



Nobility

**“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica,
in that they received the word with all readiness of mind,
and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”
— Acts 17:11**

Does God Love You?

As a person considers the vastness of the universe, he or she is amazed at God’s creative power. A universe with such complexity and design cannot just happen. There must be a designer, and that designer is God. Upon contemplating God’s marvelous creation, David wrote, “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psalm 8:3-4). David was perplexed by the fact that we are such a small part of the universe, and yet God cares for us. Here in the vastness of the expanse is insignificant man. A mortal creature of whom God is mindful. Considering everything that God has majestically made, “what is man, that thou art mindful of him?” How is it possible for God who has made and who sustains the universe to ever have the time to consider man or to care for him?

In the second half of the eighth psalm, David answers his own question. God created man with glory, honor, and dominion. God is mindful of us and cares for us because He created us with purpose. The human race was not an accident or freak of nature. Humanity was purposefully and meaningfully created. Just as we love the things we create, God loves mankind — the crowning act of His creation.

Not only did God create us, He provides for us. He provided the universe as a place for us to dwell. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said God “maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:44-45). The sun and rain are part of the provisions God has provided for mankind. God’s provisions attests to His love of us.

Though these things affirms the love of God toward us, the greatest affirmation of God’s love is the sending forth of His Son. John 3:16 declares, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Think of the tremendous sacrifice Christ made by coming into this world. He left the presence of almighty God to dwell with rebellious man. He gave up His spiritual nature to dwell in a physical form (Philippians 2:6-7). He gave up life without temptation to be tempted in every point like we are (Hebrews 4:15). He gave up His royalty to be born in a manger and to live as a servant (Philippians 2:5-7). He gave up His heavenly domain where there is no pain, no sorrow, and no death to live with the pains of this world and to suffer the death of this world. The sending forth of His Son most certainly testifies of the love of God for mankind.

It is one thing to send a Son, but all together another to sacrifice a Son, but this is what God did for you and me. Paul wrote, “But God

commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Jesus was perfect in every respect (Hebrews 5:9). He was without sin and without guile (2 Peter 2:22), but He bore our sins upon the cross, and He died for you and me. To remind the Christians in Corinth of His glorious sacrifice, Paul wrote, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). Certainly, the sacrifice of the only begotten Son of God demonstrates the love of God. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:9-10).

As we have seen, God demonstrated His love for mankind by His creation and the sending and sacrifice of His Son, but He also exhibited His love by giving us His plan of redemption whereby we might know how to be saved. God’s plan of salvation is “the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). His plan of forgiveness must be obeyed in order for us to inherit eternal life (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Have you obeyed it?

God loves you! He has demonstrated His love in numerous ways, some of which we have addressed. Therefore the question is not whether or not God loves you, but whether or not you love God. Do you love Him? Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). What have you done to demonstrate your love for Him? Are you living according to His word? Are you walking in the light as He is in the light? (1 John 1:7). Are you His friend and can you be counted on as a friend. Jesus said, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (John 15:14). Be a friend of Jesus and take courage in obeying His will.

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Baptism

If one were to investigate how various denominations view baptism, one would find as many different beliefs as there are denominations. While it might be interesting to research, a far more profitable study would concern what the church of the first century, or New Testament, believed and practiced.

The New Testament teaches that baptism is the immersion of a person completely under water. The word “baptize” is a transliteration of the Greek word “baptizo” which means “to dip, plunge, or immerse” according to Greek word scholars like Joseph Henry Thayer, W. E. Vine, Robert Young, Archibald Thomas Robertson and many others.

The meaning of the word “baptism” can also be known by the fact that baptism in the New Testament always took place where there was plenty of water. Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River (*Mark 1:4-5*) where there was plenty of water for immersion. The reason given for the place where John baptized people was “because there was much water there” (*John 3:23*). As the gospel preacher Philip studied the scripture with a man from Ethiopia, the Ethiopian, after understanding what he needed to do said, “See, here is water, what doth hinder me from being baptized” (*Acts 8:36*)? The impact of that question is seen when one considers that after being taught he was looking for a place where he could be immersed completely under water.

As Paul wrote to the Romans, he reminded them what had taken place in baptism. Their burial in water and coming up from the water united them with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, as Jesus

had been buried in the ground and had come forth alive. Paul writes, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (*Romans 6:4*).

Not only does the New Testament teach how to be baptized, by immersion, but it also teaches us the purpose of baptism. Jesus taught, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...” (*Mark 16:16*). A person is baptized for the purpose of being saved, as Jesus said, and not because one is already saved. As Peter was preaching on the day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem, he told them that in crucifying Jesus, they had crucified the “Lord and Christ” (*Acts 2:36*), and the hearers asked, “what shall we do” (*Acts 2:37*)? Peter responded, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (*Acts 2:38*). They needed to be baptized in order to receive the remission or forgiveness of sins. Saul, later called Paul, was instructed to “arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins...” (*Acts 22:16*).

