

Are we saved by faith or by baptism? Is baptism a work?

Three different emphases in defining Christianity



Orthodox belief.
Romans 4

Faith
(Orthodoxy)



Social justice.
James 2
Personal piety.
1 John 3

Obedience
(Orthopraxy)



What must I repent of to become a Christian?

	Change mind about Christ and self	Behavioral Intent		Behavior	
		Be willing to turn from all known sins at conversion	Be willing to keep on turning from all known sins	Turn from all known sins	Keep on turning from all known sins
Holiness					
Arminian					
Calvinistic					
Lutheran					
Radical grace					

1 John 3:2-10

“ 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices **(does)** righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices **(does)** sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 **No one who is born of God practices (does) sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.** 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice **(do)** righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.”

Asa Mahan

“There is positive evidence that some did attain to a state of entire sanctification.”

John N. Oswalt
(Wesley Biblical Seminary)

“A Christian cannot live in known sin and remain in a saving relationship with Christ.”

Leonard Ravenhill
(British evangelist)

“Get rid of this bunkum about the “carnal Christian.” Forget it! If you’re carnal, you’re not saved.”

Problem Passages

Biblical texts that seem to contradict the Gospel Story, other texts, and common sense.

Difficult texts do not lend themselves to definitive or dogmatic interpretations.

Possible interpretations

1. **Christians cannot sin.**
2. **Christians do not continue in** (practice - Greek present tense) **sin.**
3. **Christians do not willfully sin.**

Our experience argues against these interpretations.

1 John 1 argues against these interpretations.

The assumption behind the N.T. epistles argues against these interpretations.

The Gospel argues against these interpretations.

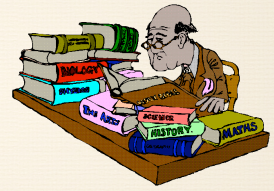


1. Life context

Interpretation of Scripture is challenging.

Sinless perfection is not observed to be the experience of any let alone every Christian.

Holiness sects claim that we need not sin but not that we cannot sin.



A. W. Tozer



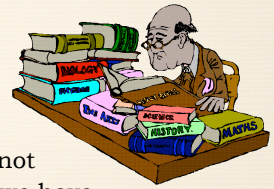
"The holy man is not one who cannot sin. A holy man is one who will not sin."

2. Literary context

Interpretation of Scripture is challenging.

1 John 1:8-10; 2:1

"⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. . . . ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." "¹ And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;"



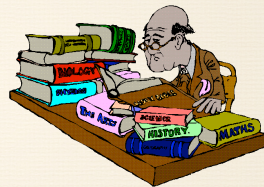
3. Historical context

Interpretation of Scripture is challenging.

1 John 2:26

"These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you."

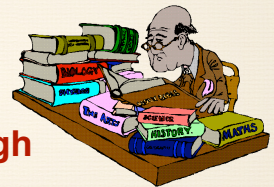
(Gnosticism taught that what we did in the body was unimportant.)



4. Theological context

Interpretation of Scripture is challenging.

The Gospel story emphasizes what God has done for us in Christ through faith (not in and through us to fulfill the Law).



A possible interpretation

4. The Spirit of Christ cannot sin.

"Cannot sin" is the key to this interpretation.

That which is "born of God" is the Spirit of Christ or our "new man."

"Abiding" "seeing" & "knowing" are relative in John's writing.

"6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him."



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This interpretation is consistent with the Biblical, theological, historical, and life contexts.

This interpretation is consistent with the Gospel.



1 John 1:5-10; 3:2-10 Paraphrase

"We are born again with His Spirit installed in us. The life of Jesus as manifest in His Spirit will not and cannot sin. To the extent that we are born of, abide in, and walk in His Spirit we will not and cannot sin either. Therefore, walk in the light and power of His Spirit so that you have intimate fellowship with him and thereby avoid sin.

No one lives a life totally controlled by the Spirit (free from all sin). Christ's blood continues to cleans us when we sin."

Challenging questions for those who define faith in terms of faithfulness to the Law.

- **GRACE** - If we are saved by grace apart from works of the Law, are we then kept by obedience to the Law?
- **PEACE** - Can there be any peace and joy when we know that we are not yet perfected in holiness?
- **PERFECTION** - How holy must we be to be safe and for how long? How pure must our motives be?
- **OLD COVENANT** - How is this distinct from the Old Covenant with its fear, from which Jesus came to set us free?
- **CARNALITY** - How are we to understand the worldly saints in Corinth?

