

Saved by Baptism

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What I want to do is just cover several different questions that have come up. One of them here is Acts 10:47: “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have also received the Holy Spirit as we *did*?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord... [they begged or urged Him to stay or remain with them] ...Then they besought him to remain... [for an extended period of time or] ...*for a number of days*” (vs 47-48).

- How is it that they received the Holy Spirit *before* they were baptized?
- Why did they receive the Holy Spirit *before* they were baptized?
- Can God give the Holy Spirit to someone under special circumstances, *before* they are baptized?
- If they received the Holy Spirit before they were baptized, why do they have to be baptized?

Which then gets down to the thing that you have in a lot of modern Protestant things: If you receive the Lord and believe with your heart then you’ll receive the Holy Spirit and they don’t even bother with baptism. Why did this occur?

Whenever you want to find an answer to a question you *always go back to the very basics*. Then you can answer the question, and you can figure out what it really should be and why. First of all: Who calls us? *God calls us!* It says ‘the Father draws him’ (John 6:44). How does God draw an individual? He surely doesn’t throw down a rope or throw down a string or send you a telegram or write you a letter. How does God draw an individual? *He draws different individuals in different ways:*

- through working mentally and spiritually with a person’s mind
- through their circumstances or trials
- through death of a loved one
- through escaping a disaster at your right hand or your left hand, and you live and the other person doesn’t
- through a personal experience
- through the wretchedness of sin
- through all of these factors God can call a person, work with their mind

Let’s see another key, basic Scripture: When the Father begins to draw a person it is spiritual. What happens? Each one of us can look back in our lives and there was a time we were just going down the road of life—PING!—you know something

happened; something changed. We can look back and say, ‘Yes, that’s when God began to call us. But what did He do? What did God do? Christ said He’s going to send the Comforter. He’s talking to His disciples at the Passover. He’s telling them what He’s going to do when He’s gone.

John 14:17—He said that He would send: “*Even the Spirit of Truth, which the world cannot receive...* [it is impossible for the world to receive the Spirit of God] ...because ¹it perceives it not, ²nor knows it; **but you know it...**”—the Holy Spirit. I’m not going to go through and explain about the ‘which’ and the ‘he’ and the ‘him’ (KJV) and the reasons for that at this particular point.

“...because it **dwells with you**, and shall be **within you**” (v 17).

- How do you know it?
- What happens to you that you know something of the Holy Spirit of God when you’re being called?
 - ✓ *you begin to understand the Bible*
 - ✓ *the Bible begins to make sense*
 - ✓ *when you read the Bible you can understand it*
- What has happened?
 - ✓ *your mind has been opened*
- How?
 - ✓ *God’s Spirit is **with** you, and “...shall be **within** you”*

John 14:15—Jesus said: “If you love Me, keep the commandments—namely, My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that it may be with you throughout the age: *Even the Spirit of the Truth...*” (vs 15-17).

Keeping the commandments of God have something to do with the Holy Spirit coming to you. How is that possible? *You begin to recognize that you’re a sinner; and you begin to see that your life is miserable; and you begin to cry out to God!* Then He sends His Holy Spirit to be with you. There are some people who, at that point, may not answer the call—because it says, ‘many are called, but few are chosen.’ That’s what you could say is a *call*. Does a person get more than one call? *I don’t know!* A person can only answer it literally once, though. I mean, if you answer God’s calling and receive God’s Spirit *within* you and are baptized, then *that’s a final decision!*

Let’s take this another step further. Let’s go to Acts 2:38—here’s a very basic Scripture, which

seems to be kind of the reverse of what we find in Acts 10.

Acts 2:38: “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for *the* remission of sins, and you yourselves shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” That is *after* you’re baptized, not before you’re baptized. However, you go back to look at the whole chapter here and that’s when God sent the Holy Spirit for the power of preaching upon the apostles—and then upon all of those of the 120.

Then Peter preached and told them to repent. Was God’s Spirit there present *with* all of those? *Yes!* It was *with*—not in—*with*. Here we see the first operation that’s happening. Then Peter said, “Repent and be baptized and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,” which then is an individual begetting in the individual after they are baptized.

Acts 5:32: “And we are His witnesses of these things, as *is* also the Holy Spirit, which God has given to those who obey Him.” There again we have commandment-keeping involved.

So far we have dealt only with those who are apostles or Jews who have been called of God, or those who followed Christ during His lifetime were subsequently baptized, received the Holy Spirit. We have all of those. Then we come in time and we have a different set of circumstances.

When they came back from this journey down to Cornelius, Acts 11:2: “And when Peter went up to Jerusalem, those of *the* circumcision disputed with him, saying, ‘You went in to men who were uncircumcised and did eat with them.’ But Peter related *the event* from the beginning and expounded *everything* in order...” (vs 2-4). In other words, as everything happened, saying to them everything that happened. Then he tells the story that he went to Cornelius’ house.

After he had gone to Cornelius’ house—let’s summarize it this way: Up to this point, God had only dealt with those who were Jews or Israelites. He had a problem with Judaism in relationship to Gentiles. But here was a Gentile:

Acts 10:1: “Now, *there* was in Caesarea a certain man named Cornelius, a centurion of a band that is called *the Italian band*, A devout man who also feared God with all his house...” (vs 1-2). He feared God. It showed that he didn’t fear the gods of the Italians or the nations, but *he feared God*.

“...both in giving many alms to the people and *in beseeching* God continually *in prayer*” (v 2). Here’s somebody who’s already seeking God. Of course, Peter didn’t know this.

