

**When
Christians
die
with
unrepented
sin**

deel 1 - 8

2013-07-13

When Christians die with unrepented sin #1

Hi all,

A pastor told his congregation that if the speed limit was 55 miles per hour (90 kph) and you were driving at 56 miles per hour (91 kph) and had a wreck and died, you'd go to hell. Is that true?

A lady came to me very concerned about her mother who had died. The mom expressed faith in Christ before she died, but due to a very abusive marriage years earlier, was still bitter towards her ex-husband. She wanted to know if her mom was in heaven.

A man addicted to porn who also had a heart condition, was worried he would be sitting in front of his computer one day watching porn and have a heart attack and die. He wanted to know if he would still go to heaven if that happened.

A single lady I knew in church, who was active in church, one day committed suicide. Is she in heaven?

When Christians die with unrepented sin

Answering these questions touch on several 'hot buttons' for many - once saved always saved, the unpardonable sin, the judgement of God to name three - but let me start by saying something that may sound rather radical:

It isn't the forgiveness of your sins that gets you into heaven.

That is a shocker to many, yet it is the truth. What gets you into heaven isn't the forgiveness of your sins - your 'ticket' to heaven is something more than that.

Your 'ticket' to heaven is that your spirit has been recreated by the Holy Spirit

The Father has legally forgiven all people who have ever lived or ever will live, charging their sins to Christ on the cross instead of them. Yet Jesus said to get to heaven you must be 'born again' by the Holy Spirit, and then you will have Life. (II Corinthians 5:19, John 3:6)

So it is more than merely Jesus purchasing the forgiveness of everyone's sins who has ever lived or ever will live - that just presented the legal *opportunity* for people to become born again. Unfortunately some in the modern 'grace' teaching only see the sins paid for on the cross and think all therefore will end up in heaven, neglecting the fact that like anything done for another person, that person must of their own will take advantage of what was done for them.

If I put money in your bank account, that is a legal transaction, but it does you no good, it doesn't become *living* until you make use of the provision. Noah was a preacher of righteousness, there was room on the boat, but only the 8 in his family survived. He couldn't make everyone get into the Ark, which is a type of Christ we are told by Peter. All he could do is the legal thing to give them opportunity. As it was with the type, so it is with the True. (I Peter 3:20-22)

Say it another way

The only people in heaven are family of the King. Barb and I have 3 sons, and there is a little of us in each of them. That is natural family. The Father has children too, and to be part of His family there has to be a little of Him in each of His kids. That is the Holy Spirit.

There are only 2 ways to become part of a family: By birth, and by adoption. We've been both born into the family and adopted by Him. It is the answer to 'Who's your daddy' that determines heaven or hell.

"...but you have received the Spirit of adoption in which we cry, 'Abba, Father'. The (Holy) Spirit Himself testifies to (with) our spirit, saying that we are the children of God." Romans 8:15-16

"And it was of His own free will that He gave us birth as sons by His Word of Truth, so that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures, a sample of what He created to be consecrated to Himself."
James 1:18

There are numerous other scriptures which state the same thing - your 'right' to heaven is because you were legally adopted through the cross of Jesus, and then born into the adopting family by the Holy Spirit.

If Jesus' sacrifice on the cross ONLY bought the forgiveness of sins but not the new birth, no one would go to heaven. Fortunately we cannot separate the two.

The earnest money

"The Spirit is God's down payment, earnest money, which guarantees that He will give us the inheritance that He promised and that He has purchased us to be His own people." Ephesians 1:14

It is interesting to note the word 'earnest' was in Paul's time 'earnest money', and the understood reference by his original readers. It means the same thing it means to us today - a down payment given as a promise of fulfilling the whole deal. All we have in Christ is from the Father's point of view, mere earnest money down to take us 'off the market' and as a foretaste of what He has for us in the ages to come. WOW!

Live by this and you will have peace

Paul wrote the Galatians because they had left grace and gone back into legalism. He contrasts the law and grace, flesh and (S)pirit, and emphasizes NOT that their sins have been forgiven, but that they were born of the Spirit and are now the family of God.

He concluded his letter by saying this: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision (being a Jew), nor uncircumcision (Gentile) means anything, but a new creation. As many as live by this rule, peace is on them, and the Israel of God." Galatians 6:15-16

If this doesn't make it clear Paul taught there are only 2 races of people in the earth, born of God and not born of God - he said it a different way earlier:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: For you are all one in Christ Jesus." 3:28

All people are the creatures of God, but only people born of the Spirit are children of God

There is great peace in knowing this. There is no race, no nationality, no soci-economic considerations that really matter - it is only a matter of have you been born of the Spirit, or not?

Paul said in 6:16 'As many as live by this rule, peace is on them...' This RULE. This is the Greek word 'kanon', or the English, canon. It was a straight rod used as we would use a yard or meter stick today. It was a carpenter's tool, used to measure all things by it because of its unerring straightness.

Paul said this fact, that the only thing that matters is the new creation in Christ, is a rule by which all else can be measured.

How this helps

If you are grounded in the fact your spirit has been recreated by God's Spirit, it ends the tendency to go back to religious legalism - which is why Paul dwelt on this truth to the Galatians. Christ in you is the measuring stick by which all else is measured.

How can any teaching, any religious exercise, improve on Christ in you? If you hear a 'prophet' say 'Pray this for 7 days then do this...', you will recognize it as a false teaching for those edicts can't do more for you than Christ who is in you.

If someone tells you in order to please God you must worship on a particular day and not do this or that, you will recognize Christ is in you 24/7 so picking one day as holier than others is ridiculous - You are already a new creation in Him; do people really think worshipping on one day rather than another improves on that?

If you hear someone say you have to do this or that for an open heaven, you'll recognize that as error since Christ is in you already - heaven is completely open to you 24/7 - so jumping through religious hoops adds nothing to Christ in you.

Paul used 'kanon', the measuring stick, because this is the guiding line for salvation in Christ alone, separate from religious works.

This is why....

This is why he said in II Corinthians 5:16-17: "From this point on I know no person by fleshly standards, but by the Spirit...for if any person is in Christ, they are a new creation; Old things have passed away and behold! All things have become new!"

This must be our foundational understanding, which is God's point of view: There are only 2 types of people in the earth; those who have been recreated by the Spirit, and those who haven't. All people have legally been forgiven, but some have received the benefits of the legal action of the cross, making the truth of the cross Alive and their spirits have been recreated. THAT is your ticket to heaven. You are right now a citizen of heaven. You are right now already in eternity. You don't die and pass on to eternity - you are already in eternity as a child of the Father, a member of His household, a citizen of His kingdom. (Hebrews 12:22-23)

So we return to an accident at 56 mph or 91 kph in a posted 55 mph or 90 kph. We return to the old lady who loves God but struggles with bitterness towards her ex-husband. We return to the man with the heart condition falling over dead in front of a porn site on his computer. And we must not forget the woman who ended her life with a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Are they in heaven, even with those sins a present reality in their lives?

We've laid a foundation - you don't go to heaven because Jesus forgave your sins, you get to heaven because your spirit has been recreated by the Holy Spirit. There are therefore only 2 races of people on the planet; citizens of heaven, and citizens of hell. And that's where we'll pick it up next week. Until then, think on these things, blessings

John Fenn
www.cwowi.org

2013-07-20

When Christians die with unrepented sin #2

Hi all,

Last week I listed 4 situations in which Christians in sin died, then asked if they are in heaven: The speeder, the bitter ex, the porn addict, the suicide. I shared how it is our recreated spirit that proves our status as God's children, thus our 'ticket' to heaven.

How big is your God?

