

END-TIMES ISSUES



Is following Jesus a "realistic" option? (3)

#136

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

AND BEYOND!

LAST TIME...

- It seems that most (if not all) truth concepts in Scripture occur in groups of two (or more) complementary or parallel concepts.
- These concepts go together, needing equal emphasis, or we end up with "half-truth" – which results in "half lie"... and eventually the lie wins.
 - In all such cases ⇨ God said *both* statements, so *both* are true! A de-emphasis or denial of one of the statements is equivalent to twisting truth into a lie.
- It's OK to *not* understand how such concepts "work together" – after all, ① we are *finite* creatures, not *infinite*; and ② (in this present life) sin has also influenced our thinking.
- It's *not* OK to *distort* such concepts – to change, de-emphasize, or deny them; *because God says both are true.*

We have described such concepts as ...

- Complementary concepts** – that fit together as a complete "whole" of the picture, with interlocking parts.
- Parallel concepts** – that always stay together, neither separating, nor merging together.
- Boundaries** – that prevent us from straying either direction into error and tragedy. (We could also call them "guard rails.")

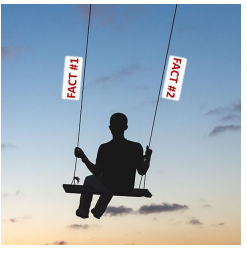
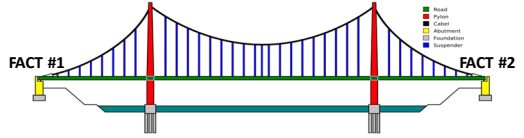




We could also compare them to...

- The two ropes on a swing
- or
- The two sides of a suspension bridge

(For both of these: You cannot remove either side without serious problems!)

SO FAR: We looked at the FIRST set of two complementary or parallel concepts.

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

- Because of the "GREAT EXCHANGE" (2 Corinthians 5:21), God has traded *Jesus'* righteousness with *our* sin.
- Now, when God looks at us who are saved, he sees *righteousness* (which actually belongs to Jesus). *Legally, we are no longer viewed as being sinful. This is called "JUSTIFICATION."*
- In our daily lives, we continue to be sinful (= to be examined later). But God is working in us, so that in the end, we will be sinless in all that we do. Morally, we will be like Jesus! *This is called "GLORIFICATION."*
- In this present life, God's people are in a process of change, called "*SANCTIFICATION.*"

Some verses that focus on this concept:

- The following passage is packed with a lot of encouragement:

GOOD NEWS!
God has a special *purpose* for everyone who loves him: *he is working to make us like Jesus* – i.e., conformed to his image! (This focuses on *his* role in our *SANCTIFICATION.*)

And we know that God works all things together for the good of *those who love Him*, who are called according to *His purpose*. For those God foreknew, He also *predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son*, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers.

And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He *justified*, He also *glorified*.

Romans 8:28-30 (BSB)

Yet this "conforming" is – in God's eyes – *as good as already accomplished!* In Christ, he *already* sees us as being without sin (declared righteous – *JUSTIFICATION*); and someday our "daily life experiences" will *match* the way he sees us (*GLORIFICATION*)!

- What God *began* he will also *finish*!

HE WILL COMPLETE THE JOB!
This started with our **JUSTIFICATION**; it will be completed with our **GLORIFICATION**!

HE IS RIGHT NOW AT WORK ACCOMPLISHING THIS!
The Romans passage (previous page) emphasized our **love** for God; the emphasis here is on our **obedience**. The focus of this passage is on **SANCTIFICATION**. Our desire is to *obey*; God is at work in us to make it possible! This is his purpose for saving us!

... **He who began** a good work in you **will carry it on to completion** until the day of Christ Jesus.
Philippians 1:6b (BSB)

Therefore, my beloved, just **as you have always obeyed**, not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence, continue to **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling.
For **it is God who works in you** to will and to act on behalf of **His good purpose**.
Philippians 2:12-13 (BSB)

NOW what about the SECOND set of two complementary or parallel concepts?

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

• We cannot keep on sinning. / • We do keep on sinning.

- This focuses mainly on what happens during this *process of change* – our **SANCTIFICATION**.
- It's also connected to the **New Covenant** – which *guarantees* that sanctification will occur.
- But to understand the significance of the *New Covenant*, we also need to take a look at the **Old (Mosaic) Covenant**.

- The **Old Covenant** was *conditional*. It depended on whether or not the people were willing to obey it.

✓ This is why the people were told "if you obey me..."

Now **if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant**, you will be My treasured possession out of all the nations—for the whole earth is Mine. And unto Me you shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.
Exodus 19:5-6a (BSB)

✓ This covenant did not change people's hearts. Unsaved people could perform some of the duties, at least superficially.