Verse 3: “He clearly saw in a vision, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming to him... [where he was in the house, *to him*] ...and saying to him, ‘Cornelius.’ But as he fixed his eyes on him, he became afraid *and* said, ‘What is it, Lord?’ And he said to him, ‘Your prayers and your alms have gone up for a memorial before God’” (vs 3-4). That would be rather startling, to be praying—wouldn’t it?

I don’t know how he was praying. I don’t know if he was on his knees. I don’t know if he was in a garden. I don’t know where he was, but he was praying. The ninth hour is considered about three in the afternoon, and that’s when they offered the incense at the temple. That is what is called ‘the hour of prayer.’ And you also find that in Luke 1 where Zacharias, John the Baptist’s father, went in at the ‘hour of prayer’ and offered the incense.

Verse 5: “‘And now send men to Joppa, and call for Simon who is surnamed Peter. He is lodging with a certain Simon, a tanner, whose house is by *the sea*. He shall tell you what you must do.’ And when the angel who had spoken to him departed, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who continually waited on him; And after relating everything to them, he sent them to Joppa” (vs 5-8). I wonder what the soldiers were thinking at that time?

Verse 9: “And on the next day, about the sixth hour, as these were journeying and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray... [about noon.] ...and he became very hungry and desired to eat. But while they were preparing *the meal*, a trance fell upon him; and he saw the heaven opened; and a certain vessel descended upon him, like a great sheet, bound by *the four corners* and let down upon the earth; in which were all the four-footed beasts of the earth, including the wild beasts, and the creeping things and the birds of heaven. Then a voice came to him, *saying*, ‘Arise, Peter, kill and eat.’ But Peter said, ‘In no way, Lord; for I have never eaten anything *that is common* or unclean.’” (vs 9-14).

Have you ever read anything in the Old Testament, which says this is a ‘common’ food? It’s either clean or unclean, nothing ‘common.’ The word ‘common’ here refers to the Jewish practice of classifying food, which is this: Unclean obviously refers to the things that God has said are unclean—all the wild beasts and four-footed things and creeping things and snakes and reptiles and all this sort of thing. But what does ‘common’ refer to? ‘*Common*’ can refer to a food that is called clean by God, but has been handled by a Gentile. If you have a loaf of bread—and, of course, in the book, *Code of Jewish Law*, there are many instances of this—that is

made, kneaded and baked by a Gentile servant in your own house, it is 'common.' Or if you have a Gentile kill an animal and handle it, though it be clean by the definition of the Bible, it is 'common.' That's why you read about what is called 'kosher' food. What is 'kosher' food? *Kosher food that is supervised, handled by, prepared by Jews*—no Gentiles involved. They also classified people.

Verse 15: "And a voice *came* again the second time to him, *saying*, 'What God has cleansed, you are not to call common.' This took place three times, and the vessel was taken up again into heaven. And as **Peter was questioning within himself** what the vision that he saw might mean... [I guess so!] ...the men who were sent from Cornelius, having inquired for the house of Simon, immediately stood at the porch; and they called out, asking if Simon who *was* surnamed Peter was lodging there. Then, as Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, 'Behold, three men are seeking you; now arise *and* go down, and go forth with them, doubting nothing, because I have sent them'" (vs 15-20).

Verse 21: "And Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius *and* said, 'Look, I am the one you are seeking. For what purpose have you come?' And they said, 'Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous man and one who fears God, and who has a good report by the whole nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a Holy angel to send for you *to come* to his house, and to listen to words from you.' Then he called them in to lodge *there*. And on the next day Peter went with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And on the next day, they came to Caesarea. Now Cornelius was expecting them *and* had called together his kinsmen and *his* intimate friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him *and* fell at *his* feet, worshipping *him*. But Peter raised him up, saying, 'Stand up, for I myself am also a man.' And as he was talking with him, he went in and found many gathered together. And he said to them, 'You know that it is unlawful for a man who is a Jew to associate with or come near to anyone of another race....'" (vs 15-28).

You will not find that law in the Old Testament. This was a *Jewish* law. You are not to be in the presence of them. You are not to eat with them. You are not to be with them because they are 'unclean' things. They are beasts, they're animals, they're less than human—and Jews today still think that. I mean, you can read many of the Jewish writings and they will treat all other people in pretty much that category.

"...But God has shown me *that* no man should be called common or unclean" (v 28)—if

you have something that you have done for a long time:

- you have never kept company with a Gentile
- you have not fellowshiped with them
- you have not eaten with them
- you know for sure that God has never dealt with any of the Gentile nations as God has dealt with Israel

Then God is going to do something different. God has to show, by a miracle, what He's going to do.

Peter said, v 29: "'For this reason, I also came without objection when I was sent for. I ask therefore, for what purpose did you send for me?' And Cornelius said, 'Four days ago I was fasting until this hour, and *at* the ninth hour I was praying in my house; and suddenly a man stood before me in bright apparel, and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Now then, send to Joppa and call for Simon who is surnamed Peter; he is lodging by *the* sea in *the* house of Simon, a tanner. When he comes, he will speak to you.' Therefore, I sent for you at once; and you did well to come. So then, we are all present before God to hear all things that have been commanded you by God'" (vs 29-33).

That would be quite a situation—wouldn't it? Here they're all gathered—I don't know how many he had in his household. I don't know how many soldiers were there. I don't know how many servants he had. But apparently he had a pretty big household.

Verse 34: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth *and* said, 'Of a truth I perceive that **God is not a respecter of persons**... [whereas, Judaism teaches that God *is* a respecter of persons] ...But in every nation the one who fears Him and works righteousness is acceptable to Him. The word that He sent to the children of Israel, preaching the Gospel of Peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all), you have knowledge of; which declaration came throughout the whole of Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism that John proclaimed, *concerning* Jesus, Who *was* from Nazareth; how God anointed Him with *the* Holy Spirit and with power, *and* He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with Him" (vs 34-38).