If we believe heaven is to be lost by someone's death at 1 mph over the speed limit, which is on the basis of them being in sin when they died, then followed to its logical conclusion not too many believers would actually make it into heaven.

That would make the Father and the Lord Jesus rather small, rather limited, that they couldn't come up with a plan any better than one that gets people born again and welcomed into the heavenly family, only to have the plan dashed to pieces should that believer die while traveling 1 mph over the speed limit, still have some anger towards an ex-spouse, have a hidden sin, or purposely cut their life short. Couldn't God come up with a better plan than that?

I have a pastor friend who grew up in the Nazarene denomination. He said every Sunday he went to the altar to repent and 'get saved', because he was sure if he had committed a sin during the week and had died, he would go to hell. He thought citizenship in heaven and status as a child of God changed with each sin/repent cycle, and he just hoped when he died he was on the 'repent' side of that cycle.

So how does this work?

If I know I've sinned or am sinning, but I don't deal with that sin by asking forgiveness or in some way acknowledging it and turning my heart and mind towards righteousness, and die, do I still go to heaven?

If someone has a habitual sin, like my example of the heart-diseased man with a porn addiction, does that sin have the power to taint his born-again spirit so that he won't go to heaven? Or because he is a child of God does he still go to heaven - but if that is so how does God handle that unrepented sin?

If a person has been through a lot in this life and only comes to God on their death-bed or after years of hardship in the world, does God expect them to have fully resolved every hurt and pain, every mistake and experience BEFORE they go to heaven - or else they won't be granted entrance?

Here today, gone tomorrow?

All these questions are really asking this: Does the Holy Spirit leave me each time I sin?

Does He stay in me if I speed a little while driving, but He might leave if I spoke evil of an anointed minister? Would He stay if I watched a little porn, but leave if I had an affair? Would He stay in me if I thought about depression a lot and just wanted to end it all and get to heaven, but leave me if I actually pulled the trigger or swallowed those pills to end it all? Where is the dividing line between heaven and hell for a believer?

Foundation #1: Earth controls heaven

Though Jesus died on the cross roughly 2,000 years ago, you didn't become born again at your first breath. You had to make a decision later in life, meaning though you responded to the Father's invitation, you still had to decide to believe on Jesus and follow Him. Earth controlled heaven in your salvation. If that was not so, the God who 'wants all mankind to be saved', would just do it for you. (* I Timothy 2:4)

If we resisted the Father's invitation for salvation until we were good and ready, this same principle extends to the smaller unresolved sins in our lives as well - though He may be inviting us to deal with sins and issues in our hearts and lives, we decide when and where and if we will deal with these things. Sometimes we like sin and so protect it in a carefully guarded place in our heart no one knows about. What happens if you die before you were ready to deal with it?

Whether that sin is something like bad feelings toward an ex-spouse you want to see punished just a little more and are resisting Father's prodding to forgive, a speeding habit where you are ignoring His admonition to slow down because you like speed, or an addiction that is there because of unresolved emotional issues you aren't quite ready to face - we control heaven's involvement in our lives.

To say it another way, a sinner sins because it is his nature to do so; A believer sins by choice. (Ephesians 2:3 says we used to be 'by nature children of wrath')

We decide to invite the Father and Lord into our little protected areas, or not. What if only He and you know about this little area - and then you die! What will be His reaction when He sees you?

Foundation #2: The difference between sins and trespasses

Paul said in Ephesians 2: "And you He made alive when you were dead in your trespasses and sins."

The Lord makes a distinction between trespasses and sins, and this is seen from the Old Testament through the New. If you don't understand the difference you will misunderstand the Lord in the gospels, misunderstand the epistles, and build a whole theology on false and incorrect beliefs. So let me clarify.

A sin is an act against God. We can think of a sin therefore as vertical.

A trespass is an act against a person. We can think of a trespass therefore as horizontal.

This means not all sins are trespasses, but all trespasses are sins.

If I trespass against another believer I have also sinned against Christ. I Cor 8:12, Rom 14:9-15 That is why all trespasses are also sins.

The guilt and the injury

New Testament understanding that God makes a distinction between trespasses and sins comes from the Old Testament. In Leviticus 6:1-7 we have the law of the trespass offering.

(I go into more detail on this in my series entitled *Sermon on the Mount 2*, which involves turning the other cheek, walking the extra mile, and other OT and cultural understandings we often missunderstand)

In the trespass offering the person who trespassed against a person could not be forgiven by God until and unless they had first made it right with the person they trespassed against. Not only did they have to restore whatever they did wrong, they had to add 20% interest in a monetary fine to make sure all was now right between the 2 people. ONLY AFTER the restoration and interest payment had been made could they come before God to get their trespass and sin forgiven.

In the Father's mind, the person must mend the damage their trespass did to the other person - the injury - before they could be forgiven vertically - the guilt. Both injury and guilt must be made right for a person's life to be right before God.

The Great Filter

The ramifications of God not forgiving a person's trespass unless they have at least tried to be forgiven by the other person can be seen in our churches today.

Sister so and so bad mouths and speaks evil of another woman in the church, yet goes to church Sunday morning and sings as if she is heaven's personal soloist, like nothing is wrong between her and the other woman out in the congregation. Because she is the one who committed the trespass and has made no effort to repent and make it right, God hasn't forgiven her no matter how many octaves she can hit Sunday morning. When she gets to heaven, she will have deal with it personally with the Lord if she doesn't change.

When you stand praying, forgive

And this is why Jesus made the statement in Mark 11:25-26: "And when you stand praying, forgive if you have something against another, that the Father may forgive you your trespasses. For if you don't forgive another's trespasses, neither will the Father forgive you your trespasses."

This is NOT heaven or hell. This is about horizontal sins, trespasses. If you bind up in your heart someone's trespass against you, you are tying the Father's hands in heaven and His ability to forgive you your trespasses. NOT SINS, but trespasses. Earth controls heaven in this case. If you do the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses even as we forgive those who trespass against us" - then all is well and your life is clean before Him.

Full circle

For example: If the ex-wife who is still bitter in my example dies with that unresolved, her sins are forgiven but that one trespass is not - Paul says she will be saved, though that trespass will be burned away - more next week on what happens 'on the other side'.

Let me close with the questions I know many are asking:

Do I have to go back 15 years to my ex and apologize that I put the burning sack of dog poop on his front step before God forgives me of that trespass? Do I have to go back to my former pastor and apologize for what I said about him 10 years ago? How do I make it right with someone now dead?

The short answer is no, you don't have to run through the caverns of your memory and hunt for any hidden trespass you may have done, large or small. In every context of this teaching by Jesus, James, and Paul, the situation calls for immediate action, but for more distant in the past trespasses you only now understand accurately, His grace covered your ignorance long ago. But from this time forward you know what to do.

And I want to add, by saying 'As you stand praying, forgive', Jesus makes it clear forgiveness is a decision, not a feeling nor emotion. We make the decision to forgive right away, but the feelings

needing to be worked through may take 10 years! Jesus taught forgiving someone is a decision, not an emotion.

Next week: More clarity on this, and gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay and stubble. Until then, blessings
John Fenn

2013-07-27

When Christians die with unrepented sin #3

Hi all,

Did you hear about the Texas pastor claiming the Holy Spirit told him anyone who gave \$52 towards getting new blades for his helicopter will have a transportation breakthrough of their own "in 52 days or 52 weeks"? I have to wonder if some pastors are even going to make it to heaven! If so, does a stunt like this survive heaven's scrutiny?

First things first: Does a Christian who dies go straight to heaven?

