

Bible Trek Ministries

www.bibletrek.com

The Three Most Important Things To Know Regarding Our *RELATIONSHIP* With God.

Excerpted from Bible Trek Lesson 4

As we already know God is in the **RELATIONSHIP** business, not the **RELIGION** business. As we also have seen: God is a God of His word, He is utterly fair, totally merciful, and He is seeking to have a “LOVE RELATIONSHIP” with each one of us. God also is willing to enter into covenant relationships with man as evidenced by the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and the New Covenants. In other words, God will make a contract with us and He will not break it. *The question is will we enter into this covenant with God?*

The three things to know are these:

1. How do I enter into this relationship with God?
2. What do I have to do to maintain this relationship?
3. Can I lose this relationship once I have it?

Notice that if you substitute the word religion here instead of relationship you lose the true meaning of the sentence.

Why is this critical? According to a USA Today study (USA Today, December 5, 1997) *43% of all Americans state they are "born again*."*

**for our purposes the term will mean committed in a relationship with Jesus Christ.*

Yet, surprisingly, according to another study also published by USA Today just 4 days later (USA Today Dec. 9, 1997):

- 50% of those polled stated that they feel that when they are approaching life's end, they will be CUT OFF from God.

- *56% stated that they are concerned that they won't be forgiven by God.*

HOW CAN YOU ABSOLUTELY KNOW FOR SURE?

1. HOW DO I ENTER INTO THIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

The Jews thought (wrongly) that their relationship with God depended on whether they observed the Law and followed the Levitical system. This is why Jesus was so angry with the priests--because they had the Word of God (there were no mass produced Bibles then) and the people did not. The people relied on the priests to tell them how to have a relationship with God. The priests stressed the “doing” of the Law as religious duty rather than the “spirit” of the Law (following God because you love Him, He loves you and you have realized that all you have and your eternal hope is a result of God’s relationship with you). His guidelines are there to make your life better, not to crimp your style. The family (God’s invention) is intended to be a living example of how this relationship is played out: accepted from the beginning, with all our faults, based on our position in the family not our performance in the family. (Read the account of the prodigal son for God’s view of this relationship in Luke 15:11-32).

Therefore, Jesus was a major radical when He claimed that God was not interested in their “doing” of the law (sacrifices), but in their relationship with God.

As we have already seen, Christianity is the **ONLY** religious system in the world where God comes to man. All other Systems require you to:

1. Go to God by working your way, making yourself acceptable.
2. Be enlightened to become like God.
3. Die and return eternally over and over again until you achieve Godhood, etc.

Jesus, on the other hand, comes to us to **redeem** us from the “*Prince of this world*” (Satan -John 12:31,John 14:30,John 16:11).

(Redemption in the Greek is likened to redeeming a slave from the slave market: a price had to be paid, and the slave released to a new way of life). We enter into a relationship with Christ by accepting this free gift.

THE WORD GOSPEL MEANS "GOOD NEWS"

The "bad news" is:

Rom. 3:23 ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The "good news" is:

Rom. 5:8 ... but God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The "bad news" is:

Rom. 6:23 ... for the wages of sin is death...

The "good news" is:

...but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Rom. 8:1... therefore, there is now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus...*

*Rom. 10:9... that if you **confess with your mouth**, "Jesus is Lord," **and believe in your heart** that God raised him from the dead, **you will be saved.***

*Rom 10:10 ... for it is with your heart that you believe and are **justified**, and it is with your mouth that you **confess and are saved.***

THEREFORE, ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE, THE ONLY WAY TO ESCAPE ETERNAL CONDEMNATION AND BE "SAVED" IS TO:

- 1 Believe in your heart*
- 2 Confess with your mouth*

These verses (Rom. 10:9, 10) make it very clear that our **ONLY** action to enter into this contract or covenant relationship is these two things: **believe** and **confess**. Notice also there is **no “conditional” IF** in this contract: it is **not** conditional; therefore it is **unconditional** and eternal. Just as in the Abrahamic Covenant when God’s action of walking through the blood alone signifies that Abraham has no part in insuring the contract will happen, even so, Jesus’ action (dying on the cross, pouring out His Blood to show us that He is the guarantor of the covenant) shows us that we have no part from a “doing” perspective, other than accepting this gift. Just to make sure, however, let’s look at this verse.

*Eph 1:13 ... and you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the **gospel** of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a **seal, the promised Holy Spirit, (New Covenant)***

*Eph 1:14 ... who is the **guarantee** of our inheritance until the redemption of the **purchased possession**, to the praise of **his** glory.*

The picture here is to be sealed; like a wax seal used in shipping during the time of the Bible, it signified ownership. *“This bag is not to be tampered with until it reaches its final destination.”* The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the guarantee that we are “saved” (this is also not to be confused what some would call the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” – All believers are Holy Spirit indwelt – the gifts of the Spirit are a separate issue).

VERY, VERY, VERY IMPORTANT:

According to the Bible, our salvation is based on what Jesus did, not on what we have done!

