

END-TIMES ISSUES



#135 Is following Jesus a "realistic" option? (2)

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO BE READY.

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Hebrews 11 – The "Faith Chapter."

We learn what happens when someone trusts God!

By faith **Abel** ... / By faith **Enoch** ... / By faith **Noah** ... / By faith **Abraham** ... / By faith **Sarah** ... / By faith **Isaac** ... / By faith **Jacob** ... / By faith **Joseph** ... / By faith **Moses' parents** ... / By faith **Moses** ... / By faith **the people** ... / By faith **the prostitute Rahab** ...

From Hebrews 11:1-31 (BSB)

- This does not mean that the *trust* of all those on the list was *permanent* – especially in regard to the people of Israel as a *nation*. But in that case, it shows us that even *temporary* faith in God can result in great things. (It also results in greater accountability and judgment for those who – having seen and experienced the works of God – have chosen to turn away from him.)
- At the same time, if we know much about these people's lives, we learn that most of them – *even those truly saved* – also had a "dark side" at some point in their lives.
- We will look at this issue...

Could some of these people have "fallen away," like what we read about in Hebrews 6?

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age— and then have **fallen away**—**to be restored to repentance**, because they themselves are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting Him to open shame.

Hebrews 6:4-6 (BSB)

Later in the chapter, we are told that these things – even though important and necessary – are *NOT evidence of salvation*. Specifically, they are NOT "things that accompany salvation" (v. 9+). [We will look further at this, at a different time.]

- ★ **Ultimately, we don't have to decide!** It's always possible that those who had the *worst* conduct were that way because of the extreme *ignorance* of God's Word, at that time in Israel's history.

People listed in the "Faith Chapter" (Hebrews 11): Did they ever sin?

- **Abel and Enoch** ... [We know very little about their lives.]
- **Noah** ... He planted a vineyard, drank some of the wine, and got drunk.
- **Abraham** ... When sojourning, he claimed that Sarah was his "sister" – which was a *half truth* (Genesis 20:12), but was the result of not trusting God for safety. He also had a temporary lapse of faith in God's promise about offspring, and (at his wife's suggestion) took Hagar as his concubine... who bore him a son. *This is the origin of the problems we currently have in the Mideast!*
- **Sarah** ... She suggested that Abraham sleep with Hagar... and after Hagar had conceived, Sarah mistreated her severely. (Hagar wasn't without sin in this matter.) It seems that she also didn't believe God (temporarily) about having a son, laughed about it, and then denied laughing.

- **Isaac** ... He claimed that his wife was his sister (which was a *complete lie*), following his father's bad example. He also attempted to bless Esau *against God's will*; and only came to his senses after he realized that his plan had been thwarted. (Later, he reaffirmed the blessing to Jacob.)
- **Jacob** ... Much of his earlier life was characterized by deception and manipulation – and he eventually suffered greatly for it. His change came later, when God put him in situations that "forced" Jacob to trust God for deliverance.
- **Joseph** ... Though not sinless, there is no indication that he had serious moral failures. Some people (not all) have suggested that Joseph may have had some "spiritual pride" when he was younger, when interacting with his brothers.
- **Moses' parents** ... [We know very little about their lives.]

- **Moses** ... He killed an Egyptian; he was reluctant to obey God (when told to lead Israel out of Egypt); he disobeyed God by not circumcising his sons when they were young. He directly disobeyed God, when expressing his anger with the people (Numbers 20:2-12), and lost the privilege of leading them into the promised land.
- **The people** ... As a group, the Israelites trusted God, when they passed through the Red Sea. Some of these people did *not* have a *living* ("saving") faith, and later abandoned the God of Israel.
- **The prostitute Rahab** ... Her only recorded sins (prostitution and lying) occurred *before* she embraced the One true God, and during her "transition" away from her former way of life. This was at the time that she did not yet know about the moral conduct that God requires of those who want to follow him.

Some of these sins appear to be quite "little," when compared to some of the sins of the judges (see below). *But they were still sins.*

MORE examples of people who trusted God.

And what more shall I say? Time will not allow me to tell of **Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets**, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the raging fire, and escaped the edge of the sword; who gained strength from weakness, became mighty in battle, and put foreign armies to flight.

Hebrews 11:32-34 (BSB); followed by further examples of *unnamed* people.

- Each of these did something that was an expression of trust in God – and great things occurred. God used them; yet none were without sin.
- The four judges (first on the list) lived during a time of great apostasy, when there was extreme *ignorance* of God's Word. Though they accomplished great things when they trusted God, much of their lives were characterized by conduct that we – having a better understanding of Scripture – would recognize as wrong.

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- Gideon** ... He was a great leader... but much of his later life was spiritually compromised, like the nation of Israel itself.
- Barak** ... The main weakness we know about him was his unwillingness to lead the army unless Deborah go with him. Because of this, he would not have the honor of defeating Sisera (the enemy commander) – a woman would.
- Samson** ... His whole life was characterized by moral failures. His greatest exercise of faith occurred at his death, which occurred along with 3000 Philistine leaders (and their wives).
- Jephthah** ... He made a rash vow, which may have resulted in the sacrifice of his daughter. (Some believe it meant she would remain unmarried, instead of dying.)