Verse 39: "And we are witnesses of all *the* things that He did, both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed Him by hanging *Him* on a tree. *But* God raised Him up the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses who had been chosen before by God, to *those of* us who did eat and drink with Him after He

had risen from *the* dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to fully testify that it is He Who has been appointed by God *to be* Judge of the living and *the* dead. To Him all the prophets bear witness, *that* everyone who believes in Him receives remission of sins through His name.’ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came upon all those who were listening to the message. And the believers from the circumcision were astonished, as many as had come with Peter, that upon the Gentiles also the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out” (vs 39–45).

There is the key. God had to do something supernatural to show that He was going to work with the Gentiles in that particular way. You can go back with Stephen and the Eunuch—how that they went down and were baptized in the water. But apparently the Eunuch was one who had been circumcised and was a proselyte. That put him a different category than an uncircumcised Gentile. We’re dealing here with uncircumcised Gentiles. And, of course, this became a big bone of contention all the way through. You know all the things that happened concerning circumcision, non-circumcision, and all the difficulties that took place. That’s part of it.

Verse 46: “For they heard them speak in *other* languages and magnify God. Then Peter responded *by saying*, ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have also received the Holy Spirit as we *did*?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they besought him to remain *for* a number of days” (vs 46-48). So, this tells us three things we know for sure:

1. God is the One Who calls us
2. He sends the Holy Spirit to be with us
3. The Holy Spirit is to be gotten in us

It can happen in most cases after baptism. In *extraordinary* cases, such as this, only to show the apostles that God was going to deal with the Gentiles, that it happened before. ***This is an extraordinary situation!*** If God just wanted to deal with them, aside from the apostles, he could have given the Holy Spirit before Peter came, or He could have given the Holy Spirit without Peter ever coming. But He didn’t do it because He wanted to show the apostles that now He was going to deal with all nations; and how was He going to deal with all nations.

After all, to change from circumcision to non-circumcision, when God commanded that they be circumcised, is a tremendous change! ***I mean, a tremendous change!*** Didn’t God say that if someone wanted to partake of the Passover and a stranger wanted to become part of Israel, that they

had to be circumcised. No uncircumcised person could partake of the Passover.

Now we’ve got something totally different. We have the circumcision of the Holy Spirit, which is *of the mind, of the heart*, not of the flesh. How is God going to prove this? *By doing the exact same thing for the Gentiles that He also did for the Jews by sending the Holy Spirit!* Only in this case, to show that God was calling them beyond any shadow of doubt, they received the Holy Spirit just prior to baptism. This is the only case where it shows it. It doesn’t show that now God is going to give the Holy Spirit any differently than He did before, by repentance and baptism, but here was an exceptional case recorded for us so we would know that God was going to deal with *all* people, and not just the Jews. That’s why He did it.

We also have the account of the 144,000: The 144,000 are sealed in their foreheads by an angel of God. Apparently they receive the Holy Spirit before they are baptized. I don’t know of any other instances where the Holy Spirit has been given before baptism. Have you heard of any? *No, I haven’t heard of any!* Could God do it before a person is baptized? ***God could!*** However, you would then have to know them by their fruits:

- that they would obey God
- that they would keep His commandments
- that they would love God
- that they would believe with all their hearts

and so forth. If that were the case and a person were not baptized, then they would seek sincerely to be baptized, because that’s also a part of the commands that have been given, that they should be baptized.

Would this also apply to people who are ready to die, repent of their sins, die a few minutes later, whatever? *I do not know! I could not answer that question, because we are to ‘walk in newness of life’ after we’re baptized! We are to live by God’s Holy Spirit!* I am sure that in many cases when a person knows that they’re going to die, almost anyone is going to do anything in some emotional thing. Whether they truly repent in that particular case, I do not know. However, if that were the case then, there wouldn’t be much need for the second resurrection. For it to carry through to the second resurrection, they act upon it at that time.

That may be something, but as far as them receiving salvation that instant, then, everyone would wait until the last and repent just before they die; then you could have the ‘holy unction’ that the Catholics have or the ‘last rites’ or whatever. You could do that at the last minute. He said, ‘I say to you today that you will be in paradise with Me,’ but

He didn't say *when*. So, he could be in paradise at the second resurrection.

This is an extraordinary situation. I think only a one-time situation where God had to show the apostles what He was going to do. That's one of the reasons why He gave the Holy Spirit in such a powerful way on the Day of Pentecost at the temple area, because He was intervening to change what He was doing. God had worked through the temple system. God had worked through the priests and Levites all that time to that Pentecost. He had to do something supernatural to show He was not going to use that system anymore.

Along those lines, the same thing here, He had to do something supernatural to show that, in fact, *He was going to work with all nations*; to change where God showed that circumcision would not be required. I know for a Jew that's something! A person really hasn't proved anything to God on their death-bed anyway. I would say, yes, it's correct to say that without baptism you do not have salvation because they were baptized right after they received the Holy Spirit.

Let's put it this way: without baptism, even if you're given the Holy Spirit; this is a one-time thing what we read there in Acts 10. It didn't repeat itself other places, just that one time.

When we come to Acts 19:1, we have something entirely different here: "Now, it came to pass *that* while Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the upper parts *and* came to Ephesus; and when he found certain disciples... [these were followers or learners, whatever] ...He said to them, 'Did you receive *the* Holy Spirit after you believed?'.... [here's a whole different set of circumstances] ...And they said to him, 'We have not even heard that *there* is a Holy Spirit'" (vs 1-2).

