

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip Busby

Last time, we ended with Genesis chapter 4 verse 24. This brings us through the information concerning Cain's family. In verse 25 we shift gears and go all the way back to Adam and Eve to see another line of their family develop. Here, we are told Adam and Eve gave birth to another son and called his name Seth, "For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew." Many people simply assume that Seth is the third child of Adam and Eve, but the truth of the matter is that we do not know for sure. Chapter 5 verse 4 tells us Adam beget sons and daughters. Which means the 3 sons we have recorded are not the only 3 children of Adam. There could be other children which were born after Cain and Abel but before Seth, and their birth is simply not mentioned. We know Cain obtains a wife from somewhere, so we know there were other children which are not named, but we just don't know in what order. Because we are not given an age for Adam at the time of Abel's birth, we also do not know how long after Cain and Abel, Seth was born. What we do know is that Seth was born after

the death of Abel, because that fact is obvious in Eve's statement.

Now, Cain and Abel may not have been very old before their mortal encounter, but they were old enough to have defined professions. So, it would seem Seth is very much their junior, and he is the first and only other child of Adam and Eve to be specifically defined after Cain and Abel. One reason for this is that it's likely any children born between Seth and Abel failed to take any initiative to serve the Lord. They may simply have followed the same path of rebellion towards God as Cain did. Cain's line is credited with much human development, and this should not be surprising since earthly things were obviously his focus. However, other children of Adam and Eve who also felt this way may simply have been a part of that developing crowd!

What is special about Seth is his family would pick up the mantle of seeking the Lord which was apparently dropped at the death of

Abel. Eve prophesied this fact or, at the very least, just happens to get it right, for she calls his name Seth. Now, there's a little conflict about exactly what "Seth" means. Some like the interpretation of saying it means "substitute." Others like to say it means something along the lines of, "to grant." In fact, it's a word which Eve designated and it means exactly what she said. God had granted or blessed her with a son in place of Abel. To say "substitute" or "to grant" is an attempt to boil down what "Seth" means, which is something we love to do in English! However, Eve's words are very important. The King James captures it well in using the words "appointed" and "seed." Eve understood Seth was not a replacement of Abel. Seth was an individual, who, through his existence, would bring the same kind of principles to the world that Abel had brought. He was also a "seed." Meaning, while Cain and his dependents had went in a way contrary to God's design, Seth brought an opportunity for there to be a lineage of people on this earth who served the Lord!

This was very important, especially to Eve. Adam and Eve had both known God's presence from day one. They had walked with God in the garden, but it was Eve who made the choice to take of the tree God had told them not to take of. Adam and Eve were then driven out of the garden, which took them away from the Tree of Life but also was symbolic of losing their direct connection to the presence of God. Abel had shown, through his actions, that God could still be reached. It was Abel's offering which God consumed with fire. This was a very physical presence of God which we see again later in

scripture. However, after Abel's death, Cain does not repent. Instead, he goes off focused on the things of this world and making a place for those who would join him. At that point, it must have seemed to Adam and Eve that all was lost; but here was another son: one which had the opportunity to walk with God and find God's presence once more. In Seth's birth, there was new hope for man!

Again, we do not know if Eve's statement was specifically led of God or not, but verse 26 tells us it did hold true. Seth obviously grew up and took a wife. He too had a son, and he called his name Enos. Enos simply means, "a mortal." Eve had named her son Seth because Abel was mortal. Seth names his son Enos, which means "a mortal." The idea was prevalent in the minds of this family line that man was not going to live forever. The recognition that what is done on this earth is temporary, was starting to sink in! Man was not as God. Man was a mortal being who did not know what lay on the other side of death. So, the record of Enos' birth is followed by the statement, "...then began man to call upon the name of the Lord."

Cain had killed his brother Abel because his brother's offering had gotten a response from God which Cain was jealous of, but in Seth, there was a deeper understanding. Seth knew that just knowing God exists is not enough, if death (being a punishment for sin) someday took you away from God. This is the clear cut choice of man. Death is coming, so do you just get out of this life what it has to offer, or do you take the opportunity to call upon the name of the Lord and believe God

will make a way? (Isa. 55:6-7) In the next chapter of Genesis, we are given a genealogy from Seth all the way down to Noah. In these verses, we are given very little information aside from that genealogy. We go from men calling upon the name of the Lord, to a story which gave men a physical example of God's salvation plan!

