternal consequences to sin.

The Bible says that *"the wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23), and that *"sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death"* (James 1:15). We

know that more than just *physical* death is meant in these verses, for Ezekiel 18:4 says that *“the SOUL that sinneth, it shall die.”* Also, Revelation 21:8 states that all sinners who die without Christ *“shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is THE SECOND DEATH.”* All sinners deserve to die an eternal *spiritual* death, as well as a physical death, for their sins.

### **3. Christ died for my sins.**

Although we are sinners and deserve to die an eternal death for our sins, *“Christ died for our sins”* (I Corinthians 15:3). We know that He died both physically and spiritually because Isaiah predicted that God would *“make HIS SOUL an offering for sin”* (Isaiah 53:10). He was *“delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification”* (Romans 4:25) as He *“bare our sins in His own body on the tree”* (I Peter 2:24).

### **4. I was saved by *believing* that Christ died for my sins.**

The Lord Jesus died *“for the sins of the whole world”* (I John 2:2), but that doesn't mean that the whole world is saved. Salvation is offered *“unto all”* but it only comes *“UPON all them that BELIEVE”* (Romans 3:22). Thus while Christ is *“the Savior of all men,”* He is *“specially”* the Savior *“of those that believe”* (I Timothy 4:10). The gospel is *“the power of God unto salvation”* only *“to every one that believeth”* (Romans 1:16). We are *“justified by faith”* (Romans 5:1) and become *“children of God”* only *“by faith in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:26).

Of course, when we speak of faith, it is not enough to just “believe in God,” for *“the devils also believe, and tremble”* (James 2:19). When Paul says, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,”* he means that we must have *“faith in His blood”* (Romans 3:25). Ephesians 2:8 says, *“For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”*

### **5. I was *not* saved by good works.**

Acts 16:31 does *not* say, *“Believe and try to be good and thou shalt be saved,”* it simply says *“believe...and...be saved.”* Salvation is *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us”* (Titus 3:5). God says that *“to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness”* (Romans 4:5). There isn't a single thing that we can do to please God. He has *“saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace”* (II Timothy 1:9). Therefore salvation is *“not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Ephesians 2:9).

### **6. I was not saved by keeping the Ten Commandments.**

The Ten Commandments were only a part of the Law of Moses, a law that contained *613 commandments!* When God gave these commandments, He demanded that men *“keep ALL His statutes”* (Exodus

15:26; Leviticus 20:22) and “*ALL His commandments*” (Deuteronomy 13:18; 26:18), and pronounced a “*curse*” on “*every one that CONTINUEETH not in ALL things which are written in the book of the law to do them*” (Galatians 3:10). The Law demanded 100% obedience—100% of the time! That’s why “*whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law*” (James 2:10,11).

Since all of us have broken at least one of God’s commandments, we know that “*a man is not justified by the works of the law*” (Galatians 2:16), and “*that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident*” (Galatians 3:11). “*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law*” (Romans 3:28). But praise the Lord, “*what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh*” (Romans 8:3). And so we read that “*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*” (Galatians 3:13), and “*by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses*” (Acts 13:39).

## **What happened to me when I believed?**

### **1. I was forgiven of all my sin, past, present, and future.**

Now that you believe, God has “*forgiven you all trespasses*” (Colossians 2:13). The Apostle Paul declares that “*God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*” (Ephesians 4:32), and so in Christ “*we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins*” (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14).

### **2. I was justified in the sight of God.**

The word “justify” in Scripture means “to make righteous.” God’s Word says that we are “*justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 3:24), and that “*being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him*” (Romans 5:9). Paul assures us that we are “*justified in the name of the Lord Jesus*” (I Corinthians 6:11), and “*that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life*” (Titus 3:7).

### **3. I was given eternal and everlasting life.**

“*The gift of God is eternal life*” (Romans 6:23), for “*by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life*” (Romans 5:18). All who believe on Christ “*believe on Him to life everlasting*” (I Timothy 1:16) and become “*heirs according to the hope of eternal life*” (Titus 3:7).

#### **4. I was indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God.**

Speaking to believers, Paul says that God has “*sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts*” (Galatians 4:6) and so now the Spirit “*dwelleth in us*” (II Timothy 1:14; Romans 8:9,11). His presence within us is the down payment that God has made in us that shows He is as serious about redeeming our bodies as He was about redeeming our souls. Paul declares that the Spirit is “*the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession*” (Ephesians 1:14).