One who believes in Jesus, repents of their sins, confesses Jesus as the Son of God is ready to be baptized (*Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16*). Being baptized in this way and for these purposes is based upon one’s faith in Jesus, a trust in God, and a confidence in the word and promises of God. If you need to obey the plan of salvation that God has set forth in the New Testament, we are ready to assist you in that.

Wayne Brewer, Mabelvale, AR

Why Follow God’s Salvation Plan?

God’s plan for salvation is simple and within the reach of all men. But, when you check with the salvation plans of different denominational churches, you have a hard time locating two that teach identical plans for man to be saved! God’s plan for the salvation of each and every human is always the same. Every person has the ability to listen to His plan and embrace it. Everyone has the capability of believing his perfect plan. Everyone can repent and turn away from his sins. It is in the reach of everyone to submit to baptism by the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So why do so many men try to be saved by the plan of someone else? What is the danger of following the plan of someone else?

Only One has all authority from God to put forth a plan for man’s salvation. “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (*Matthew 28:18*). The word power also refers to the authority in heaven and in earth! Jesus then stated the final act that seals man’s initial salvation. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (*Matthew 28:19*). Following that statement, Jesus put forth a very important principle of remaining faithful following baptism. “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (*Matthew 28:20*). If we want Jesus to be the author of our salvation, it is necessary that we obey Him. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, *he became the*

author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; (*Hebrews 5:8-9*). If we use the doctrines of men in the place of our Lord’s, our worship will be in vain! “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (*Matthew 15:9*). Anyone who puts forth a salvation plan without the authority of God behind it is a thief! “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” (*John 10:10*). Jesus is the good Shepherd, any anyone else that comes up with another salvation plan does not care for the sheep! “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep” (*John 10:11-13*).

It is very simple; when Jesus says that one must hear the gospel, believe it, repent of his sins, and submit to baptism by His Father’s and the Holy Spirit’s authority, it is a very foolish man who would leave His plan and embrace the plan of a thief who does not care for his welfare whatsoever. Our Lord has devised a plan for man’s salvation with conditions that is in the reach of everyone. I now ask you a question, “Have you met those conditions or have you embraced a plan put forth by some man who has no authority from God?” Your answer will matter a lot on the day of judgment!

Jerry Dickison, Newton, KS

Webster defines addiction as a “compulsive need for and use of a habit-forming substance (as heroin, nicotine, or alcohol) characterized by tolerance and by well-defined physiological symptoms upon withdrawal; *broadly* : persistent compulsive use of a substance known by the user to be harmful.” While addiction to a substance of any kind is certainly real, a person can also be addicted to a behavior or habit of life. Examples would be gambling and sex addictions. Peter describes such people “as natural brute beasts...Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children” (2 Peter 2:12-14).

One biblical principle that is violated when a person is addicted to a substance or behavior is self-control. Paul listed self-control as part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). Peter listed it as a quality Christians need in order to increase their faith (2 Peter 1:5-8). When a person is addicted to a substance or behavior, he or she is not exercising self-control. Part of the nature of addiction is the person is out of control. A person involved in an addiction of any kind will usually deny, minimize, rationalize and even blame others for the situation attempting to prove it is not as bad as it is. No matter how one justifies his or her actions, it does not change the fact the addict is not practicing self-control.

Another biblical principle that is violated when a person is an addict is stewardship. Jesus taught on the principle of stewardship in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. Paul spoke of the body of the Christian as the temple of God and that destroying it is sin. In 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, he says, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” Addictions both physical and behavioral generally destroy the body.

While there are certainly other biblical principles that are defied when a person is addicted, the Bible also provides principles for dealing with addiction. The idea of redirecting efforts used in addiction is a biblical concept. In Ephesians 5, Paul describes the brethren as once being ‘darkness’ but now are the ‘light of the Lord.’ Paul admonishes them to walk (live) “as children of light” (5:8). Several times in the writing of Paul, he admonished Christians to no longer live one way but rather to live a certain way (Colossians 3:9-17; Romans 6:5-14; 2 Corinthians 5:12-21). If a person were to simply ‘put off’ an evil addiction, then he or she has only accomplished half of the biblical imperative. The person must also ‘put on’ the righteousness of God.

This brings up one final point — good addictions. In Romans 6:17-18, Paul said, “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” To be a slave or an addict of righteousness would certainly be biblical. When Paul spoke of the household of Stephanas in 1 Corinthians 16, he commented that they were “addicted...to the ministry of the saints” (verse 15). Today, people who want to follow God need to understand that to be enslaved to a substance or certain behaviors would certainly be sin, but to be addicted to His work, His word, and His church is a command of God.