The confusion around this question is rooted in the Middle Ages when infant mortality was high and you were in old age if you lived to be 40. A money raising scheme was started that taught there is a middle place for the dead in between heaven and hell where the dead wait for release - and for an offering of course you could pray and send your dead loved one out of there and on to heaven.

And while that teaching may sound corrupt, it is the same principle used by ministers to manipulate people today for instance, when they are told to give \$52 for new blades for the pastor's helicopter to get a transportation breakthrough of their own.

<http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2013/06/19/texas-pastor-donate-to-fix-my-helicopter-and-get-a-new-car-from-god/>

Or I could mention bringing \$100 to the platform at the speaker's feet and you will get healed or have a financial breakthrough. Or put this cloth under your pillow and pray this pray for 7 days and on the 8th day send your prayer request with your best offering to... With preachers doing things like this, we can understand the confusion among believers in this day.

Bible says...Christians go to heaven right away

Paul compares and contrasts the earthly with the heavenly, stating we groan and long to be clothed upon from on high - not that we want to die as much as we just want to be "...clothed by our house which is from heaven." II Corinthians 5:1-10

He compares our bodies to tents and homes saying, "...if the tent which is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (Your glorified body will last forever - eternal in the heavens)

But he turns his readers towards hope, saying this: "Therefore being of good courage, and knowing while we are home (present) in the body we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight), we are of good courage I say, but would prefer to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." v6-8

(And just in case you know someone who believes there is no such thing as sin anymore, all is grace and love with no accountability, v10 says: For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each one of us may receive what is due us for things done while in the body, whether good or bad.)

So this shows a Christian who dies goes straight to heaven - but what about those unresolved sins?

Wow those people were carnal!

He wrote the Corinthians Christians go to heaven when they die, but have you seen what kind of believers they were? They make my examples of the speeder, porn addict, bitter woman and suicide look like spiritual giants by comparison.

Among the issues in Corinth were a man sleeping with his step mother, believers (who met in homes) divided into cliques with the rich people refusing to eat and have the Lord's Supper with the poor people, wives finding their freedom in Christ and flaunting it, refusing to properly dress as local custom required, thus dishonoring themselves, their husbands, and their faith, 2 brothers who sat in the same (house) church suing each other in court instead of being mature enough to settle it between themselves, and much more.

But those are not what he dealt with first - the first sins in their midst he addressed before telling them Christians who die go directly to be with the Lord, is the carnality of living like un-born again people, or as 'mere men' as he put it.

"And I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not able to receive anything else and even now you aren't able for you are still fleshly. Since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly and living like mere (un-born again) people?"

Spiritual loyalty and strife

Here he speaks of people claiming to be of one spiritual camp or the other - I am of Paul or I am of Apollos - The issue wasn't liking one ministry over another, rather letting it get to the point of jealousy and strife among them.

But what if those living as mere unborn again people (in strife and jealous of one another) die before growing up in Christ?

He tells them: "No man can lay a foundation other than that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, each person's work will become evident. The day will show it because it is to be revealed by fire, with the fire itself testing each person's work (actions). If anyone's work remains, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet as through the fire." (3:11-15)

So here we see that Christians who die with carnality built upon the foundation of Jesus in their hearts will be saved, but as by fire - their strife and jealousy likened to wood, hay, and stubble here, which will not survive the Lord's scrutiny.

Later he would speak of walking in love - clearly the things of love are the gold, silver, precious stones which are untouched by fire.

Think of it this way

So I've answered the basic question about what happens to Christians who die with unresolved sin - they go to heaven - yet the works of the flesh will be burned away, though they will be saved. So imagine a believer still filled with anger and hurt and bitterness towards their past, yet they love Jesus - they make it through but all that hurt and unresolved bitterness doesn't - what grace to finally be free! What love to not allow such things into His perfect kingdom of love and peace! Things which bring torment or caused us torment are not allowed in heaven - what grace!

So imagine that woman who committed suicide. Those who murder themselves aren't well in the mind and emotions, yet murder is a sin that can be forgiven (ask Moses about that one). The emotional damage that caused them to not think right and end their life will be burned away by the Lord, allowing only them in their purest and most whole condition to come into heaven - what love and grace is the burning of the chaff!

Paul considered himself not to be 'perfect' or mature yet, so we will all have unresolved things in our hearts and minds when we die. But anything not of the Lord will graciously be burned away so that we enter heaven without that burden: Who we really are in Christ will pass through, free from fear and worry and sins!

I think the larger question is...

Once we settle that Christians with unresolved sins go directly to heaven whether they lose everything but their salvation, or receive a reward, it still makes us wonder about that 'Christian' who sleeps around, bar-hops, or otherwise lives like the world.

If Christ is truly within them, how can they live with no apparent progress in their walk with the Lord?

So I must ask; Can a person have an experience with the Holy Spirit but not be born again? Can a person claim to be born again, even go to a born-again church, but not walk with the Lord in part because they aren't really born again?

People may have a genuine experience with the Holy Spirit, but not be born again.

Consider the person of Lydia in Acts 16:14. Paul and his group went to where Jewish women met by the river in Philippi to pray in the hopes of telling them about Jesus. We are told that Lydia was a 'worshipper of God' and listened to Paul.

Note - she was a worshipper of God but not born again. THEN the text says 'the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken of by Paul' Only then did she believe and was baptized. Up until that point she worshipped the God of Israel, but did not believe in Jesus. Do you know people who worship the same God, our God of Israel, but aren't born again? Lydia was one of those people before she met Paul.

Jesus also told the woman at the well in John 4:22 that she didn't know what she was worshipping - yet clearly she was a spiritual woman, and being a Samaritan, thought she was worshipping the one true God. Yet she didn't know what she was worshipping Jesus said. Do you think there are people in the world who worship what they think is God, but in reality they don't know what they worship? Obviously, yes.

Do you suppose there are people in the pews of our churches who are worshippers of God, maybe they even feel the presence of the Holy Spirit, sing the songs, donate money, yet don't open their hearts to Him?

Consider Judas

Judas was one of the original 12, which means he went out teamed with the others to lay hands on the sick, cast out demons, and cleanse the lepers. He was there to hear the report of the other 70 who were sent out when they all rejoiced that the demons were subject to the name of Jesus. Luke 9:1-2, 10:1, 17

Judas spent the same 3 1/2 years with Jesus the others did and saw all His miracles - yet he rejected the Lord and betrayed Him.

When I was a newly born again Christian, a family member went on a youth group retreat one weekend, and came back on fire for God. He said he didn't know what happened to him, but that he felt something he had never felt before - peace, rest, joy. But it didn't 'stick'. There was no change. He clearly experienced a touch from the Holy Spirit, but...

To this day some 40 years later, he doesn't know nor walk with God. He hasn't raised his kids to know the Lord, doesn't go to church, yet respects me and what I do. He had a single weekend where he experienced the Holy Spirit when he was 14, but wasn't born again.

There are other examples in scripture of people who had experiences with the Lord and Holy Spirit but were unchanged, but I've run out of room today. Next week I also want to address the ongoing cleansing process of the Lord in our lives which cleanses us of sins we don't even know about, and other issues. So stay tuned.

Until next week, blessings,
John Fenn

2013-08-03

When Christians die with unrepented sin #4

Hi all,

I've received so many emails with questions this week that today I'm going to answer them 'en masse'. Yet for all the emails, the questions really just revolved around 3 subjects, which means there is a huge need to know in the body of Christ in these areas.

1) What about heaven/hell experiences of people who have gone and returned?

When I shared last week about Christians going straight to heaven, I received many emails back asking about people who claim to have died and come back, or were shown hell or heaven. The questions include everything from are these experiences real, to what about their claims of what they saw?