This blessing comes with a moral and spiritual obligation to be a godly host to the Royal Guest within us. The Apostle Paul asked the Corinthians, who were not living in a godly manner: “*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s*” (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

#### **5. I was baptized into the true, invisible, world-wide Church, “the church which is His Body” (Ephesians 1:22,23).**

Paul says that we were “*baptized into Christ*” (Romans 6:3). This baptism has nothing to do with *water*. The word “*baptism*” in Scripture speaks of *identification*. Christ was *identified* as the Messiah when He was baptized with water (John 1:31-33). But He later called His death a baptism (Luke 12:50) because on the Cross He was “*numbered with the transgressors,*” i.e., He was identified with sinners as He bore their sins (Isaiah 53:12 cf. Mark 15:27,28). When God looked at Christ on Calvary, He did not see His Son, He saw us in our sins, and poured out His wrath upon them. But now our baptism into Christ identifies us with Christ. Now when God looks at us, He does not see us in our sins, He sees Christ in His righteousness. II Corinthians 5:21 puts it this way: “*For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*”

Thus our baptism into Christ is a *spiritual* baptism: “*for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body*” (I Corinthians 12:13). While God required physical baptism and physical circumcision for His people Israel, God gives members of the Body of Christ a *spiritual* circumcision (Colossians 2:11) and a *spiritual* baptism (Colossians 2:12). This baptism makes us “*members of His Body*” (Ephesians 5:30).

#### **6. I was made eternally secure in Christ.**

“*If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself*” (II Timothy 2:13), and as members of His body we are members of Himself. Now that we are a part of His Body, *nothing* “*shall be able to separate us from the love of God*” (Romans 8:39), for “*He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*” (Philippians 1:6). In the Bible, the spiritual Ephesians *and* the sinful Corinthians are *both* called “*saints*” (I Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1) and *both* are said to be “*sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*”

(Ephesians 1:13; II Corinthians 1:22). Our salvation rests not on what we do, but on what Christ did at Calvary.

## **Why should I serve the Lord now that I believe?**

### **1. If I am saved and eternally secure, can't I live as I please?**

Yes, but as you grow in an understanding of all that God has done for you in Christ, the way you want to live will change. When the Lord Jesus healed a blind man, He told the man: *"go thy way,"* but instead we read that he *"followed Jesus in the way"* (Mark 10:52). This is because once he realized what the Lord had done for him, *the Lord's way became his way.* The same is true of us. Of course, the realization of all that the Lord has done for us is revealed to us *gradually* as we study the Scriptures. But the more we learn of it, the more we will want to forsake our old ways and follow His ways.

### **2. I don't want to presume on the grace of God.**

Speaking of the sins of the flesh (Ephesians 5:1-5), Paul says: *"because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them"* (v. 6,7). Someday the wrath of God is going to come on unbelievers because of their sin. Just because you are safe from the wrath of hell as a saved and secure child of God, don't presume on God's grace and continue to partake of sin with unbelievers. Washington D.C. is full of foreign ambassadors who enjoy "diplomatic immunity" to our laws; they cannot be prosecuted by our courts for violating them. Yet when a speeding diplomat caused the death of a little girl some years ago, our citizenry was rightly outraged. How could he flagrantly violate our laws just because he was immune to the prosecution of our courts? As Christians, we should feel the same outrage at the thought of sinning against the God who saved us just because we can no longer be prosecuted by God's justice. We should rather refuse to callously indulge in the very sins for which Christ died, and think long and hard about our answer to God's question: *"Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely...and come and stand before Me...and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?"* (Jeremiah 7:9,10).

### **3. I want to serve the Lord out of gratitude for saving me.**

We don't serve the Lord to try to convince Him to save us from our sins, we serve the Lord *because* He has *already* saved us from our sins. Paul says that *"the love of Christ constrains us"* to serve Him, out of gratitude for saving us by grace through faith (II Corinthians 5:14). He adds that since *"He died for all...they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again"* (v. 15). It is only *"reasonable"* that we live for the One who died for us, and present our bodies a *"living sacrifice"* in the service of the One who presented His body a dying sacrifice for us on Calvary (Romans 12:1,2).