Salvation is what it means when it says, "...then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." Some "translations" of the Bible say things like, "Then men began to be called by the name of the Lord." This is totally incorrect, but it does serve as an example of our thinking. We believe there is so much power in titles or designations, but there is no power in words if there is nothing true behind them! Today, we think it's so important to be in a group and be known by the right title. Now, there's nothing wrong with being called a "Christian," but it won't save your soul. Only a true relationship with God will do that! You can wrongfully say you are "born again," and you can be baptized in water; but you will not share in Christ's resurrection if you have not taken up your cross and followed Jesus! This is what James was talking about in James chapter 2. Faith without works is dead or in other words, not faith at all. Faith is not just in your head or a title you wear. Faith is the substance of what we hope for and the evidence of what lies beyond death which we have not yet seen! (Heb. 11:1) True faith is desired by our spirit, accepted in our mind, and makes a servant of our bodies! (Rom. 6:12-13)

What Seth and Enos' family were seeking was not a title or distinction among men. They were calling out to God! You see, before the fall into sin, man could have gone anywhere he wanted. The Garden of Eden was not a prison, but if man ever felt he had lost God, he could simply return and there God's presence would be. People ask if God is omnipresent, why is this important? The answer is, because we are flesh! We walk in a time line which our flesh connects us to. Now, we may not fully understand it, but God does not live in our time. His presence, more than we know, is here with us; but He does not have to walk moment by moment in our shoes. When we are told God came to Adam and Eve after they took of the fruit, it's clear God already knew what they had done. However, it tells us they heard God's voice "walking" in the garden. What this means is God had come down into this created universe and at that moment was walking in our time line. That is something which we do not understand well, but we need to!

God sees everything, everyone, and every time period, so He knows everything! However, when He enters our time line in the way He did in the Garden, it's like entering our space and relating to it in much the same way we relate to it. He is living with us and interacting with us, a moment at a time, just as we experience life. This is something very special, and it's different from the fact God is omnipresent and all knowing. This is the presence of God which Israel was to experience and maintain later down the time line.

In innocence, God was always welcome and even had an obligation to care for us on this level. After man went his own way, it became man's responsibility to welcome and make a place for God in this world of sin. Because Moses followed the instructions of God, a tabernacle was built; and when it was administered right, the presence of God resided there. (Ex. 29:38-46, II Chron. 5:1-7:4) As Israel journeyed to the promised land, God went before them as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. God so wants to be "with" us that He even sent His Son to be Emmanuel in the flesh. (Matt. 1:23) Before He left, He assured us He was going to prepare a place for us so we could walk with Him forever. (John 14:1-3) He also said that upon His request, The Father would send us the Holy Ghost, who would walk with us until He returned. (John 14:25-26) In Acts chapter 2 we are told that on the Day of Pentecost those who believed in this promise heard a sound like a mighty rushing wind, fire appeared above their heads and they all praised God in languages they did not know, but many others who heard them did! This was the promise spoken through the prophet Joel that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. (Joel 2) The Holy Ghost "walks" with us today, and so Paul asks if we understand that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost? (I Cor. 3:16)

Enos and his family did not just become known as the people of God. They were the people who called for the presence of God to come once again amongst men! God's presence and promises are a result of their prayers and others like them all through time.

Their faith was not dead. They called; they invoked the name of the Lord. They desired to make a place where God would be welcome, but sin and death desire to stamp it out. So God made a way where there seemeth to be no way, and He has now prepared a place for us where sin and death will no longer be able to touch us! Since that is what Jesus left this earth to do, we can rest assured He is coming back to receive all those from all time that have called on His name. (John 14:3) Those who have died in Christ are on their way to that great resurrection. That is why they are said to arise first. We which are alive and remain unto that day will be caught up to meet the Lord in the clouds. (I Thess. 4:16-18)

Jesus came not so we could have the life Cain desired but so we could afford to die, and receive a better life than Seth and Enos could have imagined! If faith is true faith, and we allow it to constantly grow, we may not even have to walk out this time line waiting for death or to be caught up to meet the Lord. In the fifth chapter of Genesis, we are told that in Seth's family line, there was born a man named Enoch. He welcomed God into his life in such a mighty way that we are told, "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." Genesis 5:24 How's that for having something more real than just a title?

Until next time, Shalom!

Living Springs' Questions & Answers

Does a person have to stop sinning to receive Christ?

The pivotal words in this question are “stop sinning.” There are two ways which these two words could be taken. One is to say the technical definition of these two words boils down to one word, “perfection”; and the second is to apply the definition of sin given in James 4:17. Since this question could easily be taken either way, I want to cover both.