✓ However, some people (as *individuals*) trusted God, and God changed their hearts. These people desired to do God's will – *from the heart*, not simply because it was a religious duty.

- The **New Covenant** is *unconditional*. It does *not depend* on a person's willingness to obey it; but it *results* in a willingness to obey.

HOW DOES THIS WORK?

✓ In the **New Covenant**, **God takes the initiative** to make the necessary *heart changes* – and these changes result in a willingness to obey his laws. Instead of starting with "if you," it starts with "I will."

✓ This **covenant also has obligations**; but they are obligations we will *want* to fulfill (instead of having them *forced* upon us), because God gives us both the desire and the ability to do them. This includes the obligation to repent and trust God for the heart change.

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant ... It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers ... a covenant they broke, But this is the covenant I will make ... **I will put My law in their minds and inscribe it on their hearts.** And **I will** be their God, and they will be My people.
From Jeremiah 31:31-33 (BSB); the whole statement is in vs. 31-34.

How this applies to the sin issue:

- Because of the heart change that occurs under the **New Covenant**, it is *impossible* for someone under this covenant to have a heart that is devoted to sin. **We cannot go on sinning as a way of life.** Only an *unchanged* person could do this!

✓ (An *unchanged* person might not recognize that he is sinning, if he has ignored what Scripture says about sin.)

- So many things happen during the "process of salvation," that it gives us *many* reasons for why we do not *have* to sin... and why we cannot *live* a life of sin.

We know that **our old self was crucified with Him** so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, **that we should no longer be slaves to sin. For anyone who has died has been freed from sin.**
Romans 6:6-7 (BSB)

WE DIED TO SIN.

How can **we who died to sin** live in it any longer?
Romans 6:2b (BSB)

WE HAVE A NEW MASTER.

For when **you were slaves to sin**, you were free of obligation to righteousness. What fruit did you reap at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? **The outcome of those things is death.**

But now that **you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God**, the fruit you reap leads to holiness, and **the outcome is eternal life.**

For the wages of sin is **death**, but the gift of God is **eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 6:20-23 (BSB)

WE HAVE A CHANGE IN OUR "SPIRITUAL GENETICS" (OR "SEED").

Anyone born of God refuses to practice sin, because **God's seed** abides in him; **he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.**

By this the children of God are distinguished from the children of the devil ...
1 John 3:9-10 (BSB)

GRACE TEACHES US.

For the **grace of God ... instructs us to renounce** ungodliness and worldly passions, and **to live** sensible, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ...
Titus 2:11a, 12 (BSB)

WE HAVE BEEN SET FREE.

Jesus replied, "Truly, truly, I tell you, **everyone who sins is a slave to sin**. A slave does not remain in the house forever, but a son remains forever. **So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**
John 8:34-36 (BSB)

WE WANT TO BE LIKE JESUS.

We know that when Christ appears, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is. And **everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as Christ is pure.**
1 John 3:2b-3 (BSB)

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO ALL THIS?

Little children, **let no one deceive you; The one who practices righteousness is righteous**, just as Christ is righteous. **The one who practices sin is of the devil**, ...
1 John 3:7-8a (BSB)

HOW do all these verses fit with those that say we DO sin??
(Verses we will look at shortly.)

Here are TWO of the ways:

- **Many of these verses are written in present tense**, and indicate an ongoing practice or way of life ... choices that keep occurring.
- **There are different types of sin.** EXAMPLES:
 - ✓ **Deliberate sin** – You know it's sin, and you willfully choose to do it.
 - ✓ **Accidental sin** – You know it's sin, but you did it without first thinking about it, because it had become a spontaneous, habitual response. (When you realize it, you will repent.)
 - ✓ **Unconscious sin** – It's sin, but you don't realize it's sin. Once you find out, you will not want to do it.

Verses that tell us we do sin are focused primarily on sins that are accidental, unconscious, etc. (Further explanation below.)

Before looking at verses which tell us we do sin, here's why we can still have hope!!

God makes provision for those sins we do commit!

My little children, I am writing these things to you **so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin**, we have an advocate before the Father—**Jesus Christ**, the Righteous One.

He Himself is **the atoning sacrifice for our sins**, and not only for ours but also **for the sins of the whole world.**
1 John 2:1-2 (BSB)

- The entire book of 1 John is written to show us how to *KNOW* we are saved. **One of his primary focuses is on the fact that sin is not an option we will consistently choose.**
- John recognizes that **there are also sins which are not deliberate willful choices** ... and he assures us that Jesus will deal with them. Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient for *anyone in the world* who is willing to become his follower (v. 2b) – not just Jews, but also Gentiles!

We do sin, and God makes provision for it!

ADMIT THE TRUTH; WE DO SIN.

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)

ADMIT THE TRUTH; CONFESS YOUR SINS TO GOD!