Two systems of reconciliation between man and God

Paraclete (Enabler)

Jesus' Spirit enables us to be holy through an infusion of his righteousness in us.

(Holiness, Roman Catholic)



Surrogate (Substitute)

Jesus is our holiness through an imputation of his righteousness to us.

(Reformation Protestant)

Our identity and witness

Paraclete (Enabler)

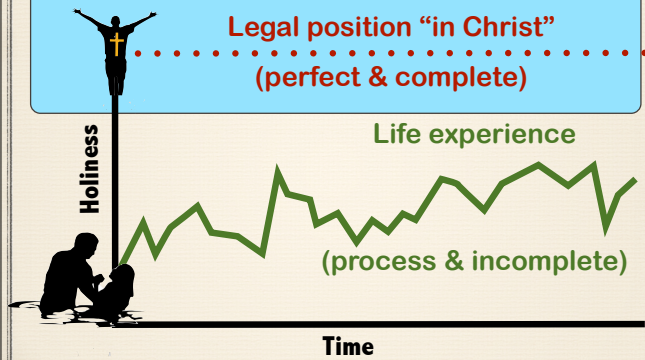
Jesus' Spirit is the Power of our ministry to the world.



Surrogate (Substitute)

Jesus' Cross is the Good News of our message to the world.

1. Our legal standing in Christ



Charles Spurgeon



“Holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness. Better still, Christ is our holiness.”

2. Our identity & witness as Christians



What can I expect in my experience as a Christian in this life?

Powerlessness is unnatural.

Progress is expected.

Perfection is unrealistic.

Perfection in this life is unrealistic.

- ✓ **Can Matt.22:37-39 be satisfied?** “love your God with **all** your heart, soul, and mind”
- ✓ **Is freedom from “known” sin enough?** “I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am **not** by this acquitted . . .” 1 Cor.4:4
- ✓ **“Perfect” (in the N.T.) can mean either flawless or complete?**
- ✓ **Is the “flesh” still present?** “The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.” Gal. 5:17

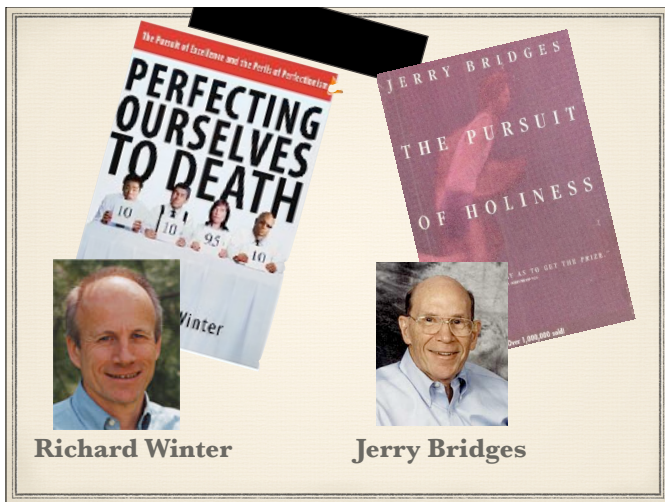
✓ Can anyone claim to be perfect?

“If we say we have no sin we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.” 1 Jn.1:8


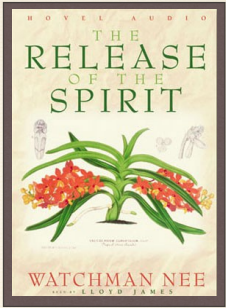
✓ Was Paul free from sin? “For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.” Rom.7:19

✓ Were the early churches free from sin?

“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. . . . For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?” 1 Cor.3:1-3



When the outer man is broken the Spirit of Christ (our inner man) will come forth.

This is the essence of the spiritual life which is the normal (not common) Christian life.

The normal Christian life is the life of Christ reproduced in the believer by the power of the Spirit in obedient response to the Word of God.

It must be actively suppressed to not appear.

Could it be that in the same way we suppress the truth of God (in Rom. 1) we suppress the Spirit of Christ (in Jas. 2).

John 7


“³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” ³⁹ But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

2 Thessalonians 5:19


“Do not quench the Spirit”

The path to spiritual wholeness

- ***The indwelling Holy Spirit of Christ through faith - conversion***
- ***The quenching of the Spirit through fear - suppression***
- ***A troubled life - torn between two worlds***
- ***The brokenness of the self through suffering - Rom.12.***
- ***The release of the Spirit.***



John Newton
(1725-1807)



“I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I want to be. I am not what I hope to be. But still, I am not what I used to be. And by the grace of God, I am what I am.”