First, let's look at the perfection definition. If you apply this one, your question is, do we have to become perfect before we can receive Christ? If we take just one scripture here or there, a person could make the argument the Bible is saying this. One such scripture is Matthew 5:48, where Jesus tells us, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” However, if you put with this one scripture just a couple of others, like Romans 3:10, where Paul reminds us, “...There is none righteous, no, not one:...” and Isaiah 64:6 which tells us, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” you can build on that doctrine. Taking just these scriptures and nothing else, one could make the Bible seem to be a book of hopelessness. If we

have to be perfect to come to God and no one is righteous, much less perfect, then there is no hope for man!

However, no scripture is truly understood without taking the Bible as a whole. Paul said all scripture is profitable for doctrine. (II Tim. 3:16-17) In this, he was not saying any scripture you may find which seems to support your theory, he was saying “All” scripture! The Bible does not contradict itself. What we believe must be supported from Genesis to Revelation. If it's not, then we are wrong in our belief or there is something about scripture we still do not understand properly. In either case, we need to seek God to find out! That point alone answers the question, but let's talk further.

In the case of your question, it becomes clear as we look at other scriptures that the Bible is not telling us we must be perfect before we receive Christ. Paul tells us in Romans 5:8, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” John tells us, in John 3:17, “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” Probably the most convincing scripture should be II Peter 3:9, where we are told the

will of God point-blank, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Repentance is not perfection, it is a turning; and that takes us to the second definition of your question.

James 4:17 instructs us about sin in the life of one who claims to follow Christ. It says, “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” This is where we must understand how time works. You see, the perfection issue is not just about what lies ahead, but what has gone before. We will never be perfect, because we have not been perfect. We can never make full reparations for the sin we have done. We can only do the best we can and pray daily that God will forgive us our sins as we forgive others for their sins against us. (Luke 11:1-4) Imperfection exists because sin has a way of taking on a life of its own. Our sin has a ripple effect - so to speak - which we just don't comprehend. The most obvious example is Adam and Eve taking of the tree God told them not to. (Gen. 3) Their actions affected every human who has ever lived, right up to this day! To be perfect in all our ways, we would need to stop this ripple effect and repay the damage it has done. This is simply not in our capabilities. Time dictates that once the damage has been done there is no going back, and we certainly cannot afford the debt we have incurred. For our lives to be clean again, this corruptible life and all the damage our wrong actions have caused, must pass away. This is the only way for

sin's damage to become irrelevant, but if death is the only answer, then we somehow need a fresh start. A man named Nicodemus understood these facts, and this is why Jesus told Nicodemus that a man must be born again! (John 3:1-21) Nicodemus asked how a man could re-enter his mother's womb and be born again? You see, Nicodemus understood people must die. He had watched many men, both good and bad, die. However, what Nicodemus did not understand is that we not only must die, but this whole world has to pass away; and to have new life, we must literally be born again, through the power of Christ's work, into a whole new existence. The fresh start we so desperately need is one we can never fully know here on this earth. This is the cost of our imperfection! (Matt. 13)

In the here and now, we are all still sinners. Paul simply refers to this condition as corruptible. (I Cor. 15:51-58) However, that is the key, “corruptible,” meaning able to be corrupted. When we talk about sin in light of James 4:17, we are not talking about what we have been. Unlike perfection, we are only talking about the future. This makes the question of, “Do we have to stop sinning to receive Christ?” a moot point because the question implies that we are somehow sinning at every moment. While the imperfection issue may rightfully be interpreted as “living in sin,” we are not necessarily knowing to do good and doing it not at every moment. We need to read II Corinthians chapter 5, specifically the seventeenth verse which says, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all

things are become new.” What Paul is talking about here is a perspective that should go forward with us from the moment we receive Christ. The way we thought about things before we turned our lives over to God should not be the way we think after. Part of the decision to receive Christ is throwing out our old perspective and allowing God to give us a new one. Because God, through The Messiah, has provided ultimate salvation which we could never have provided for ourselves, (Gen. 22:6-8) it’s no longer about the fact we have failed to be perfect, it’s about the choices we make from there on! (Rom. 6:1-16)

Now, before we all start panicking about having to get every action right after receiving Christ, we must understand God will not put more on us than we can bear. (I Cor. 10:13) There are two laws on which hang everything God has asked of us. The first is to love God with everything you are, and the second is to love your neighbor as yourself. (Matt. 22:35-40) You see, it’s not really possible for us to stop sinning before we receive Christ. As I said earlier, the only way we really understand what scripture truly means is by asking God to guide us. The reason the greatest commandment is to love God with all that you are is because that is the only way to truly know how to do good and find the strength to do it! Without faith (a relationship with God) we are only taking our best guess, and that is not good enough. This is why the scriptures exist which tell us our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Make no mistake about it, without God’s guidance we will never be

able to stop sinning! The only way to stop sinning is to humble ourselves in the sight of The Lord and allow Him to teach us the way we should go in everything we do. (I Pet. 5:6-11) This is where the knowing to do good and doing it not rule comes into play. As we walk this path of humbly learning, we cannot stop living until we know everything; so God, in His grace, has only asked us to live at the level we have obtained.