Eph. 2: ... for it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--

Eph. 2:9 ... not by works, so that no one can boast.

Eph. 2:10 ... for we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

This is one of the most important verses in the Bible. **By grace, by faith, gift of God, not by works!** It is hard for me to understand how churches

can twist this doctrine into something it clearly states it cannot be. Salvation is by grace and cannot be earned!

GRACE MEANS:

G **GOD'S**
R **RICHES**
A **AT**
C **CHRIST'S**
E **EXPENSE**

It is an **undeserved** present, a free gift.

“Through faith” = believing *is action!*

Illustration: A tightrope walker set up his line across Niagara Falls and then walked across it. When he returned across the wire, he had gathered a large crowd. He asked them, “Can I do it again?” “Yes” they exclaimed. He then placed a large wheelbarrow on the wire. “Do you think I can walk across Niagara Falls with this wheelbarrow?” “You can do it!” yelled the crowd. “Then, someone hop in!” he cried.

Faith is getting in the wheelbarrow. Many people say they believe in Jesus, but they don't hop on.

Believing in Jesus does not make you saved!

In James 2:19, **the Bible declares that even the demons believe (the difference is that while they believe in Jesus, He is not their Lord) so believing in Jesus (that He existed, that He is God) does not qualify as faith.** Faith is turning the ownership and day to day management of your life over to Jesus, accepting new management in your life and conforming to His will for your life.

There are many things in the Bible where disagreement is not only possible but inevitable. However, when it comes to salvation; Jesus either did it all

(“*It is finished*”) or if He didn’t. Then we must know (from the Bible) what (if anything) we must do or add to what Jesus accomplished on the cross.

VERY IMPORTANT! There is only one entity in the world who wants to make what Jesus did on the cross LESS than what it was: our adversary, Satan. Therefore, ANYTHING that makes His agonizing death on the cross anything less than the total payment for our sins must be looked at very seriously. We cannot blindly accept what perhaps well meaning church leaders might be saying. As we have already seen, Satan can wiggle the lips of even an Apostle (Peter), so you can be sure that he can wiggle the lips of pastors and priests of all denominations. This is why we can **only** trust the Bible as our source of truth; all other sources are subject to corruption by Satan. If the Bible says we are saved by grace and our denomination says doing good works saves us, *one* of these must be wrong since these are incompatible positions!

BUT WHAT ABOUT DOING GOOD STUFF?

The bible says that the best that you can do is:

Isaiah 64:6

*All of us have become like one who is unclean,
and **all our righteous acts** are like **filthy rags**;
we all shrivel up like a leaf,
and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

The word **filthy** is translated from the greek word to describe used menstrual rags. In other words, God says that the most righteous acts that you can do are no more than used menstrual rags – and this is your GOOD DEEDS! Imagine your bad deeds. So we see that being good offers us NO HOPE of getting us accepted by God and righteous enough to enter his presence in heaven.

*Eph. 4:1 ... (therefore) as a prisoner for the Lord, then, **I urge you** to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.*

Walk daily consistent with the blessings we have been given. Note: **I urge you**; it does not say “*you must.*”

Then why not get saved and then sin like crazy?

*Romans 6:15 ... What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? **By no means!***

THE BALANCE OF THE LAW:

Gal 5:13 ... You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

Gal 5:14 ... the entire law is summed up in a single command: "love your neighbor as yourself."

If you "love your neighbor as yourself" you will not steal his car, covet his wife or lie to others about him thus fulfilling the requirements of the Mosaic Covenant or as we know them, the Ten Commandments (easy to say, harder to do).

*Rom. 8:8 ... those **controlled** by the sinful nature cannot please God.*

*Rom. 8:9 ... you, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. **And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.***

The issue is not the sin--it is the control! (Remember in our study of Adam and Eve? The issue was not the act of eating the fruit, it was giving control to Satan.)

You may act at times like you are controlled by the sinful nature, but if you have given your heart to Christ you are really controlled by the Holy Spirit. God is then in the "process of changing you."

Romans 8:9 above "...and if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." Why? You must be under the New Covenant to get the Holy Spirit. There are millions of people in church every Sunday who look like Christians but who have never accepted Jesus as their Savior and Lord! They are not led by the Spirit! They have never made a conscious choice to accept the Jesus as their Savior and the New Covenant.

1 Cor. 6:9-11

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders [10] nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

[The above should cover almost everyone]

*[11] And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

(There is that word JUSTIFIED, again –Just As If I'd Never Sinned.)

(Spirit of our God = New Covenant)

Doing “good stuff” is great, but it is the result of the changed life. IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH OUR SALVATION. We are accepted based on our POSITION, not our PERFORMANCE! (We do good works BECAUSE WE ARE SAVED. not IN ORDER TO BE SAVED.) God invades our life changing our desires.