God did not perform this supernatural thing all the time. This was a one-time event in Acts 10, to show and teach Peter and the apostles, that God was now going to deal with the Gentiles. They said, "... 'We have not even heard that *there* is a Holy Spirit.'"

Verse 3: "Then he said to them, 'Unto what, then, were you baptized?' And they said, 'Unto the baptism of John.'" This also shows that unless you have the right baptism, and John's baptism would be as close to the right thing as you could get. But what did John tell them? '*Believe on the One Who is coming after.*'

Based upon this, I have re-baptized people because they may have been baptized one time, long ago, and especially some in the Church of God Seventh Day; brought up the question: 'I don't know

if I have the Holy Spirit of God or not, but I do believe and I want to follow God.' I have re-baptized them because they have felt that they did not receive the Holy Spirit of God. They weren't against God; they were following His way; they were trying. We have those who were baptized under the baptism of John.

Verse 4: "And Paul said, 'John truly baptized *with* a baptism unto repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in Him Who was coming after him—that is, in Jesus, the Christ.'" What does it mean *believe*? *You have to believe and be baptized!* They were baptized by John 'for the remission of sins' or unto repentance.

Verse 5: "And after hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Now, when Paul laid *his* hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with *other* languages and prophesied" (vs 5-6).

Well now, this was to convince these people that they did have truly the Holy Spirit at that time, and they needed to be re-baptized; and also to be a sign to Paul that he should stay there and preach and teach. Whenever they spoke in tongues, I am sure—and I am convinced in my own mind—that it was languages that the others understood; has to be intelligent languages that the others understood. We know Paul understood Hebrew, Latin, Aramaic and Greek because he wrote in Greek. So, if you come to people here who are in Ephesus, who are Greeks, who never spoke Hebrew, and they start speaking in Hebrew and glorifying God, you know that's from the Holy Spirit.

Verse 8: "Then he entered into the synagogue *and* spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading the things concerning the Kingdom of God."

Let's look at another case. Here we have a case of the baptism of John and not receiving the Holy Spirit. With Cornelius we had the case of believing in God, following God, wanting to know more about God, but God had not dealt with the Gentiles. Then He sends Peter, and while Peter is talking, this supernaturally happens, so he says, 'who can deny them being baptized?' But *they were baptized!*

Can you be saved without baptism? *I doubt it because baptism is such an easy thing to accomplish*, and that God would provide the circumstances to make it possible. But it is also possible to be baptized and not receive salvation.

Here's the case, Acts 8:5: "Then Philip went down to a city of Samaria *and* proclaimed Christ to them." I don't know all the circumstances about this either, but *he preached Christ unto them*. This

apparently shows us that only certain people should baptize and lay hands on for the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Philip went down there and he preached. We know the whole situation that took place.

Verse 6: “And the multitudes listened intently with one accord to the things spoken by Philip when they heard and saw the signs that he did, for unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many of those who had *them*; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But *there was* a certain man named Simon, who had from earlier times been practicing sorcery in the city...” (vs 6-9). You know about Simon Magus, I’m not going to go into all of that.

“...and astounding the nation of Samaria, proclaiming himself to be some great one. To him they had all given heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, ‘This man is the great power of God.’ Now they were giving heed to him because *he* had for a long time bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip, who was preaching the gospel—the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ—they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself also believed; and after being baptized, he steadfastly continued with Philip; and as he beheld *the* signs and great works of power *that were* being done, he was amazed. Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent Peter and John to them” (vs 9-14).

Why would they send Peter and John? *Obviously they knew who Simon was!* You’re not going to go through Samaria. It says he was there a long time. You know the incident of Jesus and the woman at the well—the city of Samaria. You also know that in Samaria is Mt. Gerizim where then that goes back to the problem of the Jews—the renegade Jews and the Jews that came back under Ezra and Nehemiah. You can read that and how the renegade Jew, who was one of the priests, didn’t want to get rid of his Gentile wife. You have intermixture of those from Babylon being there at Samaria. So, you add that to the fact that Jesus told them, ‘Don’t go into any of the cities of Samaria.’ So, here they send down Peter and John because they knew something was up.

Verse 15: “Who, after coming down to *Samaria...*” That is geographically come down because Samaria lay, geographically, at a lower elevation.

“...prayed for them, that they might receive *the* Holy Spirit; for as yet it had not fallen upon any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name

of the Lord Jesus” (vs 15-16). We find through the combination of this whole thing that there has to be the *repentance*, there has to be the *baptism*—obviously these have to be right—and there has to be the *laying on of hands*. That repentance has got to be from the heart, otherwise you’re not going to receive the Holy Spirit.

Verse 17: “Then they laid *their* hands on them, and they received *the* Holy Spirit. Now, when Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give this authority to me also, so that on whomever I lay hands, he may receive *the* Holy Spirit’” (vs 17-19). Even though Simon was baptized, he didn’t receive the Holy Spirit. Why?

1. he was not obedient
2. he wasn’t repentant

He believed. It shows that *people can believe certain things*, even be baptized, but unless they repent and unless their heart is right with God, they aren’t going to receive the Holy Spirit anyway. We have quite a mix of circumstances here in baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit. It shows that the ultimate judge of it all, God is going to give the Holy Spirit. You know the rest of the account there.

- What if a person is baptized *truly* repentant, *truly* receives God’s Holy Spirit—what happens when they sort of let things slide?

or

- What happens if a man gets in the way and they get bitter at a man and somehow they’re bitter toward God?

They really don’t hate God, they’re really not bitter toward God.

(go to the next track)

- What do we do then?

In other words, once a person is baptized and receives the Holy Spirit of God, how far will God let them slide before then they are no longer considered acceptable for the Kingdom of God?