The first question about whether people can go to heaven and return is seen in scripture. The whole of The Revelation from chapter 4 to the end is about the apostle John who was caught up to heaven and shown events in the last days of this age and beyond, returning from heaven safe and sound to tell the story.

In II Corinthians 12: 1-10 Paul talks about being 'caught up into Paradise' (I'll explain below), Paradise being a New Testament term for a part of heaven. So the answer is yes, it is possible for people to have visions and even be caught up in the Spirit to heaven and return. And I know several people who claim to have been taken to hell, most all the credible ones I know had the experience before believing in Jesus.

What about the things they claim to see? The experiences people have mentioned to me include several African women who claim to have been to hell and saw women who wore jewelry in hell for that offense, and a Nigerian man who claimed to see non-tithers in hell. Those who have been to heaven claim, in the case of a 4 year old boy, that everyone in heaven has wings and the Father is about 30 feet tall (10 meters). Who and what to believe?

Spiritual experiences have to be communicated through our flawed minds - we aren't perfect - and that means people who aren't grounded in the Word nor mature in the faith or life can allow culture, religion, immaturity of age, and other factors to influence the understanding and telling of an experience. Many who don't know the Word and some who aren't pure in heart relate these experiences within those shortcomings.

Nigeria and much of African Christian culture is currently being swept up in the Prosperity gospel that had its hold over the US in the 1980's and 1990's. A holiness movement is part of that as well with great debate going on about women and their hair and jewelry and proper clothing to wear.

So it should come as no surprise that some from there who claim to have been to hell, say they saw non-tithers and women who wore jewelry there - if they truly did see hell, they either consciously or subconsciously God only knows, twisted the experiences to their cultural expectations.

They don't know Paul's instructions not to braid hair nor display costly pearls and jewelry in I Timothy 2:9 was a reference to Roman styles at the time. Roman women showed off their wealth and status by braiding their hair and piling it high on their heads, if wealthy enough they added braided wigs, interlacing hair and clothes with pearls and jewels.

All Paul said was not to show off wealth but to dress modestly - but the culture of Nigerian/African holiness lifts the verse out of context to teach it immoral to wear jewelry, and if/when these women have an experience, they add in claiming to have seen women in hell for the offense of braiding hair and wearing jewelry. Then people easily influenced by spiritual experiences leave the Word or don't gain understanding of the Word and Spirit to believe these errors.

The little boy who's experiences are told in the great little book, *Heaven is for Real*, was only 4 years old when he went to heaven. Again, it should therefore come as no surprise he said everyone in heaven has wings (they don't) or that the Father God seemed 30 feet tall (He isn't) - he was a 4 year old and the telling of all of his experience took place over a period of years. I'm 6'6" tall and I've had little kids look at me like I was 30' tall, but if a child says in a book the Father is 30' tall, pretty soon sister so and so will claim she went to heaven and saw the Father 30' tall as well - such is human tendency for error and attention grabbing.

It is therefore the balance of Word and Spirit through people of upright character that you are looking for in a person who claims to have had experiences in heaven or hell, with angels or demons.

2) Where does our heavenly body come from?

Several expressed relief that there is no such thing as 'soul sleep' nor purgatory, and that the Word says to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. The NT uses 'sleep' of the righteous dead to indicate a temporary condition, as Jesus used of Jairus' daughter in Mark 5:39 whom He raised from the dead.

Unfortunately some have taken its use out of context and culture of the day to build false doctrine around it.

But what part(s) of us go to heaven and how do we get a new body?

First understand heaven and hell. There used to be 2 holding compartments in the earth, in the spirit realm. (Not someplace geologists can drill down to in the natural, but in the spirit realm inside the earth is the location nonetheless)

2 holding places in the earth

Luke 16:19-31 illustrates these 2 places in the story of the rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. The evil rich man went to hell, and across a great chasm from him was the beggar Lazarus with Abraham in the place called Abraham's bosom, or Paradise as it was also known at the time.

Abraham told the rich man those in hell could not cross over to Paradise, nor could they in Paradise cross over to hell to help them. These two compartments in the earth, hell and Paradise/Abraham's bosom, existed across from each other up until the cross.

Paradise is where the righteous dead went until their sins were paid for, hell was the holding place for the unrighteous. This is why Jesus told the repentant man on the cross, 'Today you will be with me in Paradise'. Jewish tradition says Paradise was a park-like place with trees and grass and water and hills. (Luke 23:41)

Captives?

"When He ascended up on high He led captive a host of captives, and He received (and gave) gifts to and for mankind. Now this expression, that He ascended, means that **He first descended into the lower parts of the earth**. He who descended is the One who also ascended far above all..."
Ephesians 4:8-9

Notice when Jesus died He descended to the lower parts, plural, in the earth - Paradise and hell. Peter tells us among other things He announced to the people of Noah's day essentially, that He was the True Ark. The word often translated 'preach' in that passage isn't preach at all, but 'to announce as a herald' - no invitation, just an announcement. I Peter 3:18-22

Let go!

When the Lord had just risen from the dead and Mary was clinging to Him, He told her: "Stop clinging to me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father..." But later that evening He appeared to the disciples. John 20:17

So why did He tell Mary He needed to ascend, only to return later that day to have a meal with them? As Ephesians 4:8 says, He led those once captive by their sins, now captive to Himself. Jesus led the whole population of Paradise and Paradise itself up to heaven because He had paid for their sins. There now remains only 1 holding place in the earth, hell.

Hebrews 9:11-12, 14, 23-24 reveals at His resurrection Christ entered into heaven itself to present His sacrifice to the Father, that the Judge could declare the sin of the world paid. Then that evening He went down to appear to the disciples, as He did off and on over the next 40 days until His ascension.

This is why Paul said in II Corinthians 12:4 that he was caught 'up' into Paradise - ever since the resurrection, Paradise has been up in heaven - and that friends, is they how and why Christians now

go directly to heaven when they die. Paradise was taken captive by Christ and carried there - amazing!

3) So what part of a person is in heaven, and where does my glorified body come from?

We are made up of 3 parts operating in a trinity. Paul said in I Thessalonians 5:23 - I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless until you meet the Lord. Best case scenario is the we are moved from the Life in our spirit outward to our soul (mind) which is being renewed, and then to our obedient body - flowing spirit to soul to body. (This flow of spirit-soul-body is exactly in the likeness of God: He flows from the Father through the Spirit to the body. This is why we pray to the Father, the answer comes via the Spirit, to us the body. Spirit-soul-body.)

David noted in Psalm 51:6: "You desire truth in the inward parts; in the hidden part you have put wisdom."

The inwards 'parts' are our spirit and soul. The 'hidden' part is our spirit. No one can divide the spirit and soul, for the soul flows from the spirit. Your spirit and soul make you, you.

The only One who can divide between soul and spirit is the Living Person of the Word of God, who is likened to a Living 2-edge sword in Hebrews 4:12-13: "The Word of God is a living 2 edged sword, able to divide between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and critiques the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And all things are open and naked before Him with whom we have to do." (The heart being our spirit/soul, with various scriptures emphasizing either spirit or soul or both depending on the author's point when using the word 'heart')

So when your earth body dies, your spirit and soul go to heaven. You look like you, talk like you - this earth body is more like a suit of clothes you take off to get to heaven. Paul said in I Corinthians 15:35-49 that this earth body will be changed to heavenly material - but what of those whose body has returned to dust?