This is why the second commandment tells us to love our neighbor as ourself. The damage we are capable of doing to our fellow man is truly why sin is such a problem, even among free-willed beings. God is not tempted by evil, and He does not tempt any man. (James 1:13-15) God cannot be pulled down by our evil, but the rest of His creation is. God can allow humans to have a free will, but we must be judged for our unrighteous choices because it’s not possible for free-willed beings to live together if they do not consider each other. We have vastly proven that point! Now, Adam and Eve did not truly know how to consider each other, but that was because they were living in innocence; thus, God took full responsibility for what they may have done to each other. All they had to do was not reject God’s guidance by taking the knowledge of good and evil for themselves. Because they did not refrain from this one action, today we have the knowledge of good and evil built right in, and we are responsible for it. Since being responsible for it does not automatically come with the knowledge of how to execute it properly, we must learn from God. As we attempt to

learn, we find we can all be at different places on our path of understanding. Thus, God only asks us to love our neighbor as ourselves, and this is why James instructs us to do the good we know to do or it's sin. Once again, through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, God has taken the burden of our unrighteousness, and only asks us to take responsibility for what we know. This means if we truly want what receiving Christ is all about, we must desire to put our best foot forward no matter how good or bad that foot is. We must also have a desire to grow in our understanding of how to love so that foot gets better and better. (Col. 3:1-17) If we do not have these desires, we do not love God. (John 14:22-23) Because heaven is a place where we can always be with God, it only stands to reason that if we do not love God, there is no reason for us to go to heaven. If there is no reason for us to go to heaven, there is no reason to receive Christ, because receiving Christ is about receiving salvation, and receiving salvation is about getting to have an eternal life with God; but if we do not love God there is no point in spending eternity with Him. So, if we do not love God, there is no reason to go to heaven. You see the loop?

The bottom line is this, Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me." Luke 11:23 We cannot love sin and love God. (Matt. 6:24) Thanks be to God and His everlasting grace, we do not have to be perfect before we receive Christ. On top of that, there is the fact we do not completely know how to stop sinning before we receive Christ. So the issue is this: if you find you do not have a desire to stop sinning, then you

have not truly received or you have lost Christ and the work He gave His life to accomplish in your life!

In closing, let me encourage you to read Philippians 4:6-9 which instructs us to put our focus on those things which are pure and just. Most of the time, when people ask this kind of question, they are doing so because they have a desire for Christ but feel overwhelmed by sin, or they are feeling the conviction of The Holy Ghost in their lives about the way they are living. These are all good things! However, the devil will attempt to keep your focus on the sin when your focus should be on God and His Word. So much of the time, sin is in our lives because we are trying to fill the void which exists because we lack a strong relationship with God. The longer we are distracted from building our relationship with God, the longer we will feel the need to hold on to the sin. Isaiah 55:6-7 tells us to call upon The Lord while He is near. Today is the day to quit wrestling with the sin and simply lay it aside. We need to put it down and walk away by putting our eyes on The One whose blood has cleansed all sin! (I Jn. 1:5-9) This will be a continuous process in our lives, and it's living in that place of repentance God desires us all to find. (II Pet. 3:9) So, don't let anything delay you. Receive Christ into your life today, and together you can overcome any and all sin in your life!

This question was asked as a follow up to the previous Q&A - If I'm currently living with my girlfriend and we are fornicating and desiring to do what is right but not having the strength to stop, will I be able to receive Jesus as Saviour and receive the Holy Spirit to give me the strength to stop fornicating?

I want everyone to be on the same page; and with that in mind, let me explain that I'm going to approach this question as an extension to your last question. In the hypothetical situation you have laid out, we could cover a considerable amount of specific teaching. However, I do not know if you're interested in the details of what I might tell someone in that situation if they came to me for counseling on the specifics, so I will not attempt to cover all those specifics in this answer. This means we are talking about the same basic subject as your last question but only with a specific scenario in mind.