2-Tim. 1 shows what we need to do in case we find ourselves in a situation where we have been letting things slide, not growing in grace and knowledge as we should have been, not really using the Spirit of God as we ought to have used it, but we haven’t become disbelievers. We may be upset. We may have different things wrong in our lives. I don’t know how far God would let the things slide, I couldn’t tell you. We’ll look at a couple of Scriptures and see.

2-Timothy 1:5 says that he had tears of joy: “When I remember the unfeigned faith *that is* in you,

which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice—and I am convinced that *it dwells* in you also. For this reason, I admonish you to stir up the gift of God that is in you by the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of sound-mindedness” (vs 5-7).

There are times when we have to do that. There are times when we have to ‘stir up’ the Spirit of God within us, because anyone can let their guard down; anyone has enough trouble overcoming sin. How far is God going to let a person go? I can answer the question best this way: Rev. 2 & 3, here we have the message to the seven churches.

You can go through and you can pick out the things that God will let happen to an individual. He tells them all to repent but two of them. The first one, they had a lot of works—I’m just going to go through and summarize each one here:

- The Church at Ephesus: The thing He had against them is that they had lost their first love. They had become more social. They had become more caring about people than caring about God. So, He told them to repent.
- The Church at Smyrna: They were weak, miserable, in tribulation, persecuted and poor. But God said they were rich and He didn’t have anything to say against them.
- The Church at Pergamos: He’s got a lot to say against them. He says He’s even going to fight against them. That they even hold the doctrine of Balaam, hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. That shows allowance of quite of bit of false doctrine within the Church, but it’s still part of God’s Church.
- The Church at Thyatira: They have those that eat things sacrificed to idols; they’ve committed spiritual fornication. Some of them have even delved into satanism a bit and have come out of it. God says they are to repent. Obviously, they *have to repent*.
- The Church at Sardis: He says, ‘You have a name that you’re alive, but you’re dead.’ And He says just strengthen the things that remain, ‘I’m not going to require very much of you, just strengthen the things that remain and I won’t blot your name out of the book of life.’
- The Church of Philadelphia: These people have been faithful.
- The Church of Laodicea: They are ‘lukewarm’ and have problems of being ‘rich and increased with goods’ and sex sins referred to there as ‘the nakedness.’

Yet, He says, ‘Repent.’ He says, ‘Be zealous’ and He would still save them.

God shows there can be a great number of different problems once they receive the Holy Spirit of God, but they haven’t yet rejected God.

In 1-Cor. 3 we have a situation—and too many times though, rather than continually striving for what we should do to be the best we can. A lot of people ask, ‘What is the minimum I can do to be saved,’ because that’s all they want to do. There are many ‘psychological’ things here; there are many thoughts and things that people use to try and minimize what they ought to do. In other words, if a person is to get into the Kingdom of God, people think—a lot of people do—‘I want to do the least amount but still make it’; there are some that way.

Let’s look at what Paul wrote here: He told them, 1 Corinthians 3:3: “For you are still carnal. For since envy and contention and divisions *are* among you...” Then it talks about Paul and Apollos and then he says what he did:

Verse 6: “I planted *and* Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.... [God was working in their lives] ...Therefore, neither is he who plants anything, nor he who waters; for *it is* God Who gives the increase. Now, he who plants and he who waters are one, but each shall receive his own reward **according to his own labor**” (vs 6-8). We’re going to be judged according to our works. We’re also going to be judged according to our heart.

Verse 9: “For we are God’s fellow workers; *and* you are God’s husbandry, *even* God’s building. As a wise architect, according to the grace of God that was given to me, I have laid *the* foundation, and another is building upon *it*. But let each one take heed how he builds upon *it*” (vs 9-10). He’s referring to your own individual life. How are you building on that foundation?

Verse 11: “For no one is able to lay any other foundation besides that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ.” We can say that starts with *calling, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Spirit, having your sins forgiven through Jesus Christ—that is the foundation!* That’s the starting; that’s the beginning.

Verse 12: “Now, if anyone builds upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay *or* stubble.” It shows many different comparable types of works. Many different comparable types of spirituality: Gold and silver and precious stone obviously the best; wood, hay and stubble obviously in degrees, the worst.

Verse 13: “The work of each one shall be manifested; for the day *of trial* will declare *it*,

because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall prove what kind of work each one's is" (vs 12-13). In other words, that's likened unto life, the fiery trials of life—it's going to be tried.

Verse 14: "If the work that anyone has built endures, he shall receive a reward. If the work of anyone is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but *he* himself shall be saved, yet as through fire" (vs 14-15).

There is the minimal salvation. If a person even builds it sloppily—of straw, little bit of wood, spit and bailing wire—and the fire comes and it's burned up, and he's a weak individual and very difficult for him to do anything, but in his heart he still believes God. If in his heart he's still striving for God's way, but there's just so many things against him that he can't get out and do any better, then God is not going to reject him. He's just not going to have the greater reward, that's all. It says, 'he himself shall be saved.'

How can this apply? I think we can see in many, many different cases. Here is a classical case in Luke; and this is the story of the prodigal son. He didn't do very well—did he? The prodigal son never rejected his father. He wanted to go on his own way; he wanted to be independent and all this, but he never rejected God. We know the whole story of it here: two sons (Luke 15:11).

Luke 15:12: "And the younger of them said to *his* father, 'Father, give me that portion of the property which falls to me.' And he divided to them *his* living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered everything together *and* departed into a distant country. And there he wasted *all* his substance, living *in* debauchery. But after he had spent everything, there arose a severe famine throughout that country, and he began to be in need. Then he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country..." (vs 12-15). Rather than go home, he said, 'I'll just tough it out.' There are many people who want to 'tough it out' themselves, and we don't know each individual's heart. But here He gives us this parable so we can understand.

