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Practice Makes Perfect

Webster's Dictionary:

- Practice:**
- a)** to perform or work at repeatedly so as to become skilled or proficient
 - b)** to train by repeated exercises ~ football practice
 - a)** to carry out or apply ~ practice what you preach
 - b)** a repeated or customary action or the usual way of doing something ~ practice righteousness

From the definitions of “Practice,” it is clear that practice actually involves *doing* something *repeatedly* with a *goal* in *mind* of becoming *better* at what they are *practicing* and/or to “*train*” themselves to make what they’re practicing into a *habitual* behavior. Sports competitors practice to improve *performance*. Musicians, both vocal and instrumental, *practice* to *perfect* their *performance*. Doctors, nurses, lawyers and other professionals attend schools and seminars for knowledge and training. Afterwards they “*practice*” what they have learned in the real world. Many people *workout* at gyms to *train* their muscles, shape their bodies, and to get rid of unwanted fat, but how many people *study* God’s *Word* and “*exercise*” it (or *put it into practice*) to be *spiritually fit and* to be rid of *fleshly excesses*?

1 Timothy 4:6–8, 11 (KJV) says, “If thou put the brethren in *remembrance* of *these* things, thou shalt be a *good minister* of Jesus Christ, *nourished* up in the *words of faith* and of *good doctrine*, whereunto thou hast attained.⁷ But refuse profane and old wives’ fables, and *exercise thyself rather unto godliness*.⁸ For *bodily exercise profiteth little*: but *godliness is profitable unto all things*, having promise of the *life that now is*, and of *that which is to come*.⁹ This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.¹⁰ For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we *trust* in the living God, who is the *Saviour* of *all men*, *specially* of those that *believe*.¹¹ These things *command and teach*.”

Here we see Paul’s instructions to Timothy on *how* he can be a *good servant* of Christ and the *spiritual leader* of the church. He is to teach the *brethren sound doctrine*, *rejecting profane, worldly doctrines*, and to “*exercise himself*” toward *godliness*. He is to be an *example* for the flock. **All** believers are to be *good examples* for others. This “*exercise*” includes rigorous, *self-sacrificing training*. **1 Tim. 4:8** tells us that physical exercise does have a *little* value in *this* life, but when we *practice godliness*, which involves *holy living*

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and *righteousness* (with a proper *attitude and conduct* toward God in *all* things) and showing *due reverence* and *moral clarity* before **God** and **men**, it has *great benefit both now* (in *this life*) and the *life yet to come*.

As an example, we can read in **Acts 5:1-10** how God *killed* Ananias and Sapphira for their *hypocrisy* in *lying* to God, and then see the results of this in **Acts 5:11-14 (KJV)** “And great *fear* came upon *all* the *church*, and upon as *many* as *heard* these things. ¹²And by the *hands* of the *apostles* were many *signs* and *wonders* wrought among the *people*; (and they were *all* with *one accord* in Solomon’s porch. ¹³And of the rest *durst no man join himself to them*: but the *people magnified them*. ¹⁴And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)”

- We see in *verses 11-13* how the *unbelievers magnified the believers*, but, they were *afraid* to join the *church* for fear that God would *kill them* for *their hypocrisy*. It’s a *sad* testimony that we don’t see that attitude (*fear of God*) in *churches or the world* anymore.

The apostle Paul was *very* aware of the concept of practicing, training, and striving toward righteousness, godliness, and holiness. When he wrote his epistle to the Romans, he wrote, “For **if** the first fruit be holy, the *lump is also holy*; and **if** the *root be holy*, so are the *branches*.” (**Rom. 11:16 KJV**). We understand that Christ is *both* the “*firstfruit*” (**1 Cor. 15:23**) and the “*root*” (**Rev. 22:16**), and we know that His believers are the branches (**John. 15:5**), so *because He* is holy, *we are to be holy*: **1 Peter 1:13-16 (KJV)** “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be *sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*; ¹⁴As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: ¹⁵But as he which hath *called* you is *holy*, so be ye *holy* in *all* manner of conversation; ¹⁶Because it is written, *Be ye holy; for I am holy*.”

In this passage we see several *key* things that clarify some issues concerning the salvation of our souls. Our “*hope*” is in the *grace* of God, which is *to be brought to us* (*future tense*) at the revelation of Jesus Christ. It will be realized by those *obedient* children who *cease* their former lusts and *turn to God*, living lives that are *now holy* and *godly*. We must realize that this transformation is *essential* (not *optional*) for *eternal* salvation.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (KJV) “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. ²⁵And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but *we* an *incorruptible*. ²⁶I therefore so *run, not as uncertainly*; so *fight*

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I, *not* as one that *beateth* the *air*: ²⁷But I keep under my body, and *bring it into subjection*: *lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*”

Paul clearly says in this passage that *if he* doesn't bring his own body into subjection (i.e. exhibiting self-control, and *fruit* of the *Spirit*), that he could “*disqualify*” himself from *eternal* salvation, *even after* having preached the gospel to others! One of the *basics* of salvation is that we are to *become a new creation* (or a new *creature*) *in Christ Jesus*:

- **2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV)** “Therefore *if any* man *be in Christ*, *he is a new creature*: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”
 - We *must* be transformed, exhibiting a *new* life that is *godly, righteous, and holy*.
- **Galatians 5:13-15 (KJV)** “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by *love serve one another*. ¹⁴For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt *love thy neighbour as thyself*. ¹⁵But *if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*”
 - Our *motivation* in serving one another *must* be *agape* love
- **Ephesians 1:3-6 (KJV)** “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with *all spiritual blessings* in heavenly: *places in Christ*: ⁴According as He hath chosen *us in Him before* the *foundation* of the *world*, that we *should* be *holy* and *without blame* before Him in *love*: ⁵Having *predestinated* us unto the *adoption* of *children* by Jesus Christ *to Himself*, according to the good pleasure of *His will*, ⁶To the praise of the glory of *His grace*, wherein *He* hath made us *accepted* in the *Beloved*.”
 - We *must* live *holy* lives and *without blame* before God, walking in (or *practicing*) *agape* love. This is *His* desire and *will* for *us* and it *glorifies* the Father as well. It should be noted that *these four verses comprise one sentence*, which gives a basic outline of “**God's plan**” for the *salvation* of *man*. This plan was conceived by God *before* the *foundation* of the *world*, that **God** would: *choose* (and *bless*) *all* who are *in Christ* who are *holy* and *without blame*, who *walk in* *agape love*.

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Furthermore, His plan *predestined* that these “*elect*” (*chosen ones*) **will** be adopted as *His sons* by (or through) *Jesus*.

- **Colossians 2:6-7 (KJV)** “As ye have therefore *received* Christ Jesus the Lord, so *walk ye in Him*: ⁷*Rooted* and built up *in Him*, and *stablished in the faith*, as ye have been taught, *abounding* therein with *thanksgiving*.”
 - We must “*walk in Him*,” being rooted and built up *in Him*, *walking in faith* (that means *practicing* our faith) and *abounding* (*full of* and *growing*) in that faith as we thank God *always, regardless of life’s circumstances*.