Jeremy Northrop, Ashland, MS

In the United States today, we are living longer than at any time in our history. More and more people need to deal with the subject of caring for older parents. I hope the brief notes in this article will help us to know there are principles we can use to accomplish the goal of being the best care-givers we can be. I also want to stress that the Bible must be the basis for all of the things we do for the elderly, because the Bible is the only book on earth that is always right!

We should care for older parents in light of these five points:

1. In light of the honor that parents deserve according to the command of God (Ephesians 6:1-3). They occupy many positions during our lives, including being our earliest care-givers, protectors, providers, teachers, examples; as well as being the people who can provide examples of wisdom and courage in their old age. Honoring them in their later years is our duty.
2. In light of the subject of health — they took care of us when we were helpless and needy. Now that they are facing the difficulties that come at the end of life, we should be strong for them in any way we can. This includes learning how to be helpful to them just as they learned how to be helpful to us. In the book of Ruth, the story of the helpfulness that was provided to Naomi by Ruth and Boaz (who were not even her children!) has much to offer us.
3. In light of the happiness they wanted for us. They desired to have us as their children, and they went to great lengths to provide for our happiness. Sure, they made their share of mistakes and sins — but they did not want us to be unhappy! They wanted the “best” for us. Now it is time to return the favor! Paul thought of Timothy as his “son” in Christ. Note his requests of Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, as he faced the end of life. He wanted Timothy to do things for him — including trying to be there with him! Being there is a great way to produce happiness for those who are older and often alone.
4. In light of history — the history of our family includes their financial sacrifices for us, their emphasis on family, and their hope for our happy future as they reared us and their strong feelings about our relationship as their children. We should attempt to make their last days good ones in view of their track record on our behalf. Jesus was totally unhappy with people who tried to escape their responsibilities toward parents (Mark 7:9-13).
5. In light of the example of Jesus who provided for the welfare of His mother when He knew He would die before she did (John 19:26,27).

Let me conclude with a few “do nots”:

- Do not make any excuse to avoid doing good toward them.
- Do not waste this opportunity for their last days often end quickly.
- Do not rob them of their dignity through neglect.
- Do not treat them as helpless children.
- Do not destroy their last days.
- Do not hurt the ones who gave you so much.
- Do not fail to do your best, no matter how they may have failed you.

Skip Andrews, Duluth, GA

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“Does the Bible Teach the Doctrine of ‘Once Saved, Always Saved’?”

The answer to the question in the title of this article is “NO”! We will briefly examine (1) The Definition of This Doctrine; and (2) The Destruction of This Doctrine.

The Definition of This

Doctrine: The following quote comes from a book entitled *The Five Points Of Calvinism Defined, Defended, Documented* by David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas. On page fifty-six under Roman numeral V “The Perseverance of the Saints or the Security of Believers,” they write:

The Westminster Confession of Faith gives the following statement of this doctrine: “They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace: but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.”

The late Sam Morris, a Calvinistic Baptist preacher from Stamford, Texas, famous (or infamous) for his tract, “Do A Christian’s Sins Damn His Soul?” wrote:

We take the position that a Christian’s sins do not damn his soul. The way a Christian lives, what he says, his character, his conduct, or his attitude toward other people have nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul...all the sins [the Christian] may commit from idolatry to murder will not make his soul in any more danger.

The Destruction of This Doctrine: This false doctrine (also known as “Once Saved, Always Saved,” or “Once in Grace, Always in Grace”) is destroyed by the Bible in numerous passages, a sampling of which can be found in the book of Galatians. Paul wrote: “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into

the grace of Christ unto another gospel” (1:6). Notice they had been “called” but had then been “removed from him that called” them. Observe they had been “called into the grace of Christ” but had been “removed...unto another gospel.” Please also take note of the fact that they had been “sanctified by his Spirit.” They had “received the Spirit” (3:2). They had “begun in the Spirit” (3:3). They had the Spirit “ministered” to them (3:5). They had received “the promise of the Spirit” (3:14). God had “sent forth the Spirit” into their hearts (4:6). They had been “born after the Spirit” (4:29). “Through the Spirit,” they had waited for the hope of righteousness. They had walked “in the Spirit” (5:16). They had been “led of the Spirit” (5:18). They had produced “the fruit of the Spirit” (5:22). They had lived and walked “in the Spirit” (5:25). They had sown “to the Spirit” so that they could “of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (6:8). But then Paul wrote: “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (5:4).

CONCLUSION

The Galatians had been called into the grace of Christ and sanctified by God’s Spirit. But Paul wrote that Christ had become of no effect unto some of them. They had fallen from grace. They did not persevere therein unto the end. They would not be eternally saved. A Christian’s sins can damn his soul. The way a Christian lives, what he says, his character, his conduct, his attitude toward other people have to do with the salvation of his soul. Concerning the sins of “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like,” Paul said: “that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (5:19-21). The sins a Christian may commit from idolatry to murder will make his soul in danger of being totally and finally lost. The doctrine of “once saved always saved” is false doctrine.

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