Physics lesson

Matter never ceases to exist, it only changes form. The camp fire wood you burned 25 years ago still exists in the form of ashes that became part of the earth, smoke that became part of the atmosphere and most likely then part of rain that has since washed into the ocean, and so on. I still remember the day my 6th grade teacher, Mr. Land, grossed us out by telling us this fact and illustrating it by saying we may have breathed in the dust of the body of Julius Caesar or that of dinosaurs.

How the Father gathers and transforms the remains of millions of bodies over the centuries into heavenly material for their glorified bodies, or whether He skips that and gives us all bodies made of heavenly material from elsewhere, we don't know. But we do know what the Word says, that we will one day have a body made of eternal material, and for this we groan, waiting to be clothed upon from on high. (Romans 8:19-23)

Returning to the subject next week. Until then, blessings!

John Fenn

www.cwowi.org and email at cwowi@aol.com

2013-08-10

Christians/unrepented sin #5

Hi all,

I've been talking about Christians dying with unresolved sin. Today I'll share about believers being judged by the Lord, and how to prevent that. But first:

Trespass in the New Testament

When I was the Executive Director of a large Bible school in Tulsa, I had a student urgently request to see me. Nervously he began to tell me that he wanted to confess his sin to me as commanded in James 5:16: "Confess your faults/sins one to another, and pray for one another that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous man avails much."

I stopped him before he could go any further, and gave him the lesson I'm about to give you. The word 'sins' in James 5:16 is the Greek word, trespass. James didn't command us to confess our sins to one another, he said to confess our trespasses one to another.

Confessional?

In other words, to go to a confessional or just blurt out what sin you committed on Saturday night to a friend or pastor or other person is NOT scriptural. What IS scriptural is to confess your trespass to the one you trespassed against - that is what James is saying. That is why he said to then after confessing your trespass, pray for one another that you be healed (in the relationship).

The Bible interprets the Bible, and James 5:16 is nothing more than a summary of Jesus' instructions of Matthew 18:15, where He said if your brother has trespassed against you, go to him alone to seek restoration. That is what James is talking about.

Paul made the same statement in a different way, again expanding on Jesus' instructions in Matthew 18:15, but in Galatians 6:1-10:

"Brethren, if a person is overtaken in a fault (Greek: trespass), you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering yourselves lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens in this way and so fulfill the law of Christ."

Those witnesses

You will recall from what Jesus said in Matthew 18:15 that if the one trespassed against/trespasser can't make peace one on one, he is to take 1 or 2 witnesses - meaning those who know of the trespass and difficulty between the 2 of them, and together those 2-3 are to try to restore their friend.

This is what Paul is saying - if a brother is overtaken in a trespass, you who are spiritual - not involved in the trespass but are aware of it, go to him and restore him if he will allow it. If not Paul said, that man "...thinks himself something when he is nothing, and deceives himself. Let him prove his own actions and bear his own burden."

In other words - you try to make peace, but if the person has shut the door because they want to stand their ground, Paul said let them be proven right or wrong by their actions - time will tell the tale. If you want more on Jesus' teaching of Matthew 18:15-20 get my Sermon on the Mount series and the forgiveness series.

Your authority

Consider the authority Jesus has given us. At His resurrection He said: "Whoever's sins you retain, they are retained. Whosoever sin's your loose, they are loosed." John 20:23

That doesn't mean you can say 'Father forgive everyone in my nation' - but following Jesus' example, He forgave those who directly and personally sinned - trespassed - against Him. Notably His forgiveness of the Roman soldiers assigned to crucifixion detail: "Father, forgive them, because they don't know what they are doing."

What they won't be accountable for

If we play this out, understand that if none of those soldiers ever believed in Jesus, on the last day of all their sins in life, the sin of crucifying the Lord would not be one they would be accountable for. Amazing.

The same example is seen by Steven in Acts 7, who in the middle of his execution requested, 'Lord, don't lay this sin to their account.' That again means, even if none of those men ever got saved, at judgement that sin against Steven would not be on their record.

This means when you say, 'Father, forgive sister so and so of their trespass against me' - they won't be accountable for it when they stand before the Lord. What authority that God would listen to us!

Jesus is on our side

You see, the Lord wants us to come before Him with as little baggage as possible. To that end John says in I John 5:16: "If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin that is not unto death and he will ask, and

He will give him life for those who sin a sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death, and I'm not saying he can pray for that."

A sin not unto death is any sin other than rejecting Jesus. He is saying the same thing Jesus, Paul, and James said - if someone has trespassed against you or maybe you are the 1 or 2 witnesses involved - you 'see' that sin, then you can ask the Father to forgive them and it will be forgiven.

The sin to death is if a believer rejects his salvation, which is to blaspheme the Holy Spirit for the Holy Spirit is the agent of salvation. Therefore the sin to death is rejecting the Lord. That is a sin you can't ask the Lord to forgive that person for, because they know full well and of their own free will, commit it.

Walk in what you know

John also said in I John 1:7: "If we walk in the light as He is in the light (our 'vertical' walk with the Lord is right), and we have fellowship one with another (our 'horizontal' walk with others is right), the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin."

He refers to our vertical and horizontal walk with God, and states that there is an ongoing cleansing process of forgiveness when we walk in the light we have, and walk in fellowship with each other. An ongoing process of forgiveness flows naturally from walking in what you know to walk in. What if you step out of that light?

That is why v9 follows - if we step out of that light we sin; then just confess (admit) it and be forgiven, once again cleansed as in verse 7, "from all sin". In other words, you confess what you know of, and He automatically cleanses us from the ones we don't know about.

Folks - we live in fellowship with God. We don't wake up and have to pray and worship and read and confess your way into His good graces each morning - we live in fellowship with Him. We approach Him as one already having Him live in your heart. We battle the enemy from the position of having already won. We live as one at peace with God and man, and having already won over the enemy. Romans 5:1-2

Judgement and believers

But what if a Christian wants to hang onto someone's trespass against them, or they want to hold onto a sin in their own heart and lives? What is the process where the Lord deals with them?

There was a problem in Corinth. The rich people refused to eat with the poor people. Yes, it was the local culture for the rich and poor to be separate in life in that day and age, but in Christ all are equal and within the house churches that started in Justus' house, believers were expected to eat and fellowship together.

(I Corinthians 11:17-22, Acts 18:7-8)

In other words, there was bias and prejudice in Corinth. Doesn't that seem like a small sin compared to what we would consider 'big' sins? But Paul makes this amazing statement about this sin of prejudice:

"For this reason, not discerning the Lord's body (believers they are to fellowship as well as Christ's sacrifice), many among you are weak and sickly, and many have died early. For if we judge ourselves we won't be judged by the Lord. But if we are judged by the Lord it is so that we won't be condemned with the world. (11: 27-32)

He was asking them to judge themselves of prejudice in their hearts so the Lord won't have to judge them...and that's where we will pick it up next week. What is the process when the Lord tries to get us to judge ourselves before He steps in? What happens to a person whom the Lord judges? We've already seen that they will go to heaven, just early as Paul stated above - but how does the Lord do this? Until then,

blessings,
John Fenn

2013-08-17

Christians/unrepented sin #6

Hi all,
I've been talking about Christians and unrepented sin...

Serious subject

In Corinth I ended last week talking about the prejudice in the body that Paul addressed in chapter 11 of his first letter. Some in Corinth were eating and drinking before they came to the meeting, which was in someone's home, rather than eat with those brothers and sisters they didn't like at the (house) church meeting. Because they were not discerning the Lord's body - both His sacrifice and the body of Christ before them - Paul said many among them were weak and sickly and many had even died before their time.

What does judgment look like?

What should have happened is that the rich people dealt with their prejudice and renewed their minds to all being equal in Christ - their love walk - and eaten with those they didn't like. That act of dealing with their hearts is what Paul said is 'judging ourselves'.