Scripture very **clearly** describes the believer’s **former** lifestyle **and** his **new** one as well. Some examples (of many) follow:

- **Isaiah 32:6-7 (KJV)** “For the *vile* person will *speak villany*, and his *heart will work iniquity*, to *practice hypocrisy*, and to *utter error against* the LORD, to make *empty* the soul of the *hungry*, and he will *cause* the drink of the thirsty to *fail*. ⁷The instruments also of the churl *are evil*: he *deviseth wicked devices* to *destroy* the *poor* with *lying words*, even when the needy speaketh right.” (this passage describes a “*former*” lifestyle – *practicing ungodliness*).
- **Micah 2:1-2 (KJV)** “Woe to them that *devise iniquity*, **and** *work evil* upon their beds! when the morning is light, they *practice it*, because it is in the **power** of *their hand*. ²And they *covet* fields, and *take them by violence*; and *houses*, and *take them away*: so they *oppress* a man and his house, even a man and his *heritage*.” (Former lifestyle – *devised and practiced iniquity*)
- **Romans 1:28-32 (KJV)** “And even as they did **not** like to *retain God* in *their knowledge*, God gave them over to a *reprobate* mind, to do those things which are **not convenient**; ²⁹Being *filled* with **all** unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, ³⁰Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹*Without* understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: ³²Who *knowing* the *judgment* of God, that they which *commit* such

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things are *worthy* of **death**, not only *do* the same, **but** have *pleasure* in *them* that *do* them.” (*Former lifestyle – what a description!*)

- **Romans 3:10-18 (KJV)** “As it is written, There is *none* *righteous*, no, not *one*: ¹¹There is *none* that *understandeth*, there is *none* that *seeketh after* God. ¹²They are *all* gone *out* of *the* way, they are together become *unprofitable*; there is *none* that doeth *good*, no, *not one*. ¹³Their *throat is* an open sepulchre; with their *tongues* they have *used* *deceit*; the *poison of asps is* under their *lips*: ¹⁴Whose mouth *is full of* cursing and *bitterness*: ¹⁵Their feet *are swift* to shed *blood*: ¹⁶*Destruction* and *misery are in* *their* ways: ¹⁷And the way of *peace* have they *not* known: ¹⁸There is *no* *fear of* God before their eyes.” (*Former lifestyle*)
- **Acts 19:18-19 (KJV)** “And many that believed came, and *confessed*, and *showed* their *deeds*. ¹⁹Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and *burned* them before all *men*: and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver.” (*Former lifestyles, but now are changing – repenting and turning from their sins*)
- **2 Corinthians 12:20-21 (KJV)** “For I *fear*, lest, when I come, I shall *not* find you such as I would, and *that* I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest *there be* *debates*, *envyings*, *wraths*, *strifes*, *backbitings*, *whisperings*, *swellings*, *tumults*: ²¹And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and *that* I shall *bewail* many which have *sinned* *already*, and have *not* *repented* of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have *committed*.” (*Describes some who have not repented or changed from their old ways*).
- **Ephesians 4:17-24 (KJV)** “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk *not* as other Gentiles walk, in the *vanity* of their mind, ¹⁸Having the *understanding darkened*, being *alienated* from the *life of God* through the *ignorance* that is *in* them, *because of* the *blindness* of their *heart*: ¹⁹Who being past feeling have *given themselves over unto* *lasciviousness*, to *work all* *uncleanness with greediness*. ²⁰But ye have *not so learned Christ*; ²¹If so be that ye have *heard* Him, and have *been taught by Him*, as the truth *is in Jesus*: ²²That ye *put off* concerning the *former conversation* the *old man*, which is *corrupt* according to the *deceitful lusts*; ²³And be *renewed* in the

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spirit of your mind; ²⁴And that ye *put on* the *new* man, which after God is *created in righteousness and true holiness.*” (Describes the *necessity* to change from *old* ways to *new* ways.)

- **Ephesians 4:25-32 (KJV)** “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. ²⁶Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: ²⁷Neither give place to the devil. ²⁸Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, *working with his hands the thing which is good*, that he may have to *give to him that needeth*. ²⁹Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is *good* to the use of *edifying*, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. ³⁰And grieve not the *holy Spirit* of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the *day of redemption*. ³¹Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: ³²And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, *forgiving one another*, even as God for Christ’s sake hath *forgiven you*.”
 - Here, Paul describes the new lifestyle, giving many *examples* for believers to follow in their conduct to ensure that they do not grieve the Holy Spirit.

- **1 Peter 4:1-4 (KJV)** “Forasmuch then as Christ hath *suffered for us in the flesh*, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; ²¹That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. ³For the *time past of our life may suffice* us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: ⁴Wherein they think it *strange* that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:” (Peter describes the needed lifestyle change here).

Eternal salvation is what most people are truly interested in *achieving* and with that in mind, let me make some comments that possibly *many* believers might consider controversial (to say the least). Some people teach, and *many* believe, that man is saved by “faith alone.” Unfortunately, the truth is that this is not what the Bible teaches. *Not only is this an over-simplification, but it is simply false.*

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Psalm 119:160 (NKJV) records, “The *entirety* of Your word *is truth*, And *every one* of Your *righteous judgments endures* forever.”

According to Psalm 119:160, if we wish to get the *truth* about any Biblical issue, we must consider *all* that the *Word* says concerning *that issue*. This is where many people *err*, because they *do not* take the time and effort to examine the *entirety* of the *Bible* before building a *doctrine* (or *teaching*). Rather, they grab a verse or two, or even *parts* of verses, which say something that *sounds good* to them and can be *used* to say what *they want* to say. This is *not uncommon* for people to do. Some do so *unintentionally* (or out of *ignorance* or *misunderstanding* the *Word*), whereas, *others might* do so *intentionally*. Others, just believe *whatever* someone “says” the Bible says, *without checking it out* to see if the Bible *truly does say that* or *not*. This is *reckless and foolish*. We are *all* responsible to see *for ourselves* what God has *said to us* in *His Word*. You *cannot* simply *believe everything others* say! Many people *lie* and many have *misconstrued, misread, or miscomprehended*, or even simply *haven’t even read* the Bible. *Don’t* just *accept* that the Bible says something *because* someone *told* you it does. It *may*, in *fact*, say what they *said* it does, but that may *still* be *misleading* you into believing a *lie*! It is *common* that people use a *verse* or a *part of a verse* to *confuse* or *mislead* others into believing a *lie*. *Deception* has been *practiced* since the *earliest* days of *mankind* and it is most *certainly* being done today by *millions* of people every day. It is currently common - *especially* in *politics, religion, and even our schools*. This is sad to say, but it is *true*. Now, let us *examine* the teaching that man is saved by “*faith alone*.”

Eph. 2:8-10 (KJV) says, “For by *grace* are ye saved *through faith*; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift* of God: ⁹Not of *works*, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰For we are *His workmanship*, created *in Christ Jesus* unto *good works*, which God hath *before ordained* that we should *walk in them*.”

This passage makes it very clear that we are *saved by God’s grace* and that this grace is “*appropriated*” *only* through “*faith*”. We know *from the Bible* that this “*faith*” is *in Christ Jesus* and what He has *done* for us:

1. He came in the *flesh* (as a man). (**Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25; John 1:14; Rom. 1:3; 8:3; 1 Tim. 3:16**)
2. He lived a perfect (*sinless*) life, fulfilling *all* the righteous requirements of the *law*. (**Hebrews 4:14-16**)
3. He *gave* His *life* on the *cross*, shedding His *sinless blood* as *substitutionary* sacrifice for the *sins* of the *world*, for those who would *believe* on Him, *repent* of their *sins*, and *obey* the gospel. (**John 3:14-17**)
4. He was buried but was *raised* from the dead on the 3rd day and was *seen alive* by *many* witnesses. (**1 Corinthians. 15:1-8**)

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5. He later *ascended* to *heaven* where He sits at the *right hand* of the *Father*. There He now *intercedes* for men and *mediates* between men and God the Father as our *High Priest*. (Acts 1:8-11; Heb. 7:24-25)

In **Ephesians 2:9** we see that salvation is *not* of *works*. We *must understand* that Paul is referring to “works of the *law*” here. Most people *thought* and *taught* that people were *saved* by “*doing*” (i.e. *works*) the *law* of Moses.” *Then*, in **Ephesians 2:10**, it says that we are *God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for “good” works*, which God ordained that we *should walk* in *them*. This might *seem* to be a paradox, concerning “works” (of the *law*) referred to in verse 9, (see **Galatians 3:11** below), but it is *not*. We can *never* be *saved* by doing *works* of the *law*, but, to be *saved*, we *must* “*practice good works*” (as opposed to *fleshly* or *ungodly works*). We must remember that *because* salvation is a *gift* from God, man has *no cause* or *reason* to boast that he has somehow “*earned*” this salvation through his *own good works* or by ‘*doing the Law of Moses*’. Only *Christ* has lived the *Law* of Moses perfectly and, *furthermore*, He *always* went about “*doing good*.”