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# Now That I Believe (Part 2)

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

## How should I serve the Lord now that I believe?

### 1. Should I be baptized?

While many pastors would say “yes,” the Apostle Paul says “no.” Water baptism was once a part of God’s program for His people Israel, but it is not a part of God’s program for His people *today*, the Body of Christ.

Whenever we are told the *purpose* of baptism in Scripture, it is always said to be “*for the remission of sins*” (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38). The Lord Himself insisted, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*” (Mark 16:16). But after Israel rejected her King, the Lord raised up the Apostle Paul, and made him “*the apostle of the Gentiles*” (Romans 11:13). This new apostle declared, “*Christ sent me not to baptize*” (I Corinthians 1:17), and then said, “*be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*” (I Corinthians 4:16; 11:1).

Water baptism is a *work*, it is something that we can *do*, and Paul insists that salvation *today* is “*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration,*” and *not* by the washing of water baptism (Titus 3:5).

It is the teaching of Paul that we don’t need *water* baptism, “*for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body*” (I Corinthians 12:13). This *spiritual* baptism took place the moment we were saved, and we are now “*complete in Him*” (Colossians 2:10), completely circumcised with a spiritual circumcision (Colossians 2:11), and completely baptized with a spiritual baptism (Colossians 2:12). Paul then affirms that while there are many different kinds of baptism in the Bible (Matthew 3:11; I Corinthians 10:1,2), there is only “*one baptism*” in God’s program for *today* (Ephesians 4:5), referring of course to our

spiritual baptism into Christ. The words “one baptism” leave no room for an *additional* baptism with water.

It is often taught that while baptism today does not save us, it is a testimony to salvation. However, this is not taught in Scripture. Water baptism today is only a *bad* testimony, for it testifies that the one being baptized does not understand that they are complete in Christ without water baptism.

## 2. Begin studying the Bible.

The Bible is God’s Word: “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*” (II Timothy 3:16,17). As they wrote the Scriptures, “*holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*” (II Peter 1:21). “*The Spirit of the Lord spake by me,*” said



David of his writings, “*and His Word was in my tongue*” (II Samuel 23:2). God’s Word has the power to cleanse our ways (Psalm 119:9) that we might not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11). It strengthens us as Christians (Psalm 119:28) and directs our steps (Psalm 119:105). It sets examples for us (I Corinthians 10:11) and gives us hope (Romans 15:4). It is “*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*” (II Timothy 3:16,17). God has magnified His Word above even His name (Psalm 138:2), so we should say with Job: “*I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food*” (Job 23:12). We should *read* God’s Word (I Timothy 4:13), *meditate* on it (I Timothy 4:15) and *study* it (II Timothy 2:15).

II Timothy 2:15 also says that as we study God’s Word we should be “*rightly dividing*” it. This is the key to understanding the Bible. While all Scripture is “*profitable*” for us to study (II Timothy 3:16), much of Scripture contains specific instructions for the people of Israel. The Old Testament portion of our Bibles contains commandments for Israel in the past, while the books of the New Testament that are not written by the Apostle Paul were written with future Israel in mind. Unless we separate these instructions from the instructions given to us Gentiles through our apostle Paul (Romans 11:13; 15:16), God’s Word can become very confusing and *unprofitable*.

A simple demonstration of the need to rightly divide God’s Word can be seen in the different Bible commands concerning something as basic as our *diet*. God told Adam he could only eat plant life (Genesis 1:29), but afterwards added meat to man’s diet (Genesis 9:3). Then later under the Law of Moses, God told Israel to “*make a difference between...the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten*” (Leviticus 11:47). But then centuries later when Peter rightly refused to eat unclean meat, God changed man’s diet

again (Acts 10:9-14), explaining to us through Paul that “every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving” (I Timothy 4:4). Similarly, the Law forbade the eating of meat sacrificed to idols (Exodus 34:14-16), but Paul taught that this is not a sin for us today (I Corinthians 8:1-13; 10:23-33). Yet in the future, God’s people Israel will again be prohibited from eating such meat (Revelation 2:20).

Since it is impossible to obey *all* of these different commands, it is imperative to determine *which* of these commands God would have us obey today. And since there are many other issues in which Scripture gives “contradictory” instructions, it is vital that we remember that it is the commands of Christ given to and through the Apostle Paul that we must obey (I Corinthians 14:37; Philippians 3:17; 4:9).