When you got saved it was actually an act of judging yourself. You thought you were merely praying the sinners prayer, or were calling out to God for help, which may have been the case. But spiritually, you were judging yourself. You judged yourself a sinner and took God's remedy for your sin, or you judged the circumstances of life were beyond you and called out to Him - either way, you were making a judgment call that said you had come to the end of self and needed Him to step into your life.

Because you judged yourself, you will not be judged by Him. You will stand before Christ to give account of your life since being saved yes, but not judged in terms of heaven/hell. You have already passed from death to life because you judged yourself. Today when we sin and feel that grievance in our heart and admit it to the Lord - we are again judging ourselves. When we judge ourselves that sin is removed from our account.

The process of refusal and judgment

Paul outlined the process the Word - both written and the Living Word Jesus - uses to correct His body. In II Timothy 3:16 he said this:

"All scripture is God-breathed (living) and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness."

'Teaching' means exactly that - which tells us that first the Lord will try to teach us the error of our ways as well as teaching us the right way to go. 'Reproof' is used to express the conviction felt when we sin. The Word both written and Living, convicts us in our spirit when we sin or start to get off His path for us.

'Correction' means 'put straight' and is used to describe placing someone back on a walking path, as if they had temporarily swerved off the path, but now He is trying to direct us back on that path.

'Instruction' means 'to train children' and carries with it learning how to control our impulses - leaving childhood for maturity.

Hebrews 12:9 asks: We were subject to the fathers of our flesh who corrected us according to what they thought was right, shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? This shows us the Father's efforts to correct us or to get us to judge ourselves if heeded, will yield life. The fathers of our flesh corrected us in our flesh. The Father of our spirit corrects us spiritually, at least initially.

Deaf ears

But what if a person refuses to be taught, refuses to address the conviction in their spirit to deal with it, refuses His efforts to put us back on the right path, refuses to reign in their impulses and immaturity and grow up in Him?

To be judged by the Lord means a person knows what to do but refuses. The Lord's dealing with us in these matters starts quite gently and then increases in intensity the more we resist. Go back to the

person of Matthew 18:15-20 who first had 1 person go to him, then 2 friends, then the leadership of the church, in ever increasing intensity of effort to get him to repent. So it is with the Lord with us.

Discrete

First He keeps things private, in our hearts between Him and us. This may go on for days or weeks or months or years. If we don't give in to Him - remember He is on our side and wants us to come before Him on that last day with nothing to burn away - He increases His efforts, by maybe letting us hear a sermon where 1 line we know by the impact in our heart is directed at us from Him.

Maybe it is a dream that we know is a warning to judge ourselves and get our heart right. Elihu told Job that God had been trying to reach him: "In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon man, then God opens his ears to instruction that He may withdraw man from his (sinful) purpose." Job 33:14-17

The truth?

If we don't judge ourselves often we'll see the impact of that sin in our health, as Paul said of the Corinthians. Recent medical studies show the link between emotional and physical health - Paul could have told them that! According to Paul in I Corinthians 11, harboring and protecting sin in our heart can make us 'weak and sickly' and even he said, many had died early. But still that is private between that person and the Lord.

People may see the external things - your health problems - but have no idea the Lord has been dealing with you for years about prejudice, or maybe your eating habits. Then something will happen and they will ask 'Why did this happen O Lord?', and only you and the Lord know why it happened.

They may hear of a fender bender you had, but have no idea He had been dealing with you for months about driving while texting - but He allowed a minor fender bender to let you know you are pushing the limits. And you will blame it on the other person, while hiding the truth about God's dealings with you.

He may not give you favor with the bank on the overdrafts anymore, shutting down favor because he has been dealing with you for years about spending discipline - but all you will do is complain that the bank is being mean to you, and that's what others will hear, not knowing the truth.

Disclaimer

That doesn't mean people who die or get sick or have car accidents or overcharge their bank account were all judged of the Lord - no! Sometimes things happen we just don't understand or are out of our control. My point is to show the ways of the Spirit and the human heart in some situations.

Wood, hay, stubble again

The above examples when not dealt with, make up the wood, hay, and stubble that we carry to heaven and will be burned away - the truth about how He was dealing with us on our prejudice or eating habits that we hid from ourselves and others, the half truths which are also half lies we told about driving distracted being the cause of our fender bender, the out of control spending that we lie about to others, blaming the bank - all these are examples of things carried into heaven as wood, hay and stubble.

Being mature in Christ means admitting to ourselves and the Lord that He is dealing with us on an issue. It means when tempted to tell someone of that mean old bank mistake, you admit it was your fault and God has been dealing with you about discipline.

These are the things that either mature us to be more Christ-like, or they stay in our hearts not dealt with until we meet Him face to face and have to have that stuff burned away and truth admitted.

He really hasn't changed

The Lord follows the same pattern He outlines in the Word. He will deal with us 1 on 1, just us and Him. If we don't repent, as in Matthew 18:15-16, He will allow someone close to us in on our secret. Maybe a spouse, maybe a pastor or trusted friend. His purpose of expanding the 'need to know' circle is to bring us out of that sin and into wholeness - life.

I've been a 'Covenant Eyes' partner with a few men as it relates to pornography, situations where I was the only one to know of their struggles, and in some cases brought into that situation by the person and the spouse.

At times a person reaches out to another, which is all part of the Lord expanding that circle to the 1 or 2 witnesses. Maybe it's anger, maybe marital issues, maybe an addiction - but people often seek the help of others when they get to a point that just God and them isn't enough. All this is the process of God's judgement, and is healthy, as He does all He can to get us to judge ourselves so He won't have to step in directly.

The next step of Matthew 18:15-20 you will recall, is to 'tell it to the church'. That does not mean publish someone's adultery in the church bulletin. Again the Bible interprets the Bible, and we see just such a situation in the life of Paul in Acts 15, when he comes before the apostles and elders to explain himself, having been accused of preaching to Gentiles and then not making them obey the law of Moses. (guilty)

So Matthew 18's example of 'tell it to the church', was understood by the apostles as seen in Acts 15, to mean privately to leadership, for that is what they did in the case of Paul. (v6)

Jesus then said in Matthew 18:17 if he won't listen to leadership, treat him as a publican and tax collector. Unfortunately some pastors teach that means to shun them, but once again the Bible interprets the Bible. Jesus had earlier said in Matthew 5:43-48 we are to love those hard to love, and do good to them, walking in love as our Father does.

In other words, just love that brother who would not judge himself/repent when 1 went to him, nor when the 2 others did, nor to the leadership - then all you can do is love him. That is why Jesus immediately said in Matthew 18:18-20 that where those original 2 or 3 that went to him at the first, are gathered in prayer for the man, He is there in their midst as the Great Shepherd of the sheep. And their prayers are agreement to ask the Shepherd to go into the highways and byways to retrieve their friend.

I've run out of room again, but will conclude this topic next week. There are many scriptural examples of the Lord judging a person, including a man being turned over to Satan to die early though he would be saved, a man not able to receive the Baptism with the Holy Spirit because his heart wasn't right, grace running out for Jezebel, and so much more. Until then, blessings,

John Fenn

www.cwowi.org and email me at cwowi@aol.com

2013-08-24

Christians/unrepented sin #7

Hi all,

I thought this week would be the end of the series on Christians dying with unrepented sin, but there are too many examples, so I'll finish next week - dealing with the Lord judging us if we don't judge ourselves.