Galatians 3:11 (KJV) “But that *no man* is *justified* by the *law* in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The *just* shall live by faith.”

Romans 3:23-24 (KJV) “For *all have sinned*, and come short of the glory of God; ²⁴Being *justified freely* by *His grace* through the *redemption* that is *in Christ Jesus*:”

James, the *half-brother* of Jesus, addressed the importance of *good works* in his general epistle, which he wrote to the twelve tribes who had been scattered abroad. He helps *clarify* the *importance* of “*works*.”

James 2:14-18 (KJV) “What *doth it profit*, my brethren, though a man *say* he hath *faith*, and have *not works*? Can *faith* *save* him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding *ye give them not* those things which are needful to the body; *what doth it profit*? ¹⁷Even so *faith*, *if* it hath *not works*, is *dead*, being *alone*. ¹⁸Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will *show* thee my *faith* by my *works*.”

- Clearly, James is instructing that faith which does *not* produce *good works* is *dead*! It will *not* save you. Therefore, we *cannot* be *saved* by *faith alone*! *If* we “*claim*” to have *saving faith*, it *needs* to be *supported* by *evidence* – *good works* are *essential* evidence.

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James 2:19 (KJV) “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the *devils* also believe, and tremble.” In this verse James states that *devils* (or *demons*) believe there is one God but they tremble. This is because all their works are *ungodly* and *unrighteous*. They “tremble” because they “practice” *ungodliness, unholiness, and unrighteousness*, they are *disqualified* from heaven and their end will most assuredly be eternal damnation and torment, and separation from God forever.

James 2:20-26 (KJV) “But wilt thou know, O *vain* man, that faith *without* works is *dead*? ²¹Was not Abraham our father *justified* by works, when he had *offered* Isaac his son upon the *altar*? ²²Seest thou *how* faith *wrought* with his works, and by works was faith *made* perfect? ²³And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham *believed* God, and it was imputed unto him for *righteousness*: and he was called the *Friend* of God. ²⁴Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. ²⁵Likewise also was not Rahab the *harlot* justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way? ²⁶For as the body *without* the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

In this passage, James illustrates how Abraham’s and Rahab’s (the harlot) works (*actions of obedience by faith*) produced good works because they had put their *faith* into action. If our faith does no work (*or is not put to action or practiced*) then it is dead and *cannot save* us. If a surgeon has the knowledge to save someone with a surgical procedure, but, won’t do the procedure, then the patient will die (*unnecessarily*). Likewise, a person can believe there’s a God, but, by not doing His commandments, he will die (*unnecessarily*) We know, from *many* scriptures, that God will either test our *faith* or He allows it to be tested by various *trials* to see how genuine it is: for examples, see: **James 1:2-4; Acts 5:41; 14:21-22; Psa. 34:19; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Th.2:4; 2 Th.1:4-5; 1 Cor. 10:13; Rom. 5:1-5; 12:9-12; 1 Pet.1:6-7; 4:12-14; Rev. 2:10** etc. (a few examples).

Genuine faith will produce godly love, righteousness, godliness, truthfulness, peace, joy, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control, and humility in our lives, as we put our *faith* into action, by “practicing” it each day. This is *essential* for the “process” of our salvation.

Galatians 5:6 (KJV) “For in Jesus Christ *neither* circumcision availeth any thing, *nor* uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”

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Galatians 5:6 reveals a *simple*, yet *critical* “key” for us – *genuine saving* faith will *manifest* itself by *obedient works* which are *motivated* by *agape* love! In **John 14:15**, Jesus said, “**If ye love Me, keep My commandments.**” We *must* realize that there is a *direct correlation* between *loving* Jesus and *obeying* Him. Just because we *say* something, it doesn’t always make it so. James is saying that we *must* put our *faith* into *practice*, *if* we don’t want it to result in “*dead*” faith. Paul adds that *love (charity) must* be our *motivator*:

- **1 Corinthians 13:1–3, 13 (KJV)** “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, *and* have *not charity*, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. ²And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have *not charity*, I *am nothing*. ³And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, *and* have *not charity*, it *profiteth* me *nothing*. ⁴Charity *suffereth long*, and is *kind*; charity *envieth not*; charity *vaunteth not itself*, is *not puffed up*, ¹³And *now abide* faith, hope, charity, these three; but the *greatest* of these is *charity*.”
 - Clearly “*love*” *supercedes both* faith and hope, *if* we *believe* God’s *Word*.
- **1 Corinthians 16:14 (KJV)** “Let *all* your things be done *with charity*.”

After Jesus *washed* His disciple’s feet, in **John 13**, He made an important point:

John 13:17 (NKJV) “**If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.**”

Other scriptures affirm this:

James 1:25 (KJV) “But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and *continueth therein*, he being *not a forgetful hearer*, but a *doer* of the work, *this* man shall be *blessed* in his *deed*.”

1 John 3:17 (KJV) “But whoso hath this *world’s* good, and *seeth* his brother have *need*, and *shutteth up* his bowels of *compassion* from him, *how dwelleth the love of God in him?*”

1 John 2:28-29 (KJV) “And now, little children, *abide in Him*; that, when *He* shall appear, we may have *confidence*, and *not* be *ashamed* before Him at His *coming*. ²⁹**If** ye know that He is *righteous*, ye know that every one that *doeth righteousness is born* of Him.”

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1 John 3:7-10 (KJV) “Little children, let no *man* *deceive* you: he that *doeth* *righteousness* *is* righteous, even as He is righteous. ⁸He that *committeth* *sin* is of the *devil*; for the devil *sinneth* from the beginning. For *this* purpose the Son of God was *manifested*, that *He* *might* *destroy* the *works* of the devil. ⁹*Whosoever* is *born* of *God* doth *not* commit *sin*; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰In this the children of God are *manifest*, *and* the *children* of the *devil*: whosoever doeth *not* righteousness is *not* of God, *neither* he that *loveth* *not* his brother.”

These passages in **1 John** speak *directly* to *all* believers, warning them that they must abide (remain) *in* *Jesus* so they can be confident that they will *not* be ashamed when He appears (for *His* elect - the *bride*). Let us look at the end of **1 John:2:29**: “...you know that everyone who *doeth* *righteousness* is *born* of Him.” It is *critical* that every believer who *hopes* to enjoy *eternal* *salvation* understand *exactly* what John is saying. He is saying that *only* those who *do* (or *practice*) *righteousness* are *truly* born of God and will be *ultimately* and *utterly* saved. We can *know* this by checking out what *other* scriptures say concerning this:

Hebrews 7:24–25 (KJV) “But *this* man, [*** Jesus**] because He *continueth* *ever*, hath an *unchangeable* priesthood. **25** Wherefore He is able also to *save* them to the *uttermost* that come unto God by Him, seeing He *ever* *liveth* to make *intercession* for them.” *** Added for clarity**

Psalms 1:6 (KJV) “For the LORD *knoweth* the way of the *righteous*: but the way of the *ungodly* shall *perish*.”

Psalms 15:1-5 (KJV) “LORD, who shall *abide* in *Thy* tabernacle? who shall dwell in *Thy* holy hill?
² He that *walketh* *uprightly*, and *worketh* *righteousness*, and speaketh the *truth* in his *heart*. ³ *He* that *backbiteth* *not* with his tongue, nor *doeth* *evil* to his neighbour, nor taketh up a *reproach* against his *neighbour*.
⁴ In *whose* eyes a *vile* person is *contemned*; but he honoureth them that *fear* the *LORD*. *He* that *swaureth* to his *own* *hurt*, and *changeth* *not*. ⁵ *He* that putteth *not* out his money to *usury*, nor taketh *reward* against the *innocent*. He that *doeth* *these* *things* shall *never* be moved.”