While the *twelve* apostles are associated in Scripture with the *twelve* tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28), the *one* apostle Paul is associated with the *one* Body of Christ (Romans 12:4,5; I Corinthians 10:17; 12:12,13,20; Ephesians 2:16; 4:4; Colossians 3:15). In Paul’s epistles *alone* we find information about “*the church which is His Body*” (Ephesians 1:22,23) and instructions intended primarily for us.

This is not to say that we need not study the rest of the Bible, for it is Paul himself who tells us that “*whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope*” (Romans 15:4). As we see God’s faithfulness to His people Israel in other parts of Scripture, it gives us hope that God will be just as faithful in His promises to the church of today, the Body of Christ.

### **3. Begin attending church.**

“*Upon the first day of the week*” (I Corinthians 16:2), Christians should be in church, “*not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*” (Hebrews 10:25). While we are already members of the one true church, the Body of Christ, Paul wrote most of his epistles to *local* churches (I Corinthians 1:2; II Corinthians 1:1; I Thessalonians 1:1; II Thessalonians 1:1) and talks about the local church over and over again (Romans 16:1,23; I Corinthians 11:18; Philippians 4:15). The local church is where the Scriptures



are read (Colossians 4:16) and taught (I Corinthians 4:17), and spiritual men are ordained (Acts 14:23) to feed God’s Word to His people (Acts 20:28). It is where spiritual leaders care for the spiritual needs of God’s people (I Timothy 3:5), who in turn support God’s work in their area by giving of their finances (I Corinthians 16:1,2). It is the place where God’s people “*show the Lord’s death till He come*” by observing a communion service (I Corinthians 11:23-26). When the

Apostle Thomas stayed home from church, he missed the Lord's first appearance to His apostles after His death and burial (John 20:24), and so doubted that He had risen (v. 25). If at all possible, choose a church that preaches the gospel of salvation, and teaches God's Word rightly divided.

#### **4. Begin to pray.**

While the Bible forbids the repeating of memorized prayers (Matthew 6:7), we are often encouraged to simply talk with God in prayer as our Lord did in John 17:1-26. God encourages us to be *"praying always"* (Ephesians 6:18) about *"every thing"* (Philippians 4:6), to *"continue in prayer"* (Romans 12:12; Colossians 4:2), and to *"pray without ceasing"*



(I Thessalonians 5:17), that is, to never give up praying. We should pray for unsaved people *"that they might be saved"* (Romans 10:1), and for Christians (Ephesians 6:18) that they might not sin (II Corinthians 13:7). We should also pray for Christians that they might be *"filled with the knowledge of His will"* (Colossians 1:9) and so *"stand perfect and complete in all the will of God"* (Colossians 4:12). We should pray for political leaders (I Timothy 2:1) and spiritual leaders (Romans 15:30,31; II Corinthians 1:1; Philippians 1:19; Philemon 22) and their ministry (Ephesians 6;18,19; II Thessalonians 3:1).

It is important to *"pray with the understanding"* (I Corinthians 14:15) that prayer works differently today than it did for Israel. In the past, Elijah could pray for fire to come down from heaven (I Kings 18:36-38) and God would grant his request, but He will not do so today. Then in the future kingdom of heaven on earth, the Lord promised Israel that *"all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"* (Matthew 21:22). This is because in the kingdom, Israel will be filled with and *controlled* by God's Spirit (Ezekiel 36:27) and can be trusted with such a wonderful prayer promise. But today *"we know not what to pray for as we ought"* (Romans 8:26). Without the control of the Spirit, what a disaster it would be if people who didn't know what to pray for as they ought received everything they asked for in prayer! But while we *don't* know what to pray for, we *do* know that *"all things work together for good to them that love God"* (Romans 8:28). Knowing this will give you *"the peace of God, which passeth all understanding"* (Philippians 4:6,7) whether or not you receive what you have asked for in prayer.