Your first question was simply, does a person have to stop sinning before they receive Christ, and the bottom line answer to that question is that it's not really possible for a person to completely stop sinning before they come to Christ. However, we separated the issue into those sins which are the result of not being perfect and those sins which are a conscious choice. In your scenario about a male and female living together and having an inappropriate relationship, you are certainly talking about a conscious sin. This takes us back to a specific statement I made in the first answer about the fact we are not sinning at every moment. This may be most difficult to see when talking about a scenario like the one

you have asked about, but it is still technically true. So, let's break it down.

What is the sin in this situation? Basically there are two: The first is that you are living together, and the second is that you have an inappropriate physical relationship. One of the things which makes a situation like this hard to understand for most people is, though these two sinful actions do have direct relationship, they are still two separate items. We must understand that it doesn't make a male and female fornicators just because they choose to live under the same roof, anymore than two males or two females living under one roof makes them homosexual. So, why would it be considered sinful for a male and female to live together? Well, the activity of a male and female living together has a couple of big problems. The first thing is the warning Jesus gave His disciples in the garden. Jesus told them to "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation:" Matthew 26:41 It was also part of Jesus' model prayer that we should pray to God, "And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil." Luke 11:4 If we are supposed to ask God for help out of the daily temptations which come upon us, it's certainly not The Lord's will for us to choose to live in a situation which includes constant temptation. This is also why Paul instructs in Romans 6:12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in

the lusts thereof.” and in II Timothy 2:22 he says, “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

If the woman you’re living with is not your wife or a close relative such as mother or sister, there is almost certainly going to be temptation to have an inappropriate relationship. The second thing which makes living together wrong is the point made in I Thessalonians 5:22 where we are told to, “Abstain from all appearance of evil.” There is no doubt that in most societies there is an assumption that when an unrelated male and female live together there is a relationship which goes beyond just living together. This is why an official marriage usually includes a fairly public ceremony or, at the very least, a couple of outside witnesses. In many places there are also legal documents to be signed which are filed and become public record. All this is to make a declaration to society that you are committed to one another. That puts aside this appearance of evil issue.

Now, to really get this point, you have to look deeper into why the appearance of evil is wrong and putting yourself in a position of temptation is wrong. The shorthand is, as a person who is attempting to follow the ways of God, you have a responsibility to keep your life clean and help others do the same. When you, by choice, live in a situation which tempts you to do something sinful, it becomes sinful because you are not truly attempting to walk in the ways of God if you are doing this. Jesus pointed this out using a

specific example which is directly related to our point here. He said, in Matthew 5:27-28, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Serving God is not about following a set of rules, it’s about a desire. It’s natural for your flesh to be tempted by a woman you find attractive, but there is a difference between being tempted and giving into that temptation. You may never commit the actual physical act of adultery; but if it’s something you allow to play out in your mind, then the fact you don’t do the actual deed is only a formality. In your heart, you have made a choice to put aside the desire to be righteous in lieu of your desire to commit adultery. You see, the laws of men may have all kinds of loopholes for the one who wants to sidestep it, but God can see our hearts. (I Sam. 16:7) When we stand before God, the desires of our hearts will be judged as well as our physical actions.

This issue is further solidified by the fact God asks us to care, not just for ourselves, but for others as well. The greatest commandment is that we love God with all our being, and the second is like to the first, which is to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. (Matt. 22:35-40) This is where the appearance of evil rule comes in. We may, through our actions be causing others to stumble, and that is not the will of God! Many people claiming to be Christians do not see why this is their problem, but it is. We need to be careful what we do and say,

especially when others are watching. As believers in God, we have an obligation to share with this world the righteousness of God; and there is no better way to show the righteousness of God than to be seeking to follow it ourselves. Now, the key word in the previous sentence is “seeking.” This takes us back to the point of imperfection. We are not righteous in all our actions; thus, we are all sinners saved by grace. However, seeking to know God and follow His righteousness is what gets counted unto us in place of the righteousness we actually lack! (Rom. 4:1-8) When we come to Christ, we take on the responsibility of showing the righteousness of God. This is part of what I meant when I said in the earlier answer that we are not necessarily sinning at every moment. Before we come to Christ, we may be doing any number of things which we may or may not understand are wrong for a variety of reasons. However, when we come to Christ, we have chosen to walk a path of growth in righteousness; and we do not make that choice unless The Holy Spirit is already convicting our hearts. This means there will already be things which are obvious evil and appearances of evil in our lives at the moment we receive Christ into our lives. These things are not just some of the first things to go, but walking away from them is all part of the choice to receive Christ in the first place!