We don't need to "whitewash" these people's sins.
We can acknowledge them, as Scripture does.
Our greatest danger is to yield to the temptation to use their failures as an excuse to "justify" our sins.

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- David** ... Most people remember his sin with Bathsheba, which involved adultery and murder; but there were other sins. On one occasion, when he lied, it *indirectly* resulted in others dying (at Saul's command). He took a census of the people, contrary to God's will, and the judgment for doing so resulted in 70,000 people dying. He was a poor example for his sons – and some of them became guilty of immorality and murder. *Yet when confronted with his sins, he had genuine repentance (Example: Psalm 51); and God used him in great ways.*
- Samuel** ... Though generally portrayed as devoted to God, his sons grew up to be very corrupt priests; and he did nothing to restrain their conduct, other than giving them a verbal rebuke.
- The prophets** ... We don't have many details about most of the prophet's lives – just their ministries and prophetic writings. Because of this, there just aren't many examples of *true* prophets having moral failure – though there is evidence that they sometimes had discouragement or other expressions of weakness. We *do* know that Jonah tried to run away from God, and was angry when the people of Nineveh repented.

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WHY have we looked at the people in Hebrews 11?

- Last time, we noted that Scripture tells us we cannot go on sinning.

No one who lives in [Christ] keeps on sinning.

1 John 3:6a (NIV)

No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.

1 John 3:9 (NIV)

We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin ...

1 John 5:18a (NIV)

Shall we continue in sin ... ?

Certainly not! How can we who died to sin live in it any longer?

Romans 6:1b, 2 (BSB)

AT THE SAME TIME...

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- We also saw verses which tell us that "sinlessness" is *impossible* in this present life. Hebrews 11 seems to reinforce this fact.

Indeed, there is **no one** on earth who is **righteous**, **no one** who does what is right and **never sins**.

Ecclesiastes 7:20 (NIV)

When I want to do good, **evil is right there with me**.

Romans 7:21b (BSB)

We all stumble in many ways.

James 3:2a (BSB)

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we say we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar, and His word is not in us.

1 John 1:8, 10 (BSB)

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So HOW should we respond to this??



- Most people seem to pick one of these themes, and ignore (or deny) the other.

Doing this is problematic! ⇨ God said both, so both are true!

- To pick *one* of these, and ignore (or deny) *the other*, results in HALF-TRUTH – or worse, since half-truth is always connected to a lie.

- Yet the *world* has told us that, in such situations, *it's not possible for both to be true*.

This forces us to make a decision: Are we going to trust the world (which tells us to pick *one*), or God (who tells us to accept *both*)?

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Some basic issues (principles):

- **Scripture is to judge us**; it is *not* for us to judge *Scripture*.
- In any issue, if we don't understand it: The WISEST choice is to choose *humility and truthfulness*. Admit: "I acknowledge that God says *both* are true. I don't understand it, but *he* does."
 - ✓ With *this* attitude, maybe we will *grow* in understanding.
 - ✓ Without this attitude, we will *never* grow; and will probably not even recognize that growth is possible.
- We can view such statements in several ways:
 - ✓ **Complementary concepts** – that fit together as a complete "whole" of the picture, with interlocking parts. ➔ MORE



- ✓ **Parallel concepts** – that always stay together, neither separating, nor merging together.
 - » You cannot combine or separate them without tragic results.
- ✓ **Boundaries** – that prevent us from straying either direction into error and tragedy. (We could also call them "guard rails.")



Now regarding this specific issue...

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|-----------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| FACT #1 (A & B) | • WE'RE WITHOUT SIN (IN GOD'S SIGHT). | • WE'RE SINFUL. | FACT #2 (A & B) |
| | • WE CANNOT KEEP ON SINNING. | • WE DO KEEP ON SINNING. | |

Here are two related issues – each of which is associated with a parallel or complementary concept.
We will look at these – one today and one next time.

- The issue we will look at today:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| • We're without sin (in God's sight). | • We're sinful. |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|

- This part focuses on the concept of "**JUSTIFICATION**," which means "declared righteous." God sees us as "not guilty of sin."
- This part focuses on our **daily life experience**. We *do* sin; but God is in the process of changing this.
- Taken together, these are a set of truth concepts that can be described in terms of a "tension" between: ① something that is "*already*" existing, *and* at the same time, ② it is "*not yet*" existing.
- Specifically, some passages describe us as "*already*" being righteous (i.e., without sin), and others describe us as "*not yet*" to that point (i.e., still sinning).
- This leaves us wondering: How can *both* be true? How can we be *both of these* at the same time? ➔

First... HOW can God see us as righteous ("not guilty of sin")?

- To understand this, we need to start with Jesus! **HE NEVER SINNED!**

... and in Him there is **no sin**.
1 John 3:5b (BSB)

"He committed **no sin**, and no deceit was found in His mouth."
1 Peter 2:22 (BSB); quoting Isaiah 53:9, which said it would be this way!