"...and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he was longing to fill his stomach with the husks that the swine were eating, but no one gave *anything* to him.... [In other words, he was hungry, but he was told, 'Don't you dare touch anything; you're feeding the animals, and when you're done with that you come in here and we'll give you your slop' type of thing.] ...And **when he came to himself...**" (vs 15-17). Obviously then repentance—a renewed repentance: 'he came to himself.' He understood what he was doing.

I'm sure there are many people who have

left the Church of God under varying and different circumstances that were very upset with people; very upset in particular with a couple of men that we know, who set themselves as lord and overmasters, and people got angry, mad and bitter, and they just left. We don't know their hearts, whether they totally rejected God or not. But look at what this boy did here. I mean, look what he did! If you had one of your own children do this, how readily would you receive him back? As readily as this? I dare say, probably not!

But you know the story: he came to himself, then: "...he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have *an* abundance of bread, and I am dying of hunger? I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; and I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants'" (vs 17-19). You know the rest of the story, and you know how God rejoices when one who is lost, comes back. He said:

Verse 24: "For this my son was dead, but is alive again; and he was lost, but is found..." (v 24). There may be many cases of that that we don't know about. There may be many people who can fall into this category of the prodigal son. Maybe, if they're sick and destitute or if they're in circumstances when they know they're about to die or something like that, and they repent to God on the spot in a minute, then you could say that would be a 'deathbed repentance' which could save them and bring them into the Kingdom of God. But, they would have the minimal, because the works weren't very good.

I don't know exactly how we can look at all of this but I know one thing, God is not like, nor does He take the posture that we have heard for so many years, that 'if you leave this corporate organization here and go into the world that you have lost it.' Let's look at another case.

Just to answer a question here about being re-baptized again. In Worldwide Church of God, a lot of people were re-baptized who had been Seventh Day Adventist or Church of God Seventh Day or Baptists. In every case, it's an individual situation. What I always did for those who were Church of God Seventh Day—in our area there were not many Seventh Day Adventists—but I would accept the baptism and laying on of hands from Church of God Seventh Day with this one question: I said that you ought to know whether you have the Holy Spirit of God or not. Even though you were baptized, you may not have received the Holy Spirit.

What you need to do is pray and fast and ask God to reveal to you that you know for sure that you have God's Holy Spirit, and if you do you don't

need to be baptized again. If you don't we'll baptized you again. That's how I handled it. Which I think is the only way to handle it. Remember when Paul came to those in Ephesus and he said, 'Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?' And he said, 'Well, we didn't know that there was such a thing as the Holy Spirit.' We are to know that we have the Holy Spirit. God doesn't want us to be in doubt. If the Holy Spirit is the greatest thing that we can have in this life, do you think God would have us in doubt whether we have the Holy Spirit of God or not? *I mean, absolutely not!*

Therefore, it says here in 1-John 3:24: "And the one who keeps His commandments **is dwelling in Him...**"

This comes right back to receiving the Holy Spirit. God gives His Holy Spirit to those that obey Him. This is so that we can know. God doesn't want us to be in doubt. How can we believe if we're in doubt? How can you believe in God if you don't believe that He's Creator? **You can't!** You can't have any doubt. He doesn't want us to be in doubt. He doesn't want us to go around and say: 'Oh, I wonder if I have the Holy Spirit?'

There are times when a person may let the Holy Spirit not be stirred up in them—like Paul said, 'Stir up the Holy Spirit that's within you.' There are times when we may 'grieve' the Holy Spirit, as it says in the Eph. 4. There may be times when we go contrary to the things that the Holy Spirit is trying to tell us and we sin. Then we realize how awful and bad and wrong it was and we repent. All of those things are the actions of the Holy Spirit working with us.

1-John 3:24: "And the one who keeps His commandments is dwelling in Him, and He in him... [the one keeping the commandments] ...and by this **we know** that He is dwelling in us: by the Spirit which He has given to us."

- We are to **know** that we have the Holy Spirit abiding in us!
- We are to **know** that we are in Christ!
- That's something **we know!**

I know that, and I know there are times that I have not been as I should be before God. I've experienced all the things we've talked about: repenting, stirring up the Spirit, fasting and praying, getting back close to God.

How far will God let a person go, before He takes away the Holy Spirit and they've committed the unpardonable sin? We just gave a quick summary of the seven churches. All right, here's a case which is a pretty rotten case:

1-Corinthians 5:1: "*It is commonly reported*

that there is sexual immorality among you, and such immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—allowing one to have his own father's wife. You are puffed up and did not grieve instead, so that he who did this deed might be taken out of your midst" (vs 1-2).

- think about the person doing this
- think about the people involved in it
- think about what emotions that they had to go through to even commit this thing
- think about the things that were on their heart and in their minds when they were going through this

Yet, they would come and go to church every week. This is a grievous problem. I mean, a terrible problem.

Verse 3: "For I indeed, being absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged *concerning* him who has so *shamelessly* committed this *evil deed* as if I were present: In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, and my spirit, together with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ to deliver such a one to Satan for *the* destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." (vs 3-5).

That person had to have slipped pretty badly. I mean, look, he was already committing fornication with his stepmother. That's going pretty grievously. Of the people who have left Worldwide Church of God, I don't know of any or many or even a few who have gone to that extreme. To just cut them all off and say, 'Hey, you're all going into Gehenna fire,' that's not my judgment to make. We don't know their heart and their mind, but this was a pretty disastrous case.