This shows us there is a pivotal statement in your question which is not actually a fact no matter what we may want to believe. You said, “...desiring to do what is right but not having the strength to stop.” Once again, we go back to information I gave in the earlier

answer. First, is the truth that we are saved by grace through faith, and that faith is not of ourselves it’s the gift of God. (Eph. 2:8) Faith is not blind belief; faith is a relationship with God. The second point is that God will not put more on us than we can bear. (I Cor. 10:13) This makes the premise of your scenario wrong in one way or another. As I said before, the choice to live for God is a choice between having what this world can offer or giving up this life in order to seek the righteousness of God. (Matt. 10:38-39) There is no middle ground! A desire to do what is right is a desire to put away the sin in your life. Which means, in your scenario, if the statement about a desire to do what is right is true, then the statement about not having the strength is a lie. If the statement about not having the strength is true, then the statement about having a desire is a lie!

This is where the damage of not understanding the truth about salvation comes in. Far too many Christians believe that when they say a sinner’s prayer, they are saved or born again, and that is simply not the case. We will not be saved until the day Christ returns and we are given a new and incorruptible body! (I Cor. 15:50-58) Receiving a new body is what being born again is all about. Now, there should be a moment when you truly make the choice to turn from your sin and receive the work Christ gave His life to do in your life; but that moment is a moment of decision. If you truly have a desire to make that decision, then The Holy Spirit has already been doing a work in your life. (I Cor. 12:3) Simply put, God is already attempting to have a relationship with you, and that is the gift of faith

Ephesians 2:8 is talking about! That desire you feel to do the right thing is the conviction of The Holy Spirit; and if The Holy Spirit is convicting your heart, then the strength you need to put the sin aside is already right there with you. You are standing on the threshold of a door God has opened to you. The choice to walk away from the sin you already see in your life and do the right thing is all part and parcel of the choice to receive Christ! You have already been given a glimpse of what losing this life and following the path of righteousness will cost. The questions you must consider now are very simple. Do you believe that God is actually there to help you, and do you believe He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him? (Heb. 11:6) Beyond that, there is only the simple question of what do you want? A) A life dedicated to the God who created you, or B) The pleasures of sin?

To sum it all up, I want to look at the words of Paul in Romans chapter 6. Paul states in verse 20, "For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." If you haven't chosen to receive Christ in your life, then what you do or don't do beyond that has no eternal consequence; for all who do not choose to put their trust in God will be sent away on Judgment Day with the words, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matthew 7:23 Before you receive Christ, you are free from the laws of righteousness; but once you truly make the choice, you become that new creature in Christ (II Cor. 5:17) which understands Paul's question in verse 21, "What fruit had

ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." In verse 22, Paul speaks to the fact you do have the strength to step over that threshold you are standing on and walk away from the sin which is so easily besetting you. He says, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." In verse 23, Paul makes your two options clear by stating, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Part of understanding the truth is asking the right questions. The right question is not, will I be able to receive Jesus as Saviour and The Holy Spirit to give me the strength to stop fornicating? The question is, when are you going to listen to the voice of The Holy Spirit you are already hearing and accept the strength God is offering you, through the shed blood of His Son Jesus Christ, to nail your sin to His cross and walk into newness of LIFE? (Rom. 6:4)

For further information related to this issue please read Q&A #5 which appeared in Issue #19, Q&A #6 which appeared in Issue #21, and the article Happy Home Above which appeared in Issue #28. You can also find these articles on our website at www.livingspringsinstitute.org. Click on the Q&A button to find those, and for the article click on the Learning Center button, then go to Articles.

***Questions submitted to the Institute,
answered by Philip Busby.***

DECODING THE TRUTH

PART V

(Heb. 11:24-26)
Does this mean even
a physical
relationship between
a man and his wife is
sin? No, but a

In part III of
this series, I
made a
statement
which in many
ways sums up

the difference between false beliefs like those taught in popular books and the truth taught in the Word of God. First, a Saviour must be perfect from the beginning. Second, He must remain in perfection throughout His life; and this is the nature of Jesus which many false teachers and fairy tale writers want to tell us is untrue! False teaching tells us the nature of a Saviour is not important; that they are only guides to help us find the truth. In reality, this means they can be anything from good to very evil. Just so long as they teach us something. However, that is not what the Bible tells us.

Now, we have spent time in this series talking about why the perfection of Jesus is necessary; and we have talked about why, unlike other humans, Jesus had the ability to be perfect from the start. What we are down to now are the arguments about specific actions which Jesus could have taken in His earthly life which some may not yet understand why they would have destroyed that perfection of Jesus.