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

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

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)

YES, SIN EASILY ENTANGLES US.

... let us throw off everything that hinders and **the sin that so easily entangles**. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.
Hebrews 12:1b-2 (NIV)

IT'S A WAR.

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from **sinful desires, which wage war** against your soul.
1 Peter 2:11 (NIV)

EVEN THE APOSTLE PAUL HAD NOT REACHED THE FINAL GOAL!

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Brothers and sisters, **I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it**. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, **I press on toward the goal** to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 3:12-14 (NIV)

HOW can we explain the fact that we do keep on sinning, even though choosing to sin is not an option?

- **We still live in a body of "flesh"** – i.e., controlled by a sin nature that keeps pulling us toward sin. Throughout our unsaved years, we've developed habits and lifestyles that go contrary to the ways of God – contrary to all that God made us to be.
 - ✓ These impulses toward sin will not be gone until we are with Jesus. We look forward to that day, when we will receive new "resurrection bodies" that have no inclination to sin.
 - ✓ Until then, we must fight the impulses that so naturally come to us. We must develop a *new* way of thinking (Romans 12:2) and *new* habits to fight against the impulses we learned during our unsaved days. (The "flesh" will fight back.)
- **As Jesus' followers, our hearts have been changed.** God has given us both the *desire* and the *power* to pursue sanctification. The flesh is "mortally wounded," but it still tries to get us to sin. At times, it may seem quite powerful. *But ultimate victory is already guaranteed*, because of what Jesus has accomplished for us, on the cross.

- **What can we conclude?**
 - ✓ It is *impossible* for a genuine follower of Jesus to keep pursuing sin. Yet, it is also *impossible* to be 100% without sin in this present life.
- **But what if we *do* choose to willfully sin – "just one time" – does that mean it's too late for us to return to Jesus?**
 - ✓ If you have done this, change your ways quickly! The more that you willfully sin, the easier it will become for you to do it again – and the less probable it is that you are really saved. **IMPORTANT NOTE** ➡
 - ✓ If your salvation is genuine, God will use that sin to accomplish good in you (Romans 8:28); but it may be through *severe consequences* caused by that sin, or by *discipline* in some other way – which is an expression of God's love. If it seems that God is ignoring you – letting you get away with your sin – it may be that you do not belong to him. (You might not like the idea of "hell," but you have no interest in God or in honoring him.)
 - ✓ If you have done this, don't sit around worrying about whether or not you have sinned "too much" to be saved... just turn back to God immediately!

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IMPORTANT NOTE ➡ **ABOUT:** "The more that you willfully sin ... the less probable it is that you are really saved."

- **When a person falls into sin ...**
 - ✓ There is a difference between a *temporary lapse* into sin, and a *pattern of life* that reveals the absence of genuine conversion.
 - ✓ A truly regenerate believer may fall into sin; but it will only be temporary. Sooner or later, the believer will come back to repentance, and the backsliding will come to an end.
 - » We cannot predict the time when such a person's "sooner or later" will occur. It may occur *sooner* than expected ... or *later*!
 - ✓ The issue is whether or not one's overall course of life demonstrates movement *toward* holiness or *away* from it.

We will continue to be tempted throughout life; and our awareness of this struggle may even intensify, as we grow in Christ. But the issue is this: When we yield to sin, do we return to repentance and the pursuit of holiness?

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IMPORTANT NOTE ➡ [Continued]

- **Don't forget God's role!**
 - ✓ In all this, God is at work in his people! When we (God's people) lapse into sin, we *will* be willing to return to him... yet at the same time, his *grace* (a continuation of the *same* grace that saves us) is what enables us to return to him.
 - ✓ We don't have to worry that our salvation depends on attaining a certain "percentage of holiness." We can rest assured in the fact that God *does* draw us back to him, and we *do* grow in holiness (even if in small amounts), and this holiness *does* reflect in our lives (in good works)... and in the fact that we *aren't* growing *away* from him.

What a wretched man I am!
Who will rescue me from this body of death?

Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Romans 7:24-25a (BSB)

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How do YOU respond,
when you fall into the "mud pit" of sin?

COME AND
FOLLOW ME!

I KEEP FALLING IN...
SO I MIGHT AS
WELL STAY HERE!

CAUTION
DEEP MUD
KEEP OUT



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OUR MISSION!

- **IF we emphasize only the "we do sin" part ...**
 - ↳ We won't take sin seriously, and it will become an excuse to "justify" our sin.
- **IF we emphasize only the "we cannot sin" part ...**
 - ↳ We will either live a life of self-deception; or we will feel constantly frustrated with failures, and may eventually give-up.

**We need to accept BOTH TRUTHS,
and let them drive us toward following Jesus!**

↳ **With all our hearts, and refusing to give up!** ↻

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