It seems there are 2 extremes of teachings often heard - the 'Jesus never judges us, sin is past, grace is here so I'm not accountable to anyone' teaching, and the 'God is just waiting for me to step out of line and then POW, He will judge me' teaching. Let us find balance through the Word.

Jesus does judge Christians

In I Corinthians 11:29-32 Paul says of those prejudiced people: "For all those who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgement against themselves. For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned with the rest of the world."

Unless one wishes to pick and choose which verses of the Word they believe are for today (and some do), this passage says the Lord WILL judge a Christian IF:

- 1) The person refuses to judge themselves.
- 2) Their refusal to judge themselves puts them in a position of potentially losing their salvation - '...when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.'

As I stated last week, when you got saved you judged yourself. When you admit sins as you commit them, you are judging yourself. Therefore you are not in danger of being judged by the Lord. Only those who refuse to deal with their sins to the point they could lose their salvation are potential candidates for Jesus judging them by calling them home early.

There are lesser judgements He makes as well, not salvation related but rather related to growing up in Christ, but that will be next week, so stay tuned. Today is about those who potentially could lose their salvation if Jesus doesn't step in and bring them home.

Some examples

I arrived just as he died, his chest just collapsing as his last breath escaped. He had been a Christian since his teen years, and now at age 42 he was dead, an alcoholic whose liver had failed. His lifestyle was to be in bondage to alcohol for a few months at a time, to the extent he was known as one of the town drunks, then go to church and clean up his life for a few weeks or months, then he would go back to the bottle again.

I asked the Father; 'Do you want to raise him from the dead?' and I heard immediately: "No, I've brought him home lest he commit a worse sin."

In the Lord's great goodness, after years of this man's lifestyle of sin/repent, sin/repent, and not able to break through into permanent wholeness, the Lord removed His hand of grace which allowed the abuse his liver had taken through the years to be manifest in his body - his liver failed almost immediately the last time he left being sober to pick up the alcohol again.

In John 5:14 Jesus told the man who had been lame for 38 years before being healed: "Go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come to you." Jesus isn't saying the man had to be sinless the rest of his life, but rather that as a lifestyle not to sin, lest a worse thing (hell) come upon him.

That Jezebel spirit

I have a cd/MP3 series on what the Word states the 'Jezebel spirit' really is which you can get if interested, which is nothing like what is commonly taught, but my focus here is on the Lord's actions not hers. In Revelation 2:20-23 He says:

"...you tolerate that woman Jezebel...I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her fornication...Beware, I am throwing her on a bed, and those who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great distress and afflictions, unless they repent of her doings, and I will strike her children dead." (her followers, not literal children)

Notice the apostle John reports the same conditions as Paul does - people who are given time to judge themselves but do not, with the result of the Lord judging them, and again, sickness/affliction - but remember Paul said He does this that we are not condemned with the world. So even here we see His great mercy.

Corinth

Among the believers in Corinth was a man who had a sexual relationship with his step-mother. Paul said that level of sin wasn't seen even among sinners. As stated in I Corinthians 5:1-13, no one confronted him, but rather accepted it and some even boasted of his exploit. Paul told them they should have confronted the man and dealt with it as a (house church) body. Because they did not, he had to step in to deal with it, saying:

"...I have decided to turn this man over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." v5

In other words, the Lord would remove His grace from the man's life, allowing him to suffer the consequences of his sin, which would mean an untimely death. Whether that was illness or accident we don't know, but we do know the man's life would be cut short so that he could make it to heaven, lest he continue down the path of sin and lose his salvation altogether. 'That his spirit may be saved...' Paul said.

Notice the process - the man sinned but didn't deal with it when he had been given time to repent. Secondly, no one in the body of the local home based church confronted him. Because the man refused to judge himself, he was to be turned over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh.

Let me say that this isn't something anyone can do. Paul was the apostle to the Corinthians, so he had authority before God on their behalf. I remember being in a small group praying for a relative of someone in the group, when a woman suddenly 'commanded' him over to Satan for an early death - much to the surprise of the man's relative who had simply asked for prayer for him! You cannot decide you have simply had enough of someone and think you can turn them over to Satan - the Lord won't listen to that prayer.

Turning over to Satan

In my nearly 40 years walking with the Lord I can only think of a handful of times I've been moved by the Lord to turn someone over to Satan and be taken to heaven lest they lose their salvation.

A case of mental illness, but he loved the Lord

The first involved a young man who was mentally ill. He loved the Lord, but had been kicked out of Bible school for unrestrained 'words' for people, among other behavior, leading to a stay in a mental institution. By the time he came back home and to our church, he was seeing demons nearly all the time, and tried to run them over with his truck.

The first accident he had from seeing and then trying to run over demons was about 1am one morning. He knocked on our door a little after that, having walked from the accident site. He said he saw a demon on a barbed wire fence, so tried to run him over - taking out a line of fence and damaging his truck. Over several weeks he got worse and worse, repeatedly trying to run over demons resulting in other damaged fences, driving across fields, and so on. His strong Christian parents were very concerned, and we all prayed.

Barb and I talked and prayed as his behavior continued, realizing there was only one solution, though he was only in his early 20's. Medical science had no answers, he would not or could not apply anything I had told him, and he refused to give up his desire to run demons over with his truck.

Finally I prayed a prayer I had never prayed before: "Father, we are all at an end. We don't want him to totally lose his mind, but something is clearly wrong beyond our understanding. His ultimate deliverance would be to go to heaven, for there seems no earthly cure nor his willingness to deal with it. As his pastor I ask that you remove your hand of grace and take him home, at your discretion and totally ignore me if I'm out of line." Or words to that effect.

Some 7 days later we got a call - he had died in a 1 car accident. No one knew why in the world he would drive off the side of the road right there, and at highway speed. But I did - he was chasing another demon. He died instantly when his truck hit an embankment of a creek. I was shaken to my boots that what I had prayed had actually happened.

The Sunday following his funeral, during our worship service, suddenly I saw him standing on the platform smiling at me. 2 other people saw him and several others said they were aware of him watching us that day as well. Lest you think that is weird, remember (dead) Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus, Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, and the apostle John saw and talked to people already in heaven in The Revelation.

Witnesses

Hebrews 12:1 says we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, the Word indicating they are allowed to witness parts of our lives from time to time, as in the case of Moses and Elijah in Jesus' life.

Caution - Let us not think that everyone that is sick or with a chronic condition must have some hidden sin that must be repented of, for that is not the case in scripture. But it is also true that sometimes as seen in I Corinthians 11 with the case of the prejudice in the hearts of some there, they were weak and sickly because they would not discern the body of Christ and judge themselves. My topic has a narrow application, but worth sharing on the ways of the Lord in judging believers and the whole process.

I've run out of room this week. Next week the conclusion, which will be lesser judgements from the Lord NOT resulting in an early death. Until then, blessings,
John Fenn
www.cwowi.org and email me at cwowi@aol.com

2013-08-31

Christians/unrepented sin #8

Hi all,

In this last of the series I share judgements of the Lord in the lives of Christians that do not lead to death. Today I'll share how the Lord exposes secret sin or secret impurities in our hearts if we won't deal with them privately between Him and us. Next week I start a series naturally related to this one; When do we cut off fellowship with someone? But for today...

Redefining lukewarm

Laodemia is mentioned in Revelation 3. The city had important financial and medical centers and was very rich. To give you an idea how wealthy, after the city was destroyed by an earthquake in the year 60 AD, about 40 years before The Revelation was written, citizens rebuilt the city from their own wealth, refusing federal money from Rome. Can you imagine any city today, leveled by an earthquake but being wealthy enough the citizens could rebuild it bigger and better out of their own bank accounts? They were rich.