One such action is the fact Jesus needed to refrain from having physical relationships with women. This is something many of the false stories about Jesus tell us He did not refrain from, and many today do not see why this would be a problem. I've heard people suggest that it's even a good thing because it truly shows us Jesus was human, but that is missing the point. Jesus came to show us how to live, not just enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

physical relationship is about the continuance of this life, and Jesus came to give us the next. This is why Jesus had no problem with the question the religious leaders asked Him, trying to trip Him up. They asked, if a man had a wife and died leaving no children and his brother took her to wife to raise up children but died also, this happening to all seven brothers until one day even the woman died leaving behind no children, whose wife would she be in the resurrection? This was a question they could not answer because they were only thinking of this life, but Jesus simply explained there will be no marriage or giving of marriage in the resurrection. (Matt. 22:24-33) Marrying and giving in marriage has to do with a focus on this life and its continuance. Jesus, even though He was fully man, did not come to live this life but cut through it to make a way out of the death this life ultimately brings.

Physical relationships are simply that, physical relationships. So, one of the first things you must understand about sex is that it's a joining. Genesis 2:24 tells us that the two become one flesh. As we've already talked about, Jesus had to be a newly created human so He would not simply be trapped in the same cycle we are trapped in. If Jesus had simply been born of the seed of Adam, He would have no more power over death than the rest of us. (I Cor. 15:42-49) Jesus did not come so we could have more of this life. Jesus came so we could have life eternal which is more abundant than this life. (John 10:10) Jesus clearly told

us, if we seek this life we will lose it; and if we lose this life following Him, we will find life. (Matt. 16:25) That is what Jesus came to do: make a path we could follow, not just show us a path to follow. (John 13:36) To create this path Jesus had to live it. Which meant, He had to refrain from the activities of the flesh which are about the continuance of this life and focus on making a way in which we can afford to let it end. Joining Himself to another human would have defeated this goal in a number of ways.

The most basic way should be obvious. If Jesus became one flesh by having a relationship with a woman, His flesh would no longer be sinless! "What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh." I Corinthians 6:16 In Jesus' case it was not just about being joined to a harlot, but any woman no matter how good she may have been. Again, if we could be perfect, we would not need a Saviour. No woman from the seed of Adam could be righteous enough to not destroy the perfection of Jesus by being joined to Him!

The next item is the words spoken by Paul in I Corinthians 7:32-33, "But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife." Jesus could never have yielded His will to The Father in the way He needed to if He had taken on worldly concerns such as marriage. (Luke 14:26) Marriage is a commitment to care for your wife and the family which may result from your union. In many ways, your life is no

longer your own but your family's. Jesus could not afford to make this kind of commitment to any one person or persons. Jesus came to be The Saviour of all mankind. There are thousands of ways in which Jesus would have never been able to accomplish His Father's will if He had been married, but there is one big reason we should see. Jesus did not go to the cross for legitimate crimes! More than once, Pilot said, "I find no fault in this man."; and Pilot desired to let Jesus go. (Luke 23, John 18-19) However, it was for this cause that Jesus had been born. (John 18:37) So, Jesus went willingly to the cross and gave His life for us. (Isa. 53:6-7) If He had been married, it would not have been His choice to give His life! (I Cor. 7:3-5)

Next, there is the simple fact that the Bible gives no evidence Jesus was married. Now, some have suggested the books which contain this information were simply left out of the Bible; but if Jesus had been married, it's impossible to believe there were, at the very least, four Gospels to include in the Bible which would take the time to mention Jesus' mother but make no mention of His wife! Others have suggested that Jesus' marriage was secret, but this would have been a sin. I Thessalonians 5:22 tells us to abstain from all appearance of evil. It would have been an egregious appearance of evil for Jesus to have had a wife without making it public knowledge. Again, physical relationships are a joining. Whether we like it or not, we are making a commitment with the act. If we are going to get it right, we have an obligation to stand before God and man to make a public proclamation we understand and knowingly accept the commitment, we are not just being

fools. Jesus certainly would have done this. He came to show us how to live righteously in all things; and in His instructions He even told us, if a man looks at a woman to lust after her, he has already committed adultery in his heart. (Matt. 5:27-28) A physical relationship is private. The accepting of the responsibility which automatically comes with it is not!