- The *Key Emphasis* of Psalm 15 *involves* what a person “*does* and *does not* do.”

Proverbs 11:4-6, 19 (KJV) “Riches profit *not* in the day of *wrath*: but *righteousness* *delivereth* from *death*.
⁵The *righteousness* of the *perfect* shall *direct* his way: but the *wicked* shall *fall* by his *own* *wickedness*. ⁶The

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righteousness of the upright shall *deliver* them: but *transgressors* shall be *taken in their own naughtiness*.¹⁹ As *righteousness tendeth* to life: so he that pursueth *evil* pursueth *it* to his *own death*.”

Ezekiel 18:20-28 (KJV) “The soul that *sinneth, it shall* die. The son shall *not* bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the *righteous* shall be upon *him*, and the *wickedness* of the *wicked* shall be upon *him*.²¹ But *if* the wicked will *turn* from *all* his *sins* that he hath *committed*, and keep *all* My statutes, and *do* that which is *lawful and right*, he shall surely *live*, he shall *not die*.²² All his *transgressions* that he *hath committed*, they shall *not* be mentioned unto him: in his *righteousness* that he hath *done* he shall live. ²³Have I any *pleasure* at *all* that the *wicked* should *die*? saith the Lord GOD: *and not* that he should *return* from his ways, *and live*? ²⁴But *when* the *righteous turneth away* from his *righteousness*, *and committeth iniquity, and doeth* according to all the *abominations* that the *wicked man doeth*, shall he *live*? *All his righteousness* that he *hath done* shall *not* be *mentioned: in* his *trespass* that he hath trespassed, *and* in his sin that he *hath sinned*, in *them* shall he *die*. ²⁵Yet ye say, The way of the *Lord* is *not equal*. Hear now, O house of Israel; *Is not My way equal? Are not your ways unequal?* ²⁶When a *righteous man turneth away from* his *righteousness*, and *committeth iniquity, and dieth in them*; for *his iniquity* that *he hath done* shall he *die*.²⁷ Again, when the *wicked man turneth away from* his *wickedness* that he hath *committed*, and *doeth* that which is *lawful and right*, he shall *save* his *soul alive*. ²⁸*Because* he *considereth, and turneth away from all* his *transgressions* that he hath *committed*, he shall *surely live*, he shall *not die*.”

- Verses 24 and 26 of **Ezekiel 18** should raise a big **red** flag to those who preach “*once saved always saved*,” or “*unconditional*” *security* (or any *other* false doctrine of *demons*). This is just *one* example of what I *warn* about, when I say that *every doctrine must* line up with the *entirety* of God’s Word. Sadly, many churches do a very *poor* job of teaching about “*salvation*” and what it means. I also believe many will stand before God to *answer* for that, because the blood of many people will be on their hands. Many will die *lost* because of their *false* teachings.

Matthew 5:20 (KJV) “*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*”

- We must understand that *most Pharisees* were *hypocrites* (see **Matthew chapter 23**)

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Romans 8:1 (KJV) “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*

- **Romans 8:1** affirms that one can be “in Christ” but be walking in the flesh rather than walking in the Spirit (see **Rom. 7:4-6; John 15:2,5,6; Matt. 7:21-23; 12:33**). ****KEY NOTE:** *most* “new” versions of the Bible **omit** the last half Romans 8:1, which actually transforms the verse into a “lie!”

It is important to realize that being “born again” by the Holy Spirit is not the end of the salvation process but rather it is the beginning of it. This is made clear in many scriptures, but particularly so in 1 Peter 1:3-9. Of course, what I just stated is contrary to what many teach today. I remind you that just because many people say something or believe something, that doesn’t mean it must be true. Check out the mainstream news and you should be able to figure out what I mean.

1 Peter 1:3-9 (KJV) “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,⁴To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: ⁷That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: ⁸Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: ⁹Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

- When a person is “born again” (spiritually), they have been truly “saved,” in the sense that they are no longer dead in their sins and no longer separated from God. They have been delivered (or saved, or rescued) from that spiritually “dead” condition. *But*, it is not yet a guaranteed eternal outcome for the individual, from which they cannot possibly fall (contrary to popular teachings).
- Peter is saying, in this passage, that we are born again unto a lively (or living) “hope” that we will one day be raised from the dead, just as Jesus was, and that we will receive a spirit body which will be incorruptible, immortal, and undefiled, and that we will inherit (or enter in to) “eternal life” and will spend eternity with, and in the presence of, God Almighty. Peter does Not say that we are born again to eternal salvation! He’s saying that now that we are born again, we have the hope of eternal

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salvation. I like to explain it this way: once we are *born again*, we have *begun* the *process* (or journey) of *inheriting eternal salvation*. Let me give one more analogy. Let's say I am planning a trip to Washington D. C. to visit the president. The first thing I have to do is to *prepare* and get *ready* for the trip. Well, if one is going to go be with God in *heaven*, we know from Scripture that no *sin*, or anything that is *defiled*, can enter the *kingdom of heaven* (**Rev. 21:27; 22:14**). I must *first realize* that I am "*lost*" (*separated* from God and *dead* in my sins). So, I need to *repent* and have my *sins washed away* by the *blood* of the Lamb. When I have been *born again*, I *receive* the *firstfruit* of the Holy Spirit. It is at *this* point that I am *now* ready to *begin* my *journey* to be *with Jesus* in *heaven*. The neat part is that *He will be with me* the *entirety* of my journey, since His *Spirit* will be *within* me and His Holy *Spirit* will *enable* me to *complete* the journey, *as long as I listen to Him and follow His Spirit's directions*. *But, if I don't listen* to the Holy *Spirit* or I *don't follow* the *Spirit's leading* (i.e. *walk in the Spirit*) or *if I just stop following Him, then*, I will *never* reach the *final destination*. I will either end up getting *lost* (either *dead in sins* or maybe on the *wrong* path) again, or *possibly I could* just *stop* or *sit down* and simply *go to sleep*, and *never finish* my journey. There are many things that *might distract* you and *prevent* you from reaching your *goal* in *life*. Once you have *begun* the journey, you need to be *careful* to *stay* (*continue*) the *course* and *finish* your *course*. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about this very thing:

- **2 Timothy 4:6-8 (KJV)** "For I am now ready to be *offered*, and the time of my *departure* is at hand. ⁷I have *fought* a *good* fight, I have *finished* my course, I have *kept the faith*:
⁸Henceforth there is *laid up for me* a crown of *righteousness*, which the Lord, the righteous judge, *shall* give me *at that day*: and *not to me only*, but unto *all them also* that *love His appearing*.
- Paul is saying that he has fought the *good* fight (many fights are *not* good), he *finished his course*. *Not everyone's *course* is the *same*, but, everyone *must finish their course properly*, *if* they wish to *inherit* the *prize* and *enter into* "*eternal Life*." Furthermore, to *finish* your course *properly*, you must "*keep the faith until physical death*." (**Rev. 2:10**)

Paul's first statement (verse 6) brings up another very *critical* point that many Christians *don't* often consider *carefully* enough. Paul knew he would *soon* be *killed*. He *understood* that *flesh* and *blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God* (**1 Cor. 15:50**). He *understood* what the writer of Hebrews meant concerning the *saints* in the Old Testament, when he wrote about their *lives* and exploits of *faith*:

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Hebrews 11:13-16 (KJV) ¹³These *all died in faith*, *not* having *received* the *promises*, but having *seen* them afar *off*, and were *persuaded of them*, and *embraced them*, and *confessed* that they were *strangers and pilgrims on the earth*. ¹⁴For they that say such things declare *plainly* that they *seek* a *country*. ¹⁵And *truly*, *if* they had been *mindful* of that *country* from whence they *came out*, they *might* have had *opportunity* to have *returned*. ¹⁶But *now* they desire a *better country*, that is, an *heavenly*: wherefore God is *not ashamed* to be *called* their God: for *He* hath prepared for *them* a city.”