#### **5. Begin to share the gospel with others.**

The word "gospel" simply means *good news*, and God wants everyone to know about *"the gospel of the grace of God"* (Acts 20:24). As Christians, we are *"ambassadors for Christ"* (II Corinthians 5:20) and

as His representatives here on earth, it is our privilege to introduce people to Him. It is a natural thing to want to share good news with others. During the siege of Samaria, four starving Hebrew lepers thought that perhaps the besieging Syrian army might pity and feed them, and so ventured out among them one night (II Kings 7:3-5). They discovered that the Lord had frightened the army into leaving in such a hurry that they left all of their food behind (v. 5-7). The lepers ate to their heart's content (v. 8), then said, "*We do not well, this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace...now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household*" (v. 9). Similarly, now that you have "*tasted that the Lord is gracious*" (I Peter 2:3), you will want to share "*the gospel of your salvation*" (Ephesians 1:13) with others.

You may fear you will be unable to answer questions that others might ask, but God understands we can only "*speak the things which we have seen and heard*" so far in His Word (Acts 4:20). When the Lord healed a blind man (John 9:1-7), jealous religious leaders questioned him to try to discredit him (v. 13-24). He replied, "*one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see*" (v. 25). As a new Christian, you can say the same, spiritually speaking. Then the more you study God's Word, the more you will be "*ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you*" (I Peter 3:15).

#### **6. Begin to give of your finances to the Lord's work.**

The work of the ministry is carried on by men who "*forbear working*" at secular labor, but who have a right to eat, drink and support a wife and family like anyone else (I Corinthians 9:4-10). Thus if you benefit from the "*spiritual things*" that they teach you, God asks you to minister unto them in material things (v. 11) so that they can continue to minister God's Word to you, and reach out to others, with sufficient funds to carry out the work of the ministry.

Under the Law of Moses, Israel was required to "tithe," i.e., give one-tenth of their income to the Lord for the maintenance of their priests (Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:24). Tithing was compulsory, and they "*robbed*" God when they withheld it (Malachi 3:8,9).

Since under Law God blessed Israel when they obeyed Him and cursed them when they did not, God challenged Israel to "*bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse...and PROVE [test] ME now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing*" (v. 10). But under grace, God has already opened the windows of heaven and blessed us "*with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*" (Ephesians 1:3). Thus Paul challenged the Corinthians to "*prove the sincerity of your love*" (II Corinthians 8:8) by responding to His grace financially. Do you see the difference? God told Israel to test Him with their obedience to see if He wouldn't bless them in response. But today, *God tests us* by blessing us *up front*, then asking us to be obedient givers to His work.

So unlike Israel, we are not to give “*of necessity*” (II Corinthians 9:7), we are not commanded to tithe, but are rather instructed to give “*as God hath prospered*” us (I Corinthians 16:2). Some cannot afford to tithe, others can afford to give more than ten percent, but all must give out of a grateful heart for all that He has done for us in Christ.

While there are many Christian causes worthy of our support, God would have “*all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*” (I Timothy 2:3,4), and He would have “*all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery*” (Ephesians 3:9). Thus care should be taken to financially support only churches and organizations that preach the gospel and teach God’s Word rightly divided (II Timothy 2:15).

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The following is the third and last in a series of articles written as a primer for new believers, to help establish them in their new-found faith.

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# Now That I Believe (Part 3)

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

## How do I deal with sin now that I believe?

### 1. Not with the Law (the Ten Commandments).

It is natural to think that while we are saved by grace through faith without the Law (Romans 3:28) that we then need the Ten Commandments to help us to be good. However, this is not the purpose of the Law. *“The Law is not made for a righteous man”* (I Timothy 1:9), but for unbelievers (v. 9,10), to give them *“the knowledge of sin”* (Romans 3:20), to teach them that they are sinners and need a Savior.

The Law accomplishes this by making sin *worse*. Because of our fallen human nature, men naturally want to do what they are told *not* to do. Signs saying “Wet Paint, Do Not Touch” generally only invite transgression. This is why Paul says that *“the strength of sin is the law”* (I Corinthians 15:56). The Law gives *motion* to sin (Romans 7:5) and *revives* it (Romans 7:9). God didn’t give the Law to make sin better, but to make it worse: *“that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful”* (Romans 7:13).

Why would God want to make sin worse? To show unbelievers their need of a Savior: *“the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ”* (Galatians 3:24). The Lord warned the religious leaders of His day that *“the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you”* (Matthew 21:31) because the publicans and harlots knew they needed a Savior, unlike those religious leaders who thought themselves good enough to be saved by their works.