That brings us to another point, and that is children. One of the biggest fairy tales we hear is the idea Jesus, through a relationship with a woman, left children on the earth. This has all the earmarks of a knights tale! What greater lore could there be than the idea that certain people are actually descendents of Christ? What utter fleshliness and foolishness! Jesus was not building a worldly kingdom through starting a specific line of corruptible humans. Jesus was here to build a kingdom from those who, throughout time, have made the choice that God is what they want, not this world and what it can offer. We can do everything right, but there is no way we can make our children be right. In the end, all children are individuals who will make their choices and stand before God someday as individuals for those choices. If Jesus had children, they would be no different. There would be no point in Jesus leaving behind biological children in this world. God created Adam and Eve with His hands. They were certainly the children of God, but look what they did. We are everyone children of God. We were all created in the image of God. (Gen. 1:26-28) There would be nothing extra special about Jesus' children. They, like the rest of us, would all be freewilled beings who could choose sin!

Two wrongs don't make a right, and mixing good with evil does not make

something good. This is what was being said in Genesis chapter 6. Before the flood, we're told the people who served God were coming in to those who did not serve God and having children by them. The culture which lived for God was being intermingled with the culture which did not serve God. At best, this resulted in lukewarmness which God will spew out of His mouth. (Rev. 3:15-16) After the flood, man attempted to build one unified culture at the Tower of Babel which would keep there from ever being a Godly culture again. (Gen. 11:1-9, Matt. 6:24) God stopped this attempt and later established a nation of people who were given specific instructions on how to be a Godly culture. All this has served as constant examples of how hard it is to maintain righteousness among so much unrighteousness!

Jesus did not come to establish yet another culture or group which would struggle day by day to maintain. Jesus came to fulfill the promise God had already established would come through Israel. What Jesus was and still is looking for are those who, through their free will, have chosen the path of God instead of the world. Jesus made this clear when they came to Him one day as He was teaching and told Him His mother and brethren were looking for Him. Jesus said, "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it." Luke 8:21 No matter what nation or culture they come from, these are the ones who will rule and reign with Christ. At the resurrection, the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet The Lord in the air. This will provide us with incorruptible bodies. (I Cor. 15:50-57, I Thess. 4:15-18) It will be those who have trusted in Jesus which will

receive these incorruptible bodies and rule with Christ, not an earthly bloodline continually corrupted by sinful man.

Fleshly men have trouble understanding this because they do not truly believe Jesus will return! You see, Gnostics believe there is no reason for a Messiah to return. Since they only believe in guides, not a true Saviour, there is only the need for these guides to exist down through the ages. The idea there is a code of understanding which can be sought out by those who are brave and strong is vastly different from a God who offers salvation to all those who desire righteousness. However, these ideas show us why Jesus having a child is silly to the true believer but almost necessary to the Gnostic.

We just don't get the idea that God is real and He has not left us. We do not need a multitude of guides to lead us to some hidden truth. We need a Saviour who can provide a way for death not to be the end of our relationship with God. Those who truly know God will understand this, and those who do not want God will continue to look to man for excuses. This is why Gnostics look for guides, and even Catholics believe that through the office of Pope there is a succession to the authority of Christ left on this earth. They believe the ways of God must be upheld by man to be real or to continue because they do not truly believe in a living God!

The truth is, Jesus died, but He rose again. He does not need children or bishops to continue His authority, and it does not matter how many or how few believe - the truth is the truth. This is what the Sadducees had to

confront in Acts chapter 5. The disciples were teaching and doing miracles in the name of Jesus, and the religious rulership wanted them to stop. One idea was to just imprison these men, but the angel of The Lord had released them. Another idea was to just kill them, but they feared the people who had already seen their miracles. Then one of them, with a little bit of wisdom, reminded the council that in times past, false teachers had arose after which many people followed. However, after their death their followers eventually disbursed, and the whole matter went away on its own. Thus, the council concluded the smart thing was to simply wait and see if this matter with Jesus would do the same. That was a good decision. However, it did not accomplish what the council was hoping for because Jesus is not dead and the disciples were not false prophets. Their message survived and grew!

The devil understands the truth cannot be destroyed. (James 2:19) So, since the beginning of man's existence, instead of working on destroying the truth, he has been trying to distort it. Many have been led astray by these distortions, but those who simply know God will be strong and do exploits. (Dan. 11) What is important in our lives is we know the truth, not because someone told us that was the truth but because in our spirit we know we have found another building block of truth which we have been looking for. With it, we will grow in the grace and knowledge of The Lord Jesus Christ and know Him for who He really is, not just for what some book says!

Until next time, may The God of grace and mercy guide you into all truth as you study His Word!