Sadly, I hear people today talking like they *already have* the *promises*. They *claim* it *cannot* be *lost* or *forfeited*, *because* someone *told* them so. They have *not read*, and *carefully studied*, their Bible (the *fine* print). Look at *verse 15* above. I have seen many people who *declared* themselves to be “*saved*” (claiming that they *already have eternal* life) and then *turned back* into the *sin* and *bondage* that they *had been delivered from* (much like the dog *returning* to his *own vomit* or the *sow* that *was washed* to her *wallowing in the mire*, etc.). *Some may eventually* come to their *senses* and *repent* and *get back on the road* to “*eternal* salvation” but, *far too many* will *not*! Were they *ever saved*? *Maybe*, in the *sense* that they *may* have been *delivered* from their ‘*spiritually dead*’ condition, at *one* time. The Bible has *hundreds* of *warnings* about *departing from God*; *backsliding*; *being led astray by false teachers*; *being drawn away by your own lusts*; *about pride*; *casting away your confidence (faith)*; *being offended*; *about trying to establish your own righteousness*; *ignoring a root of bitterness*; *leaving your first love*; *hardening your heart toward God*; *rebelling against God, His Word, or His Holy Spirit*; and many *other* possibilities. This is *why* we are told to *examine ourselves to see if we are really in the faith* (in **2 Corinthians 13:5**). Believe it or *not*, it is *not difficult* to *separate* yourself *from* God and to *not* even be *consciously aware* of it happening.

Philippians 3:12-16 (KJV) “*Not* as though I had *already attained*, either were *already perfect*: but I *follow after*, *if* that I *may apprehend* that for which *also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus*. ¹³Brethren, I *count not myself* to have apprehended: but *this one thing I do*, *forgetting* those *things* which are *behind*, and *reaching forth* unto *those things* which are *before*, ¹⁴I *press toward* the *mark* for the *prize* of the *high calling* of God *in Christ Jesus*. ¹⁵Let *us* therefore, *as many as be perfect*, be *thus minded*: and *if* in *any thing* ye be *otherwise minded*, God *shall reveal even this unto you*. ¹⁶Nevertheless, *whereto we have already attained*, let us *walk by the same rule*, let us *mind* the *same thing*.”

It is clear that the apostle Paul did *not* consider *himself* to have *already attained eternal salvation*, in its fullest sense, but he *determined in his heart* to *continue* to *press on toward the goal* and for the *prize* of the

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upward call of God *in* Christ Jesus. This is referring to the *actual redemption* of his *body*, when Jesus *returns* for His *church* (His *body*, His *people*). This event is commonly called the “*rapture*.” I will have *more* on this *later*. In *verses 15 and 16*, Paul is saying that *mature Christians* should have the *same attitude* that *he* has. They should *continue* to “*practice*” and *pursue* the *righteousness* and *holiness* of *God* and *especially* the *resurrection* of God unto *eternal life*. Mature Christians do *not rely* on past *virtuous deeds* or *achievements*, *nor* do they *dwell* upon past *sins* and *failures*. *Instead*, *mature Christians remain focused upon Jesus and on following Him, and His directions*, as *delivered* by the Holy Ghost.

Romans 8:22-23 (KJV) “For *we know* that the *whole creation* groaneth and *travaileth* in *pain* together until *now*. ²³And *not only they*, but *ourselves also*, which *have* the *firstfruits* of the Spirit, even *we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting* for the *adoption, to wit, the redemption* of our *body*.”

Both **Phil. 3:12-16** and **Rom. 8:22-23** point to the *future achieving* of the *eternal* salvation of our *souls*, when *Christ* will *redeem* our *bodies*. **Rom. 8:23** makes it clear that Paul, and *all other believers* who are *born again*, have received the *firstfruits* of the Spirit, but, are *still waiting* for the “*adoption*,” which *coincides with* the *redemption* of our *bodies*. This event is what many call the *rapture* or the *catching away* of God’s church.

Revelation 2:10-11 (KJV) “Fear *none* of those *things* which thou *shalt suffer*: behold, the *devil* shall *cast some* of you into *prison, that ye may be tried*; and ye *shall have tribulation ten days*: be thou *faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*. ¹¹He that hath an *ear*, let him *hear* what the Spirit saith unto the *churches*; He that *overcometh* shall *not be hurt* of the *second death*.”

This passage was *revealed* to John by God through His *angel* (**Rev.1:1**) and this passage was *directed* to the *church* at *Smyrna*, in particular, *and* to *us* as well. It is *clear* from this passage (and those above – **1 Pet. 1:3-9; Phil. 3:12-16; Rom. 8:22-23**) that we *will* be *tested* (*after* being *born again*) and that the *culmination* of our *eternal* salvation is *still in* the *future*. Remember, it is *reserved* for us *in heaven*. *Since* that is the *case*, then we certainly have *not entered into* it yet. If we have to *reserve* a motel room, it’s *always* for a *future* time. That is what *reservations* are *about* and *for*, by *definition*. (Also see **Ps. 119:112; Matt. 10:22; 24:9-13; Mark 13:13; Heb. 3:12-14; 10:35-39** and others).

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The Word of God teaches us that to actually *receive* “eternal salvation” that a believer must not only be *born again* by the *Word* of God (1 Pet. 1:23) *and* by the *Spirit* of God (John 3:5), but he also must *endure* (or *persevere*) in *this faith* (and *love*) until *physical death*, while *also* living a life of *holiness* and *godliness*, which *produces fruit* of the Spirit *and good works*. A person whose “*new life*” reflects *these* attributes, however long (or short) this *new* life lasts, *will receive* the *promises* and *inheritance* of God - in the *next* life (Heb. 11:13-16,39). **Caution:** We must *not* fall into the *trap* of thinking that *because* we practice *godliness* and *righteousness* that we *will* be saved...**NO!** This is a *snare* of the *devil!* *Our righteousness* is as *filthy rags* (Isaiah 64:6). *Only* the *righteousness* of *Christ* can *save* and *justify!* We *must remain* “*in Christ,*” and *continue* to practice *righteousness*, and our *faith*, with *agape love* being our *motivation* in *all* the *good* works that we *walk* in (1 Cor. 16:14). This, my *friends*, is the *lifestyle* of *true* believers.

Titus 2:11-14 (KJV) “For the *grace* of God that *bringeth salvation* hath appeared to *all* men, ¹² Teaching us that, *denying ungodliness* and *worldly lusts*, we should *live soberly, righteously, and godly*, in *this present* world; ¹³Looking for that *blessed hope, and the glorious appearing* of the great *God and our Saviour* Jesus Christ; ¹⁴Who gave Himself for us, that *He might redeem* us from *all iniquity*, and *purify* unto *Himself* a *peculiar* people, zealous of *good works.*”

The “*blessed hope*” (V13) that Paul refers to is when Christ *actually redeems* (and *glorifies*) our bodies, raising them up and *changing* them so we *can* live with Him *forever!* This event, which is commonly referred to as either the “*rapture*” of the church, *or* the “*catching away*” of the church, *or also* as the *first resurrection*, *or also* as the *resurrection* unto *life*; and it is the *next event* on the “*eschatological calendar*” (of “*end time*” events). This event has been *referred* to in several scriptures *prior* to this point (**Rom. 8:23** and **1 Pet. 1:3-9** especially). It is important to understand that this “*rapture*” *could possibly* occur at any *moment!* There are *no* prophecies that need to be *fulfilled* before this event occurs, like there are before Christ’s *second advent* can occur. We must remember that when a person is *born again*, their *body* (or *flesh*) is *not changed* or given a *new nature*, but their *spirit is*. Their *spirit was* “*dead*” but, when “*born again,*” it is made *alive, or ‘quickened’* by the *Word and* the Holy Spirit. So the *spirit is changed* but the *body is not*. When Christ returns to “*catch away* His *bride,*” He will *first raise* the *bodies* of those who have *died ‘in Christ.’* Their bodies will be raised as *immortal, powerful, ‘glorified’ spiritual* bodies. They will *no longer* be *flesh* and *blood* bodies, *because flesh* and *blood cannot inherit* the kingdom of God (**1 Cor. 15:50**). The *new ‘spirit bodies’* will have different, and

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much better, attributes than our former *flesh* bodies did, and they will *never wear out* or *die*. We will look briefly at a few scriptures dealing with this event, which many call the *rapture* or the “*catching away*” of the church of God (or the *bride of Christ*).