In 2-Cor. 2 we have the situation where the whole church repented because of the things they allowed by letting this continue on and putting up with it in the Church and not helping the man come to repentance before. We also have a situation where the man apparently repented and Paul told them to let him come back to church. We can follow his thought all the way through.

2-Corinthians 2:1: "Now, I am resolved within myself not to come to you again in sorrow. For if I make you sorrowful, who is it that makes me glad, if it is not the one who has been made sorrowful by me? And I wrote this same *thing* to you, lest when I come, I might have sorrow from *those* in whom I ought to rejoice; *for* I have confidence in all of you, that my joy is *the joy* of you all. For out of much distress and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears—not that you might be sorrowful, but that you might know the overflowing love which I have for you. But if anyone has caused

sorrow, he has not grieved me, but you all, *at least* in part (in order that I may not overcharge *him*). To such a one this punishment, which *was inflicted* by the majority *of you, is sufficient*” (vs 1-6). The whole church got together and said, ‘Ok, buster, you’re out.’

Verse 7: “So that on the contrary, you should rather forgive and encourage *him*, lest such a one be swallowed up with overwhelming sorrow.” Quite a contrary thing that they let him back in the Church. They wouldn’t have done that in Worldwide; once you’re kicked out, that’s it. So, if he comes back and says, ‘I’m sorry,’ they only applied it to the two top ones, hundreds of times over. Not to the rest! I say that not in jest, but in fact.

Verse 7: “So that on the contrary, you should rather forgive and encourage *him*, lest such a one be swallowed up with overwhelming sorrow. For this reason, I exhort you to confirm *your* love toward him. Now, for this *cause* I wrote *to you*, that I might know by testing you whether you are obedient in everything. But to whom you forgive anything, I also *forgive*; and if I also have forgiven anything, to whomever I have forgiven *it*, for your sakes *I forgave it* in *the* person of Christ; so that we may not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes” (vs 7–11).

Then he shows that that one should be brought back into the Church. What else does it show us in the instructions that have been given? *It does not tell us to re-baptized him*—right? ***Though they sin grievously***, it doesn’t tell us to re-baptized—does it? *No!* But obviously, this person has a lot of work to do—a whole lot of rebuilding of the mind and the spirit and the attitude and the heart and things like this—that comes to yielding to God. Again, how far will God let a person go before He cuts them off? That’s an individual judgment that God Himself has to make.

Once you have repented of your sins to be baptized, to receive the Holy Spirit, then you don’t have to go out and be baptized every time you sin—that’s absolutely correct. What is it that we have to do? *Repent!* Very clear here!

1-John 1:7: “However, if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, *then* we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our own sins, He is faithful and righteous, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (vs 7-9).

Once we’ve been baptized, we still sin. How do we get rid of those sins? ‘Oh well, get up every morning and be baptized.’ *No!* We REPENT! We have access to God. What if a person ends up being

a prodigal son? Goes out and commits fornication—like this guy did in 1-Cor. 5—and then somehow comes to his senses? *He’s repentant!* He’s burned up all of his good works! I mean, they’re gone! ‘Wood, hay and stubble’—that is gone! ‘But he himself shall be saved even so as by fire.’ He may go out and have his life so consumed to ‘the destruction of the flesh’ as Paul said (1 Cor. 5), but in the final analysis, if there’s that repentance, they still may be saved. Not ‘shall be’—‘may be.’ It said that his spirit ‘*may be*’ saved, because that depends on their heart, mind and attitude. This is why we’re not to judge other people who are Christians. We need to judge situations and circumstances.

Romans 14:7: “For no one among us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we should live unto the Lord; and if we die, we should die unto the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s. *It is* for this very purpose *that* Christ both died and rose and is living again, so that He might be Lord over both *the* dead and *the* living. Now then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (vs 7-10). An individual thing. God has to make that judgment.

Verse 11: “Because it is written, ‘For *as I* live,’ says *the* Lord, ‘every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ So then, each one of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore, we should no longer judge one another, but judge this instead: Do not put an occasion of stumbling or a cause of offense before your brother” (vs 11-13). So we’re all going to stand before the judgment seat of God—God is going to judge it.

Where does it show that if we are baptized then our children are also given a measure of protection or whatever it may be?

1-Corinthians 7:13: “And *if* a woman has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to dwell with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife... [‘sanctified’ means *to be made Holy*—not, obviously, for salvation, but for God’s Holy protection and blessing] ...and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the husband; otherwise, your children would be unclean, but now they are Holy” (vs 13-14).

In other words, they have God’s blessing; they have God’s protection. Obviously, until they reach the age where they have to be making their own choices and decisions. But sure they do. I mean, I can, like with my own children. I’ve told them, I said, ‘A lot of the things that you have, which are part of you—your body, your mind, the way that you think, the blessings of God—all those things have

come, first of all, because your mom and I have been loving and faithful to each other and nobody else. Therefore, that blessing is automatically passed on within your very being. You have that as part of you. Don't stand up and say 'I'm big and strong and tough and wonderful and the greatest thing that's ever come to earth,' because you're not. *You just have a blessing from God!*

For my daughter, for her not to say, 'Boy, I'm the greatest and most beautiful thing that's ever arrived on the face of the earth,' and go out and squander your life and ruin it by doing all sorts of things you ought not do, because all you're doing is squandering the blessing that came from God in the first place. I've told them: 'What you need to think on doing is how you can take the blessings of God in your life—both physical and spiritual, though you're not baptized at this point—and when you have your own family and children, if you are following God, how you can multiply that and pass that on to your children.' God says the 'blessings will come to those that love Him unto a thousand generations.' It is true. You know that will be passed on.