The Law was given that *“all the world may become guilty before God”* (Romans 3:19). It condemns *every human being* because it demands 100% obedience *100% of the time* (James 2:9,10). Paul says, *“Cursed is every one that CONTINUETH not in ALL things which are*

written in the book of the law to do them” (Galatians 3:10). You weren’t able to fully obey the Law before you were saved, and this is how it taught you your need of a Savior.

But now that you believe, you are *still* incapable of rendering perfect obedience to the Law. Thus if you try to eliminate sin from your life by using the Law, you will find yourself feeling frustrated, defeated, and experiencing the kind of self-condemnation that even the Apostle Paul felt when he tried to use the Law to deal with sin (Romans 7:15-25).

Sin “*deceived*” Paul into thinking that the Law was something he could use to help him battle sin (Romans 7:11). This is a natural mistake that many Christians make. Since the Law “*is holy, and just, and good*” (Romans 7:12), it

“For the Christian,  
forgiveness is  
‘a done deal,’  
a fait accompli.”

looks like something that would be a good tool to use in dealing with sin. However, gasoline is a liquid, and it looks like something you could use to put out a fire. But as we know, gasoline only makes a fire *worse*, and as we have seen, the Law only makes sin worse.

How does the Law make sin worse? Did you ever have someone tell you, “Try not to think about pink elephants.” A moment beforehand, pink elephants were the furthest thing from your mind, but now a law has placed them in the foreground of your thinking. Then if you go through the day thinking, “I’m not going to think about pink elephants, I’m not going to think about pink elephants,” this law *keeps* the forbidden thought on the center stage of your mind, which leads to sin due to our fallen sinful nature.

The way then to deal with stealing, for example, is not to go through the day reciting God’s law in your mind, “*Thou shalt not steal.*” This only keeps stealing in the forefront of your mind, and as Paul puts it, “*to be carnally minded is death*” (Romans 8:6). Thinking about sin will only lead to sin, and “*if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die*” (Romans 8:13). While it is not possible for you to lose your salvation, sin will have a *deadening* effect in your spiritual life.

But if the Law is not the way to deal with sin in our lives, what is?

## **2. Deal with sin with the Spirit.**

The way to deal with sin is not to focus on a law that prohibits it, but to divert your mind and thinking to the Spirit and spiritual things. To be carnally minded is death, as we have seen, “*but to be spiritually minded is life and peace,*” as the verse goes on to say (Romans 8:6). Thinking about sin will deaden your spiritual life, but thinking about spiritual things will enliven your spiritual life. That’s why Paul says, “*if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live*”

(Romans 8:13). It is the Spirit and a focus on spiritual things that helps us deal with sin, not the Law.

This explains why after speaking of things that are “*true...honest...just...pure...*” and “*of good report,*” Paul exhorts us to “*think on these things*”(Philippians 4:8). Tightrope walkers are told, “Don’t look down,” because we tend to follow in the direction we are looking. I’m told that it is dangerous to walk along a superhighway because drivers will be looking at you, and we tend to steer toward where we are looking. Similarly, the way to steer clear of sin is not to focus on a law that condemns it, but to focus rather on spiritual things, thereby steering your life toward *them* instead. This is so important that Paul even goes so far as to challenge us to be constantly “*bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*” (II Corinthians 10:5).

With this in mind, it is little wonder that Galatians 5:16 says, “*Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*” Notice Paul does *not* say that if we walk in the Spirit we won’t *have* the lusts of the flesh, only that we won’t *fulfill* the lusts of the flesh in the measure that we walk in the Spirit.

### **3. Crowd sin out of your life.**

As you learn to walk in the Spirit, a wonderful thing happens: you find you have less and less time for sin. When Paul says, “*neither give place to the devil*”(Ephesians 4:27), he means we should not give Satan any *room* in our lives. In short, the way to force sin from your life is to *crowd it out* by filling your life with the things of the Lord. Not even Satan can add a single thing to a life that is already *filled* with the things of God.

This principle of grace will work where the Law fails. The Law says, “*thou shalt not bear false witness*”(Exodus 20:16), but doesn’t tell liars how to stop lying. But Paul says, “*Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth*”(Ephesians 4:25). The way to deal with lying is to focus on telling the truth. Similarly, the Law says, “*Thou shalt not steal*”(Exodus 20:15), but offers no advice for thieves as to how to keep from stealing. But grace supplies the victory with the commandment when it says, “*Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth*”(Ephesians 4:28). The way to stop *stealing from others* is to begin *working* and *giving to others*.