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (KJV) “But I would *not* have you to be *ignorant*, brethren, concerning them which are *asleep*, that ye sorrow *not*, even as *others* which have *no hope*. ¹⁴For *if* we believe that Jesus died and rose again, *even so them also* which *sleep in Jesus* will *God* bring *with Him*. ¹⁵For this we say unto you by the *word* of the Lord, that we which are *alive and remain* unto the *coming* of the *Lord* shall *not prevent them* which are *asleep*. ¹⁶For the Lord *Himself* shall *descend* from *heaven* with a shout, with the *voice of the archangel*, and with the *trump* of God: and the *dead in Christ* shall *rise first*: ¹⁷*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. ¹⁸Wherefore *comfort one another* with *these words*.”

This is *one* of the most *well known* scriptures describing the *first resurrection* (that is, *unto Life*) of the *bodies* of the *saints* of God. It describes how Jesus will bring *with Him* the *spirits and souls* (or *inner man*) of those who have *previously died “in Christ.”* It briefly describes the *resurrection* of their bodies and how they will *rise* to meet Jesus in the *clouds in the air*. Jesus does *not* come to Earth at *this* time, *as* He *will at* His *second advent* and the battle of *Armageddon*. *After* the *dead bodies* are raised, *as spiritual bodies*, unto *eternal life*, those who are *still alive and are in Christ (remaining on planet Earth)* *will be caught up together with* them, *in the air*, to meet the Lord also. Their bodies will *also* be *changed* into *immortal, powerful, incorruptible, “glorified” spirit bodies* – “*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump!*” (1 Cor. 15:51-53) It should be *noted* that *this 2nd group* of saints comprise a *unique group*, since they will *never die* a *physical death*! They will simply be *transformed* or *translated* from living beings with flesh and blood bodies *directly* into living beings with *spirit bodies*! *Then all* who were raised up to meet Jesus in the clouds (*in the air*) will be *with Him forever* from that moment on. We are to *comfort* one another with *these words*! This event will be *one* of the greatest *miracles* God *will work in* mankind! What a *comfort* it is to know that God has *promised* to do this *extraordinary miracle*!

1 Corinthians 15:42–46, 50–55 “So also *is the resurrection* of the *dead*. It is *sown in corruption*; it is *raised in incorruption*: ⁴³It is *sown in dishonour*; it is *raised in glory*: it is *sown in weakness*; it is *raised in power*: ⁴⁴It is *sown a natural body*; it is *raised a spiritual body*. There is a *natural body*, *and* there is a *spiritual*

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body. ⁴⁵And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [***Jesus**] *was made a quickening spirit*. ⁴⁶Howbeit that *was not first spiritual*, but that which is *natural*; and *afterward* that which is *spiritual*, ⁵⁰Now this I say, brethren, that *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*; *neither doth corruption inherit* incorruption. ⁵¹Behold, I show you a *mystery*; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²*In a moment*, in the *twinkling of an eye*, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be *changed*. ⁵³For this corruptible must put on *incorruption*, and this mortal must put on *immortality*. ⁵⁴So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, *Death is swallowed up in victory*. ⁵⁵*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*” * **Added for clarity**

These two passages (*1 Thess. 4:13-18 and 1 Cor. 15:42-55*) further clarify this “*resurrection unto eternal life*” that is promised by God for His elect. This event is also called the “**First resurrection**.” Paul explains that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (**V50**) and how not every believer will necessarily die **physically**, but that all will be “**changed**” (at the time of the *rapture*) when their bodies are *redeemed and glorified*. It is at this time that “**death**” is swallowed up in victory (**V53-57**). When this happens, it also fulfills Jesus’ prophecy (in **Matt. 16:18**), “...I will build **My** church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

We already can *understand* that “*physical death*” is the gate (or gateway) to **hell**, and God’s **Word** points to this *rapture* as the moment when Christ Jesus will actually consummate His *triumph and His power over death*.

Note: The word “Hades” is used in newer English translations instead of hell (or the unseen world of departed spirits of men) where the wicked are kept in a conscious state of torment until their resurrection unto judgment and eternal death, at the end of the millennial (or **1,000 year**) reign of Christ and His saints, on the Earth. (**Rev. 20:1-15**). Hades was also the place of confinement of the “righteous” souls prior to the resurrection of Christ. At **His resurrection**, Christ reclaimed all these captive souls from “**paradise**” (the temporary comforting compartment of Hades for the departed righteous souls awaiting resurrection) and He took them to heaven, **with** Him, when He ascended on high (see **Eph. 4:8-10; Heb. 2:14-15**). Hades (Hell) was robbed of its victory (through *death*) at *that* time, as far as saints are concerned. At this present time, death still “stings” the Christian and will do so until the end of the first resurrection event (also called the “rapture”).

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Hopefully, this will help to understand the passages above. When *truly saved* Christians *die now*, their “*inner man*” (*soul and spirit*) go *immediately* to be with Jesus in *heaven*. This is *why* He brings *them with* Him when He returns to *Earth’s atmosphere from Heaven* to “catch away” His *elect*, since He will (at that time) *reunite* each saint’s *inner man* with their “*newly*” *resurrected spirit body*. This *resurrection* is the “*final step*” (or *consummation*) of our *eternal* salvation process; the “*redemption and glorification of our spirit bodies*.” This is when the *actual* “*adoption*” as *children of God occurs*, by Jesus Christ (**Eph. 1:5; Rom. 8:23** etc.).

Hebrews 9:28 (KJV) “So Christ was *once* offered to bear the *sins* of *many*; and *unto them that look for Him* shall He *appear the second time without sin* unto *salvation*.”

- The writer of Hebrews describes how *all living believers*, including himself, are eagerly *waiting* for Christ to appear again (*not* for *sin*, but) to *complete* His *eternal salvation* process.

Lamentations 3:24-26 (KJV) “The LORD *is my portion*, saith my *soul*; therefore will I *hope* in Him. ²⁵The LORD *is good* unto them that *wait* for Him, to the soul that *seeketh* Him. ²⁶It *is good* that a man should *both hope and* quietly *wait* for the *salvation* of the LORD.”

- Even the prophet, *Jeremiah*, eloquently described this *process* in the Old Testament. I often *remind myself* that: I *know who holds my future*, and I *know who holds my hand*; with **God** things *don’t just happen, everything* (by **Him**) is *planned*. **Hallelujah! Praise His Holy Name!!**

As believers, we *must* understand that the things that we “*practice*” (which would be the things that we *do or exercise* during *our* life) have a tremendous impact on our *spiritual* and *eternal* outcome! We will examine a *few* scriptures to *illustrate* what I am talking about.

1 John 1:5-7 (KJV) “This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is *light*, and in **Him** is *no darkness at all*. ⁶**If** we *say* that we have *fellowship* with Him, and *walk* in *darkness*, we *lie*, and do *not* the *truth*. ⁷But **if** we *walk in the light*, **as He is in the light**, we *have* fellowship *one with another*, **and the blood** of Jesus Christ His Son *cleanseth* us from *all sin*.”

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- John makes it clear that believers must practice truth and walk in the light, **if** we wish to have *fellowship* with God *and with one another, as believers*. **If** we do this, then the blood of Jesus will cleanse us from all sin. (Also look at **2 John 4** and **3 John 4**).