A note about willful sinning: God loves you too much to leave you the way you are. If you continue to willfully go against God's will for your life, God will have no choice but to bring you to a point of accepting his will for your life. After all that is what you asked him to do when you accepted him as your Savior: “Come in to my life and make me new”. He may do this by allowing the natural consequences of your sin to occur (STD's, HIV come to mind in the area of sexual sin – bankruptcy in the area of financial misconduct to name a few) or he may allow circumstances in your life to radically change your behavior.

Deut. 8:5

Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.

Proverbs 3:12

because the Lord disciplines those he loves,

as a father the son he delights in.

Hebrews 12:6

*because the Lord disciplines those he loves,
and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."*

Hebrews 12:10

Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.

Ok, we have a relationship (not a religion) with God because our sins are forgiven, the debt is paid and doing "good stuff" is a result of God through the Holy Spirit working through us. This then becomes the big question:

CAN I LOSE THIS RELATIONSHIP?

Once again we must look only to the Bible, not to man's opinion.

Question: Why would God save us and then take our salvation away? *

Question: If salvation is the SOLUTION for sin, how can we say then that our sin (or a sin) will cause our salvation to be taken away? *

Question: If there is an unpardonable sin (other than rejection of Jesus*), then Christ did not die for ALL sin. Salvation then is available ONLY to a select group, since there are those who will not qualify for this salvation. This would mean that John 3:16 (along with a host of other verses) is not valid. *

Question: Why would God (who knows the beginning and the end) not take us immediately to heaven if He saw that later in our life we would reject Him or sin to the point of being tossed out? * After all:

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

** The Bible says in Luke 12:10 that the only sin that won't be forgiven is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, which is rejecting the Holy Spirit when he draws you to Christ.*

In light of Ephesians 2:8-9 already reviewed. [...For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the **gift of God**--not by works, so that no one can boast.], ***this next verse is one of my favorites:***

Romans 11:29

*...for God's **gifts** and his call are irrevocable.*

According to the Bible our salvation is a **gift of God**. Romans 11:29 says that God's **gifts are irrevocable!** If your driving license is taken away it is REVOKED! God says His gift of salvation is irrevocable or can never be taken away!

Paul, arguably the greatest of the Apostles, said the following:

Romans 7:14-20

*We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a **slave to sin**. [15] I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. [16] And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. [17] As it is, **it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me**. [18] I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. **For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out**. [19] For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing. [20] Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, **but it is sin living in me that does it**.*

Now, if Paul says he can't stop sinning and he is a slave to sin, how can I ever hope to stop sinning? And if I can't stop sinning, EXACTLY which sin is it that will get me thrown out? If there is one sin that will cause me to lose my salvation (other than the rejection of the Holy Spirit's drawing to Christ ...see above), it only makes sense that a fair God would tell us what it is--but He doesn't.

In reality, our performance as Christians (when it is good) is the work of the Holy Spirit working in and through us--not our own efforts. When our performance is not good, “ *it is sin living in me that does it.* ” (v. 17). Our position in Christ has not changed. Paul, the slave to sin, most certainly was not thrown out of God’s Kingdom even though he could not stop sinning.

Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, [39] neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

SINCE NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD, THEN THE ONLY WAY WE CAN BE SEPARATED IS TO NEVER HAVE BEEN JOINED.

The Apostle John addressed this issue of those who appeared to be Christians but later fell away from the faith:

1 John 2:19-20

*They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us. But you have **an anointing from the Holy One**, and all of you know the truth.*

“An anointing from the Holy One” = Holy Spirit (New Covenant)

SO, WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO MAINTAIN THIS RELATIONSHIP? NOTHING !

*But when we truly understand what God did for us, we will be motivated (by our growing love due to an increased understanding of God and what He has done for us) to allow God to accomplish the things He wants to do in our lives. **WE ARE A WORK IN PROCESS** (see the whole book of Ephesians). In fact, in Philippians 1:6, God tells us that “ He who has begun a good work in us, **WILL** perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”*

There is only one way we can be placed out of God's salvation, that is to willfully turn our back on the Holy Spirit when he draws you to Christ and reject God's provision for our sin--the Death of Jesus Christ. Our performance (compared to God's standard) will always be inferior, poor and full of sin. *But our position will not change.* We are either out or in. Once in, never out, because Jesus Himself said:

John 10:28-29

I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. [29] My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

The Apostle John says it this way:

1 John 5:11-12

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

THE QUESTION IS: CAN I LOSE THIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE 'SON' ONCE I HAVE IT?

THE ANSWER IS: NO!

“If God's holiness compels him to take back the gift of eternal life from certain believers because of their sin, one of two things is true: Either God compromises his holiness for a time - through their small sins - or man's good works can meet the requirements for holiness - at least for a short period of time. In that case Christ died needlessly.”

Dr. Charles Stanley: ETERNAL SECURITY, Pg.104

© 2001 Bible Trek Ministries/GCS Ministries, Scott Barkley: all rights reserved. You may freely copy this as long as you retain the copyright notice and do not change any verbiage.