### **4. Walk worthy of who God has made you in Christ.**

Paul calls Christians “*saints*”(Ephesians 1:1), then begs us to “*walk worthy*” of this high and holy vocation (Ephesians 4:1). He teaches us that “*Christ be in you*”(Romans 8:10), then prays “*that ye might walk worthy of the Lord*” that is within you (Colossians 1:10). He tells us that we are “*sanctified in Christ Jesus*”(I Corinthians 1:2), but later insists that “*that every one of you should know how to possess his*

*vessel in sanctification and honor*" (I Thessalonians 4:4). He flatly states that we are *"holy"* in God's eyes (I Thessalonians 5:27), then challenges us to be *"perfecting holiness"* (II Corinthians 7:1). He has *"glorified"* us (Romans 8:30) by making us a part of *"the kingdom of His dear Son"* (Colossians 1:13), and now asks that we *"walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory"* (I Thessalonians 2:12).

### **5. Live as God sees you.**

Paul teaches us that in the eyes of God we are *"dead to sin"* (Romans 6:2). He then challenges us to *"reckon ye also yourselves TO BE dead indeed unto sin"* (v. 11). Using the imagery of leaven as a symbol of sin and *"wickedness"* (I Corinthians 5:8), Paul instructs us to *"purge out therefore the old leaven...as YE ARE unleavened"* (v. 7). In short, grace simply teaches us to recognize who we are in Christ, and then *be that holy person that God has made us to be.*

### **6. Make your state match your standing.**

As believers, there is often a difference between our eternal *standing* in Christ and our current *state*, between our *position* in Christ and our everyday *practice*. Our positional standing before God is one of sinless perfection, but who can argue that our everyday *state* is less than perfect. We stand before God *"ACCEPTED in the Beloved"* (Ephesians 1:6), and so we should live our lives in a way that is *"ACCEPTABLE unto the Lord"* (Ephesians 5:10). When we believed the gospel, we were *"made the righteousness of God in Him"* (II Corinthians 5:21), and God now calls upon us to live *"righteously, and godly, in this present world"* (Titus 2:12).

Believers who fail to do this *"oppose themselves"* (II Timothy 2:25), i.e., are living in opposition to who they are in Christ. We sometimes say of a friend, "He's not himself today." By this we mean he is not acting in accordance with his personality. Similarly, when a believer sins he is not acting like himself, he is not acting like who God has made him in Christ.

### **7. What to do when you sin.**

Of course, it is inevitable that you will sin as a believer and *"grieve"* the very Spirit of God that seals your security (Ephesians 4:30). When this happens, you needn't trust Christ and get saved again, nor do you need to ask God for more forgiveness. In his letters to the churches, every time the Apostle Paul mentions *forgiveness* it is always in the *past tense*. For the Christian, forgiveness is "a done deal," a *fait accompli*. Forgiveness of all your sins, past present and future, was something you received the moment you were saved. Asking for more forgiveness would be like asking for more salvation or more redemption. You should feel *sorrow* for having grieved the Spirit when you sin, and you may even wish to express this to God in prayer,

but you stand in no further need of forgiveness. When you find that you have sinned, you should thank God for His grace and determine not to continue in the path of disobedience to God's Word.

## **How do I deal with adversity and affliction now that I believe?**

### **1. Recognize that we're saved from sin, not from suffering.**

When Adam sinned, death entered the world (Romans 5:12). Ever since then, the pain and sickness that lead to death have been part of the human race. Paul says, *"we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."* And we also know that Christians are not exempt from suffering because Paul adds, *"and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves"* (Romans 8:23). Adversity is also part of the Christian life, else Paul wouldn't exhort us to have *"patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure"* (II Thessalonians 1:4).

### **2. Don't doubt the love of God.**

When we are sick, injured or in pain, when we suffer emotional trauma or financial reversal, there is a tendency to question the love of God. "If God loves me, why am I sick?" or, "If God loves me, why did this happen?" God's answer is found in Romans 5:8: *"God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* To determine God's love for us, we must not look to our circumstances in life, we must rather look to the Cross.



At Calvary He demonstrated His love for us when He saved us from our sins and the punishment of hell. After Calvary, His love for us can never be called into question.