Matthew 7:21-23 (KJV) “**Not every** one that *saith* unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the *kingdom of heaven*; but he that **doeth** the **will** of My Father which is in heaven. ²²Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, I **never** knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.”

In **Matthew 7:21**, Jesus warns that *not all* who *believe* will make it into the kingdom of heaven. *Only* those who *do* (*practice*) *the will of the Father* will make it. Many, who have prophesied in His name, cast out demons in His name, and done many *wonders* in His name will **not** make it! They *believed* and *did good works* too! But *the one thing* that kept them *out* is in **V23** – “...depart from Me, you who *work iniquity!*” These were believers and God worked through them *but* they *continued* to “*practice*” *lawlessness (some form of sin)*! We must *never forget* that those who “*practice iniquity*” (*sin*) will **not** make it into heaven!! This is because *iniquity* (and *sin*) *separates* you from God!

- **Isaiah 59:2 (KJV)** “But *your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face* from you, that He will **not** hear.”
- **1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (KJV)** “Know ye **not** that the *unrighteous* shall **not** inherit the *kingdom of God*? Be **not deceived**: neither *fornicators*, nor *idolaters*, nor *adulterers*, nor *effeminate*, nor *abusers of themselves with mankind*, ¹⁰Nor *thieves*, nor *covetous*, nor *drunkards*, nor *revilers*, nor *extortioners*, shall *inherit* the *kingdom* of God.”

There is **no ambiguity** in what the two passages above are saying. It is for *this very reason* that the doctrines of “*once saved always saved*” or “*unconditional eternal security*” (as is *commonly* taught) is such a *terrible lie*! It is truly a “*doctrine of demons (or devils)*” (**1 Tim. 4:1**). There are many who will **not** endure sound doctrine in churches today. They have “*itching ears*” and run to teachers that will tell them what they *want to hear*, even though it is **not** the “*truth!*” (**2 Tim. 4:3**) They *do not love the truth* and for *this reason* they will *die* believing the *lie* and will be *eternally damned*. **Isaiah**, warned about these people too, *hundreds of years before Paul*:

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Isaiah 30:9-13 (KJV) “That this *is* a *rebellious* people, *lying* children, children *that will not hear* the law of the LORD: ¹⁰Which say *to the seers, See not*; and *to the prophets, Prophecy not* unto us *right things, speak* unto us *smooth things, prophesy deceits*: ¹¹Get you *out of the way*, turn aside *out of the path, cause* the Holy One of Israel to *cease* from before us. ¹²Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, *Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon*: ¹³Therefore *this iniquity* shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose *breaking cometh suddenly at an instant*.”

- What an accurate description of many who *claim* to be ‘Christians’ today. They are *rebellious*, they *won’t hear the truth*; they are *liars*; they want to *hear* what *they want to hear*; they want ‘*out of the way*’ (remember, **Jesus is the way and the truth**); they want to turn *aside, out of the path*; and they want the Holy One of Israel (*Jesus*) to *cease* from before them (they *won’t* follow Jesus)! It is a **fact** that their *despising and rejecting of God’s Word and their continued unrepentant iniquity and perversion* will cause the *righteous* judgment of God to come upon them *suddenly*! And *His* righteous judgments *endure forever* (**Psalm 119:160**)!

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 (KJV) “*Even him [the antichrist]*, whose coming is after the *working of Satan* with all *power and signs and lying wonders*, ¹⁰And with all *deceivableness of unrighteousness* in them that *perish; because* they received *not the love of the truth*, that they *might* be saved. ¹¹And for *this cause* **God** shall send them *strong delusion*, that they should believe a lie: ¹²That they *all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*.” ***added for clarity**

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 is speaking about the coming of the antichrist, but, that “*spirit*” is already here (see **1 John 4:1-4**). It was already here when John wrote the epistle **1 John** in the first century A.D. These *false doctrines* are part of the “*unrighteous deception*” (V10) that unrighteous people *want* to believe, so they can *continue* to have *pleasure* in their *unrighteous deeds*! And, *because they don’t love the truth, God will* send them a *strong delusion* that they should *believe* the *lie* and they will *all* be *damned*, because they will *continue* to “*practice*” the *unrighteousness* that they take pleasure in. Now, *because I love the truth*, I wish to *speak* the truth to anyone who will listen; *and* I wish to *do* the truth (*i.e. practice truth*) as well. Read **1 Kings chapter 22** for an Old Testament example of **God** sending *lying spirits (a strong delusion)* to Ahab, just as the prophet Micaiah revealed to Ahab. This is also recorded in **2 Chronicles chapter 18** as well.

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The *primary principle* that applies in what I am *trying* to convey is the principle of “**sowing and reaping**.” It is spelled out very succinctly in the apostle Paul’s epistle to the *Galatians*. It is seen *throughout* the Bible.

Galatians 6:7-8 (KJV) “Be *not* deceived; God is *not* mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. ⁸For he that soweth to his *flesh* shall of the *flesh* reap *corruption*; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap *life everlasting*.”

When we *practice* things of the *flesh*, we are “*sowing*” to the *flesh* and it *will* reap *corruption* (or *death*). This is also affirmed by **Galatians 5:19-21 (KJV)** “Now the works of the *flesh* are manifest, which are *these*; *Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like*: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Galatians 5:22-23 (KJV) “But the *fruit* of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

When we (by *faith*) *practice spiritual* things, such as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, righteousness, godliness, holiness, love etc., then we *will* reap *everlasting life*. How *simple* this really is!

Jesus often used *agricultural* analogies, parables, and principles (in a *metaphorical* sense) to demonstrate principles in the *moral* and *spiritual* realms (see **Job 4:8; Prov.1:31-33; Hos. 8:7; 10:12; Matt. 13:1-44** and *many* others). One *key* factor in the agricultural realm obviously involves what “*type*” of fruit (or crop) is produced? Is it *good* fruit or *bad* fruit?

Matthew 7:15 - 20 (KJV) ¹⁵Beware of *false* prophets, which come to you in *sheep’s* clothing, but inwardly they are ravening *wolves*. ¹⁶Ye shall **know** them by their *fruits*. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? ¹⁷Even so every **good** tree bringeth forth *good fruit*; but a **corrupt** tree bringeth forth *evil fruit*. ¹⁸A *good* tree *cannot* bring forth *evil* fruit, neither *can* a *corrupt* tree bring forth *good* fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that bringeth *not* forth *good fruit* is *hewn down, and cast into the fire*. ²⁰Wherefore by their *fruits* ye shall know them.”

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- This is very straight forward. We reap what we sow. If you live *godly* lives, you will reap *eternal life and blessings in the presence of God*. If you do live *ungodly* lives, *you will be damned and suffer eternal torment with no hope of ever improving you lot*. Furthermore, you will wish to die (in order to *escape* the torment), but, you will not be able to do so.

Luke 6:39-49 (KJV) “And He spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they *not both* fall into the ditch? ⁴⁰The disciple is *not* above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be *as* his master. ⁴¹And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy *brother’s* eye, but *perceivest not* the beam that is in thine *own* eye? ⁴²Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, *let me pull out the mote* that is in *thine* eye, when thou thyself *beholdest not* the beam that is in thine *own* eye? Thou *hypocrite*, cast out *first* the beam out of *thine own* eye, and *then* shalt thou *see clearly* to pull out the mote that is in thy *brother’s* eye. ⁴³For a *good* tree bringeth *not* forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a *corrupt* tree bring forth *good* fruit. ⁴⁴For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. ⁴⁵A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for *of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh*. ⁴⁶And *why* call ye *Me*, Lord, Lord, and do *not* the things which I say? ⁴⁷Whosoever cometh to *Me*, and *heareth* My sayings, and *doeth* them, I will show you to whom he is like: ⁴⁸He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the *foundation on a rock*: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, *and could not shake it*: for it was *founded upon a rock*. ⁴⁹But he that *heareth*, and doeth *not*, is like a man that *without a foundation* built an *house upon the earth*; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and *immediately* it *fell*; and the *ruin of that house was great*.”