[He] was tempted in every way that we are, yet was **without sin**.
Hebrews 4:15b (BSB)

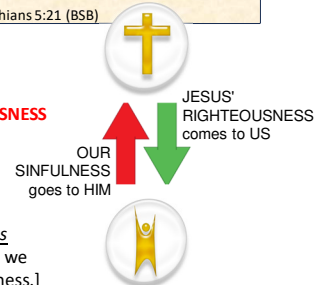
... Him who knew **no sin** ...
2 Corinthians 5:21b (BSB)
- In contrast, **WE ALL HAVE SINNED**. [We already saw verses that express this fact.]

- What do these two facts have to do with us being viewed as "without sin"? **It's only possible by means of "THE GREAT EXCHANGE."**

God made **Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf**, so that **in Him we might become the righteousness of God**.
2 Corinthians 5:21 (BSB)

- ❖ All the **SIN** that defines us had to be taken by **Jesus**...
- ❖ ... so that **Jesus' RIGHTEOUSNESS** could be taken by us.

When this happens, God sees Jesus' righteous in us.
But it is only because he sees us "IN HIM" (Jesus). [On our own, we will *never* have true righteousness.]



• What does this GREAT EXCHANGE accomplish?

- ✓ On the cross, God sees our sin in Jesus. Because of this, God must punish Jesus with death.
 - » Jesus fully pays what we deserve to pay. Being the *infinite* God, he was able to suffer *infinitely*, in a few hours, a punishment that would take us (as finite creatures) an *eternity* to pay.
 - » His resurrection from the dead demonstrated that our punishment was *paid in full*.
- ✓ On the other hand, because of this great exchange, God sees Jesus' righteousness as being present in us... **NOW!!**
 - » This means that God does not see us as sinners. *Legally*, we are "not guilty" of sin. We have also been freed from sin's controlling power.
 - » But all this is only because God sees us "IN HIM." On our own, all there is to see is sin – and **WE NEED TO NOT FORGET THIS! We cannot survive on our own, but only IN HIM!**
 - » Because we are "in him," we will also share in his resurrection.

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Some verses that focus on our JUSTIFICATION:

(= The reason God can see us as being "without sin.")

- On our own, we have absolutely no righteousness – Romans 3:10.
- We cannot be justified (declared righteous) by our works or by observing the law – Romans 3:21; 4:5-6; Galatians 2:16; 3:11.
- Our justification/righteousness is connected to Jesus' death (the shedding of his blood) and his resurrection – Romans 4:25; 5:9.
- It is "from God," and "in Christ" – 1 Corinthians 1:30; Philippians 3:9.
- His righteousness is "credited" or "reckoned" to us - Romans 4:6, 11.
- We receive it by God's grace, through faith – Romans 3:24, 26, 28; 5:1; Galatians 2:16; Philippians 3:9; Titus 3:7.
- It means our sins are forgiven – Colossians 2:13.
- It is proved genuine by the presence of our works (not by faith "alone") – James 2:24. (This is just like salvation, which is proved genuine by the presence of the "fruit of salvation.")
- It is a present reality – Romans 5:1, 9.

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• We're without sin
(in God's sight). / • We're
sinful.

- Our "position" in God's sight is that we are "without sin."
 - ✓ This is where the word "**JUSTIFICATION**" fits in. This means we are "declared righteous" in God's sight; and it was made possible at the cross.
- But our "position" in God's sight does **NOT** match our present daily "experience."
 - ✓ There is a longing within us to be the way God sees us; but elements of the "old nature" still reside in us – our "flesh."
 - » We don't *need* to sin; but we often seem to forget that fact!
 - » We have God's power to *not* sin; but sinning still happens – even at times when we don't realize it.
- Someday, our daily life experience will be "without sin"! This will happen when Jesus returns.
 - ✓ Our "position" in Christ will match our "practice" in daily life!

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✓ In this present life: If we belong to Christ, we will be willing to pursue a sinless life. This is called "**SANCTIFICATION**."

- » There will be victories over sin (even though there will probably be discouragements along the way).
- » When we have victory (or partial victory) in one area of life, God may open our eyes to other areas where we need to change. This will be an ongoing process throughout life.

✓ When Jesus returns: He will finish the good work that God began in us. This is called "**GLORIFICATION**."

- » The *desire* to be holy – which we demonstrate as we pursue sanctification – will be completely satisfied at that time.
- » Morally, we will be like Christ for all eternity. *Sin will never hound us again!*

**THIS IS WHY WE
HAVE HOPE!!**

... He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:6b (BSB)

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[We plan to continue this next time.]

Done:

✓ Perfection
and holiness.

Partly done:

✓ Sin vs.
no sin.

Yet to be done:

□ Concerning
passages.

OUR MISSION!

CLING TO ⇒ **BOTH TRUTHS!**

If **FACT #1** applies, then apply **FACT #2!**

#1 = IF you believe God has begun a good work in you (Philippians 1:6)...

#2 = THEN your responsibility is to demonstrate your trust in God,

↳ By: *pursuing the holiness that you are claiming God has called you to!*

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Credits

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