They had a lot of health clinics, especially eye clinics, because of thermal springs outside of town. People came from all over the Roman Empire to soak in the naturally hot water, have mud baths, and from these eye salves were made and applied to diseased eyes.

The city got its water from these hot springs via an aqueduct. But the arriving water was too hot to be able to drink right away, yet too cool to immediately be used in cooking - it had to either cool down or be heated up to be useful for anything - it was lukewarm.

Jesus, always wanting to make His teaching understandable, refers to this when He addresses them:

"I know your life and that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth! (Why?) Because you say, 'I am rich. I have prospered and grown wealthy. I have need of nothing.'"

But you don't realize you are actually wretched, pitiable, poor, and blind, and naked. Therefore I counsel you to buy me gold tried in the fire, that you may be truly wealthy, and white clothes to clothe you **to keep the shame of your nudity from being seen**, and put salve on your eyes that you may see.

Those who I love, I tell their faults to and convict and convince them, and reprove and chasten them. So be enthusiastic and in earnest and with burning zeal repent (change your mind and attitude). I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears and listens to my voice and heeds what I say and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he eat with Me..." (Revelation 3:14-22, Amplified Version)

Lukewarm; a Christian near you!

Being lukewarm isn't that you can't work up the same level of emotion at pastor's messages. It isn't being bored with morning scripture reading. It is spiritual blindness brought on by self-deceit which focuses on money and outward appearance, thinking prosperity is the badge of God's blessing and that you have need of nothing. That is how Jesus defined being lukewarm in this passage.

Spiritual reality

Of greater interest to my topic today is the phrase, "Buy me gold tried in the fire that you may be truly wealthy and clothe you, **to keep the shame of your nudity from being seen.**" Their nudity is not physical, but spiritual - they aren't righteous before Him in this area. Revelation 19:7-8 says 'the bride has made herself ready, and to her was given fine linen, clean and white, for fine linen is the righteousness of saints.'

Unfortunately we are raised to think a person is either 100% in right standing before God, or 100% not in right standing before God. But not a single one of us is perfect, which means we can be 100% righteous in some areas, but maybe in 1 or 2 or more areas we are unrighteous.

A matter of degrees

Perhaps an otherwise mature believer holds onto unforgiveness against a sibling for something they did 10 years earlier. That person is right before the Lord in every other area - growing in love, in knowledge, and so on - except for that 1 area concerning their sibling. And it is that 1 area the Lord will deal with. That 1 area is the wood, hay and stubble that will be burned away at judgement if not dealt with. But that 1 area doesn't send a person to hell - it just means in that one area they aren't right before God.

To put it in natural terms - you may have an immature son or daughter who say, continually forgets to keep their room neat or forgets to empty the trash or breaks curfew you set for them, but you don't kick them out of the family for their immaturity in that 1 or 2 areas. In other areas they are the model child, so you overlook and try to work on the shortcomings of character while accepting whole heartedly that which is good and mature in them. Same with the Father and Lord.

The great graciousness of God is often mistaken as a stamp of approval on a person's life. A back-biting person in church may be blessed in every other area of life, and the person wronged may think something like; "Well, the Lord is blessing them in the rest of their life, so it must be me instead of them." or "That minister may be a drunk and adulterer, but his meetings are sure anointed so God must be OK with him."

Not understanding God honors any part of His Word even a donkey might utter, Him healing someone is not a stamp of approval on the donkey that talks. Someone may think 'God is blessing the whole package'. Wrong. He is so good He blesses what He can, and because He is discreet, He keeps the matters He is trying to deal with in that person's heart, confidential - for now.

At this point their unrighteousness in an area is between Him and them only - unseen by human eyes, a private issue in the heart of the believer that Jesus doesn't want to make public. But He threatens to expose their unrighteousness to others if they don't repent. (I'll talk about this 'matter of degrees' in next month's cd/MP3 series, so stay tuned)

A person's unrighteousness exposed

Some of you will remember the Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker scandals of the 1980's. Jim was convicted of financial crimes though an affair with a secretary was also exposed. Swaggart was caught with a prostitute and admitted he had battled porn since he was a teenager, if memory serves.

In recent years Ted Haggard's battle with homosexuality was made public, and Todd Bentley's excessive drinking, affair, and marriage to his children's nanny were made public.

Coming to a church or family near you

I'm sure in your area you know of churches rocked by scandals and affairs made public.

When these things become public knowledge in the body of Christ it is the Lord Jesus exposing the nakedness - unrighteousness - of people who refused to judge themselves from perhaps even years earlier, so He had to step in as the Great Shepherd and give them the opportunity to repent and 'buy gold tried in the fire that you may be clothed' ('with fine linen clean and white which is righteousness...').

On a family level, this can include things like a credit card company being allowed to cut off credit to a person - because they would not earlier deal with their lust of buying things and control themselves, so the shame of their nakedness in this part of their lives was allowed to be exposed.

Often we hear of unfaithfulness in marriage and wonder how it could happen to 'that couple' that seemed so solid in the faith - but there were private issues between the Lord and one spouse or the other's heart (or both) that the Lord tried to get them to deal with while still private in the heart, probably for years.

Did He cause the affair?

Of course not. Did He try to get them to deal with it before a fantasy of lust became a reality that destroyed the family? Yes! If a person insists on continuing in sin the Lord will allow them to go to that next level of sin - they are free willed people after all - but He will use that as a means of judgement, allowing their unrighteousness in that area to become public, to their shame and embarrassment.

Over the years I've seen fraud exposed many times. This ranges from the person getting a government pension because they claim an injury, only to have an investigator discover them doing all sorts of physical activity they said they can't do, to people under reporting income so they can take advantage of the system that underwrites their support or housing, to the various Christian get-rich-quick schemes that either collapse or investors eventually discover to be a scam.

When they get exposed for what they are, the Lord allowed it to provide an opportunity for the people to judge themselves and grow in Him - He had to allow it because they would not deal with it privately.

Acts 10:42

Peter told the Roman household of Cornelius that God is the judge of the **living** and the dead. It isn't just that we die and are then judged, He is the judge of the living too. He is active today doing what He threatened the Laodecian believers with: Exposing their sin to others and/or the public if they won't deal with it privately. Some people teach all is grace, there is no sin, there is no accountability. But this and elsewhere says He judges the living and the dead - and I think all reading this are still alive...

In Acts 8:9-23 a (former) sorcerer named Simon believes in Jesus and is baptized in water. When Simon sees the apostles laying hands on the new believers and them receiving the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, he tries to give Peter and John money so he too can give the Holy Spirit.

This linking of giving money to get the Holy Spirit, thinking the anointing or things of the Spirit may be secured by an offering, is abominable before God, and Peter and John. Yet it is common practice today.

The Holy Spirit actually withdraws from such practice, leaving the leaders and people having to substitute emotion for the Presence, which leads to twisting scripture into their own interpretation, and the remaking of God into their own image that He might serve them and their lusts, rather than them seeking to be made into His image as His servants.

In fact, the Holy Spirit that Simon thinks he can purchase, is denied: "You have no part in this matter* for your heart is not right before God." Peter then had a manifestation of the discerning of spirits, telling Simon in v23 he was actually bound in bitterness and sin. (**matter* is the Greek word 'logos', or word. "You have no part in this word", ie tongues)

Out of space here...but...

This subject is much larger than what I can write here, so in September mid-month I'm doing a cd/MP3 series on how and why the Lord judges His people - But I've run out of room for today, so must close. Next week I'll start a related subject - how do we know when to cut off fellowship with someone? The answers may surprise you...until then, blessings!

John Fenn

www.cwowi.org and email me at cwowi@aol.com