These two parables (above) portray two deadly forms of “hypocrisy” that are *not at all uncommon* among believers. We are *not immune* to *hypocrisy*! Because *no* person is *immune* to *hypocrisy*, we must frequently “*check*” ourselves.

2 Corinthians 13:5 (KJV) “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own* selves. Know ye *not* your own selves, how that Jesus Christ *is in you*, *except* ye be *reprobates*?”

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It may be a very *humbling* experience to examine ourselves, to see if we are *truly* “in the faith” or if we are in the “*flesh*.” It is *not* hard to tell whether we are *practicing* (or *exhibiting*) the fruit of the Spirit or the works of the flesh! One passage gives a good overview of *both*: (although covered earlier, I will list it again)

Galatians 5:19-23 (KJV) “Now the *works of the flesh* are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,** ²³**Meekness, temperance:** *against* such there is no law.”

Some *other fruit of the Spirit* would include *righteousness, humility, mercy, godliness, holiness, forgiveness, and truthfulness*. There are *other* works of the *flesh* listed in *other* verses as well. It is very obvious that we would all be well advised to obey (*do, practice*) **2 Cor. 13:5** by examining our “fruit” and our “works” to see where we *really* stand. It only took ONE sin for Adam and Eve to be separated from God. We know that iniquity and sin will separate us from God also! (**Isa 59:2**)

1 John 1:9 (KJV) says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

If we obey 1 John 1:9 by “confessing” our sin (*repenting and turning from the sin, and back to God*), we have confidence that He will forgive us and cleanse us from our sin. The “*problem*” is that *if we “practice” sin (any sin), then we are not truly repentant and we will die in our sins*. This is pretty clear, from the *Word*.

So, this raises some questions for everyone who confesses to be a *Christian*; or a *follower of Christ*; or a *Believer in God*:

1. Are you “*practicing*” what you *preach*?
2. Are you a “*doer*” of the *Word* or a “*hearer*” only?
3. Are you “*honestly*” examining yourself and truly repenting of the sins you *have been practicing*?

The answers to these questions could dramatically impact (or even determine) your eternal end.

Sadly, many people ignore simple (or *easy*) “*choices*,” and the consequences can be *very catastrophic*.

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There is a saying that goes something like this: “What is *easy to do*, is *also easy to not do*.” Can we really *afford* to ignore this “*simple*” task?

You can drive your new vehicle for a long time, without checking or changing the oil, but *eventually* the engine will *suddenly* and *catastrophically* die. I would *not* recommend trying this with your *walk* with **God**. Just as it is *easy* to check and *change* the *oil* in your vehicle, it is easy to check and *change* your *walk* with **God**. Please *don't ignore it* or *neglect* it and let it “*slip*.” It is a *sure* thing that *if it slips*, it *will* slip *backwards*! The Bible has much to say about *backsliding*. It isn't *always* fatal, but it is *never* a good thing to *ignore* it! Every *believer* must remain *aware* that he has an *enemy*. The Bible gives us *many warnings* concerning *him*. I can *assure* you that he is *serious* about trying to *kill* you *spiritually*, *if not physically as well*. I give you *two* of the warnings, *hopefully* you will *heed* them: **John 10:10 (KJV)** “*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*”

- The *devil* wants to *steal* your *joy* and your *peace*. He wants to *kill you*, both *physically* and *spiritually*. He also wants to *destroy* your *relationship* with *Jesus* and your *testimony* for *Christ*.

1 Peter 5:8-11 (KJV) “Be *sober*, be *vigilant*; *because your adversary* the *devil*, as a *roaring lion*, walketh about, *seeking whom he may devour*: ⁹Whom *resist stedfast in the faith*, knowing that the *same afflictions* are *accomplished* in your *brethren* that are in the *world*. ¹⁰But the God of all *grace*, who hath *called us* unto His *eternal* glory by *Christ Jesus*, *after* that ye have *suffered a while*, make you *perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you*. ¹¹To *Him* be *glory and dominion for ever and ever*. Amen.”

- *All* believers have this *adversary*! Don't *hide* from him or try to *ignore* him! That *won't* work. By *faith*, you must *resist* him! He wants to *devour* you! **If** you *obey* the *Word*, the **God** of all grace, *after* that ye have *suffered* a while, *will* make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

Praise His Holy Name!! Thank Him for His Mercy and Grace!!

2 Timothy 3:12-14 (KJV) “Yea, and *all* that will live *godly in Christ Jesus* shall *suffer persecution*. ¹³But *evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived*. ¹⁴But *continue thou* in the things which thou hast *learned* and hast been *assured* of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;”

- As a *believer*, rest assured, you *will suffer persecution*. God *tests* the genuineness of His saints' *faith*, but He has *promised* He will *never leave you nor forsake you* (**Heb. 13:5**). When you go

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through the *fire*, He will be right there with you! It is called the “**Refiner’s Fire**,” and it is meant for your *good*! It *too*, is part of the *process*. *He loves His saints*, and **He** who *began* a good work in you *will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*. (**Phil. 1:6**) There is most definitely a “Cost” to being a follower of *Jesus*, but, it’s *small*, when compared to what one will *gain* in the end. *Never lose sight of the end!*

2 Corinthians 4:14-17 (KJV) “Knowing that *He* which *raised up* the Lord Jesus shall raise up *us also* by *Jesus*, and shall present *us* with you. ¹⁵For *all* things *are* for *your* sakes, that the *abundant grace might* through the thanksgiving of many *redound* to the *glory* of *God*. ¹⁶For which cause *we faint not*; but though our *outward man perish*, yet the *inward man is renewed day by day*. ¹⁷For our *light affliction*, which is but for a *moment*, worketh for *us* a far more *exceeding and eternal* weight of *glory*;

With all these things in mind, let me go back *once more* to what I covered concerning the fact that “What is *easy to do*, is also *easy to not do*.” Please, do *not* take the “*examining of yourself*” lightly.

Hebrews 2:1-4 (KJV) “Therefore we ought to give the more *earnest heed* to the things which we have *heard*, lest at any time we should *let them slip*. ²For *if* the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and *every transgression and disobedience* received a *just* recompense of *reward*; ³*How shall we escape, if we neglect* so *great salvation*; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was *confirmed* unto *us* by them that *heard him*; ⁴**God also bearing them witness**, both with *signs and wonders*, and with divers *miracles*, and *gifts of the Holy Ghost*, according to His *own will*?”

The *easiest* way to “**neglect**” one’s salvation that I can think of is to “*assume*” we *can’t lose* it, and then *continue to practice* some sort of *sin*. When we “*neglect*” *anything* in life, we run the risk of losing that which we *had*. **If** we are *not careful* to *maintain* our home, it will *fall apart eventually*. This *same* principle applies for our *automobile*, our *body*, and even for our *relationships*! **If** we neglect our *marriage*, we will one day see its *demise*. Moreover, **if** we neglect our *Salvation*, we *could* also see its **forfeiture** (*reversal* or *undoing*). This is *not* commonly taught in many *religious* circles, but the *Bible* actually *does* support this teaching. We must be *careful* to realize this important *truth*, which has *many applications* in life.

Hebrews 2:3 asks: “How shall we escape, **if** we **neglect** so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him?”

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Probably one of the best ways to “*not neglect*” our salvation is to make it a “*habit*” to *practice* the “*presence of God*.” By this, I’m talking about *keeping the following attitude uppermost* in our *mind* at all times:

“I have *yielded* my *body* to **God** as a *living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God*! He dwells in me and is with me *everywhere* I go, and He is *fully aware* of *everything* I do, whether *secret or not*. Therefore, I must do nothing that I would not do, if He were present; say nothing that I would not want Him to hear me say; and go nowhere that I have any doubt that He wants me to go.”

If we would follow these simple guidelines, our lives would be more *joyful* and more *victorious* (over sin). Furthermore, God *would* make us prosperous in all things in life. What a *difference* it would make in our lives!