### **3. Learn the value of adversity in this life.**

Someday *"that blessed hope"* of the Rapture (Titus 2:13) will put an end to all our troubles, and so we *"rejoice in hope of the glory of God"* (Romans 5:2). But in the meantime, Paul says that we can *"glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope"* (Romans 5:3,4). We can glory in tribulation since we know it works *for* us, not *against* us. It works to instill in us these desirable qualities in life, and *rewards* in the next life.

### **4. Learn the value of adversity in the next life.**

Tribulation not only works good things for us in this life, it works good things for us in the next life. Paul says that *"our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and*

*eternal weight of glory*" (II Corinthians 4:17). This is because while God could have taken us home to be with Him the moment we believed, He rather chose to leave us here to serve Him. But since leaving us here exposes us to sickness, hardship and heartache, God promises to richly *reward* the suffering that we endure. If it be asked *how* richly we will be rewarded, suffice it to say that *"the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (Romans 8:18). God here vows to lavishly reward all affliction that we encounter as we represent Him here as *"ambassadors for Christ"* (II Corinthians 5:20).

## **What does the future hold for me now that I believe?**

### **1. Death may usher you into the presence of the Lord.**

When we die, our body returns to the earth, but our soul and spirit depart from our body (Genesis 35:18) and *"return unto God"* (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Paul tells us that to be *"absent from the body"* is to be *"present with the Lord"* (II Corinthians 5:8). We needn't fear death, for he also tells us that *"to depart and to be with Christ"* is *"far better"* than anything we have ever known (Philippians 1:23).

But man was created to be a trinity of *"spirit and soul and body"* (I Thessalonians 5:23). This is at least part of what Genesis 1:26 means when the members of the Holy Trinity said to one another, *"Let US make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness."* Death separates our soul and spirit from our body, but God will not allow us to continue forever in this divided state. And so we read that when the Lord returns at the Rapture, *"even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him"* (I Thessalonians 4:14). The Lord will return with the souls of those who died in Christ to be reunited with their bodies. These dead and decaying bodies will of course have to be *"changed"* (I Corinthians 15:52) and *"fashioned like unto His glorious body"* before they can go to heaven (Philippians 3:20,21). This will happen *"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"* (I Corinthians 15:52).

### **2. You may live to see the Rapture.**

When *"the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout"* (I Thessalonians 4:16) *"the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord"* (v. 16,17). While it is obvious that dead and decaying bodies must be changed before entering heaven, those who are *"alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord"* (I Thessalonians 4:15) must also be changed, for *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"* (I Corinthians 15:50). Thus Paul says of *all* believers at the Rapture that the Lord will *"change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body"* (Philippians 3:20,21). Our bodies will be fashioned like unto the body He lived in here on earth for the forty days after

His resurrection and before His ascension into heaven (Acts 1:1-3). This body was blessedly recognizable to His friends and loved ones (I Corinthians 15:3-7), and was even hug-able (Matthew 28:9), yet it could also rise through a solid rock tomb and walk through shut doors (John 20:19). Such is the changed body that awaits every believer.

### **3. You must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ.**

After the Rapture, “*we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*” (II Corinthians 5:10). This judgment seat will not determine whether we go to heaven or hell—that is something that must be determined in *this* life by trusting Christ. No, the purpose of this judgment is to present *rewards* to believers for their *service* for the Lord. This judgment is sometimes called the “Bema seat” judgment, since the original New Testament was written in Greek, and the Greek word for “judgment” in Romans 14:10 is “*bema*.” This word was used for the judgment seat in the ancient athletic competitions, where the “judge” determined 1st, 2nd and 3rd place, etc., not guilt or innocence. These rewards (I Corinthians 3:8) are sometimes called *crowns* (I Corinthians 9:25; II Timothy 4:8) because they will determine the level at which we will rule and reign with the Lord Jesus Christ in the heavenlies throughout eternity (II Timothy 2:12). Paul encourages us to live our lives in such a way so as to “*obtain*” these rewards (I Corinthians 9:24).

## **Conclusion**

As you can see, now that you have believed, many wonderful things have happened to you in the spiritual realm. It is our prayer that these articles will help you make these spiritual realities actual, substantive and operative in your life. God has fully equipped you to deal with sin and adversity in your life, and you have a bright future ahead of you, eternally speaking. May God bless you as you endeavor to “*grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ*” (Ephesians 4:15).