But, this thing is as you also mention, that if you go ahead and strive to just have good works, just for a reward. Can you just work for a reward and demand it of God? *No, you can't!* Because if you do, your works to be seen of men—what did Jesus say? *You have your reward already*, that is, men have seen it, 'Oh that's a nice work, that's good, you've done a good work.'

How does that relate to a greater reward or stars in your crown, or whatever it may be? It relates this way: That's why we are told whatever we do we do from the heart and don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. That means, obviously, from the point of view that you're going to do it so that you're going to get something better for yourself. In other words, if you do things, you're doing it for God and doing it for other people, not so that you can selfishly get a greater reward. Let God give the reward. Let God do the determination.

It's got to be from the heart! Without any forethought and premeditation: 'Well, I'm going to make sure that I drag my sick little body out of this bed and go to Sabbath services, so that I will get a greater reward because I have never missed a Sabbath in ten years.' God let's you go there and give half the church the flu—ha! That's your reward! Or 'Boy, I'm going to take care of the widows and I'm going to take care of the children, and boy, I'm going to make sure I do all this and do all that and be seen of the minister and open the door and carry his briefcase and all those things.' All that is just so much vanity. The reward has been in carrying the briefcase. The reward has been 'thank

you for carrying it'; if your motivation was to do it so you could get on the good side of the minister or on the good side of the minister's wife, or to be seen of others so you can crawl up the ladder of deaconship, eldership, apostleship, or whatever. That's why God has to judge the heart.

Just one other thing. Must you be baptized to be saved? I mean *be resurrected*—that is salvation. You may not necessarily have to be baptized for God's Holy Spirit to come to you. But if it does come to you, then you need to repent of your sins and be baptized and have hands laid on so you can receive the Holy Spirit; or if you are truly a Cornelius, and you receive the Holy Spirit before you're baptized, you better be instantly baptized after that, otherwise there's no salvation (Rom. 6). This tells us what baptism is all about. If God, in one person's circumstance, may happen to give the Holy Spirit before they're baptized, they better hurry and follow it with baptism just as quickly as they can.

Romans 6:3: "Or are you ignorant that we, as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death?" How can Jesus Christ's death for your sins be applied to you unless you are baptized? *It cannot!*

Verse 4: "Therefore, we were buried **with** Him though the baptism **into** the death..." Unless you tell God that you are willing to die—and that's what baptism is; 'the wages of sin is death'—and 'God, I know *the wages of sin is death* and I am willing to die, **right now!**'

"...so that, just as Christ was raised from *the* dead by the glory of the Father, in the same way, we also should walk in newness of life. For **if** we have been conjoined together in the likeness of His death... [**if**—conditional] ...so also shall we be *in the likeness* of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man was co-crucified with *Him* in order that the body of sin might be destroyed..." (vs 4-6). That is we don't live according to sin.

"...so that we might no longer be enslaved to sin; because the one who has died *to sin*... [in the operation of baptism is what we are talking about] ...has been justified from sin. Now, **if** we died together with Christ..." (vs 6-8). That's why baptism is important.

"...we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from *the* dead, dies no more; death no longer has any dominion over Him. For when He died, He died unto sin once for all; but in that He lives, He lives unto God. In the same way also, you should indeed reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Christ Jesus our Lord" (vs 8-11).

Romans 8:9: "However, you are not in *the*

flesh...” That is accounted by God—because we’re still in the flesh. I am still here in the flesh. But before God, as long as I have the Spirit of God, and as long as I am yielding to God, I am not counted by God as in the flesh.

“...you are not in *the* flesh...” (v 9). That has reference to not just being a fleshly body, that means you’re not living according to the dictates of the carnal mind of flesh—that’s what that means.

“...but in *the* Spirit, if *the* Spirit of God is indeed dwelling within you. But if anyone does not have *the* Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. But if Christ *be* within you, the body *is* indeed dead because of sin...” (vs 9-10)—and because of baptism (Rom. 6).

“...however, the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. Now, if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from *the* dead is dwelling within you, He Who raised Christ from *the* dead will also quicken your mortal bodies because of His Spirit that dwells within you... [That is obviously when? *At the resurrection* (1 Cor. 15)—that’s when that takes place.] ...So then, brethren, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to *the* flesh; because if you are living according to *the* flesh, you shall die; but if by *the* Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you shall live” (vs 10-13). That obviously then has reference to the *resurrection*, reference to *salvation*.

It is true, unless you are baptized, you are not going to see salvation, ***that is the resurrection!*** Because every instance where we find in the Bible—and it was just moments before they received baptism that they got the Holy Spirit—he’s standing there preaching to them, telling them all about Christ. He’s probably wondering in his mind, ‘What am I going to do here?’ God already made up His mind. Zappo! Give them the Holy Spirit; the decision is made. It’s not something he took upon himself, but it’s something that God told him what he should do. That makes it entirely different.

What about people roaming around in the world that believe in God. Well, it says that ‘even the demons believe in God.’ There are people who believe in God, but God hasn’t called them, and there’s a vast difference between being called and believing that God is Creator or whatever you may want to believe that God is. There’s a vast difference in it. There are people who believe that there’s a Creator God, but they’re not willing to believe to obey Him. Obviously, they’re not in any condition of salvation, a condition that is different than salvation. A condition that is you’re living in the flesh with God’s Spirit in you on the way to being saved, but you haven’t yet attained unto salvation.

It’s been a long time since I talked to anyone about the very basic, basic things. God has allowed us to grow in grace and knowledge and we get on these things and we have our sermons going. I say to remember this, and I tell you to remember a whole chapter in the Bible, and you remember it. From that we go to this, but you can’t do that with people who are just starting. You can’t do it! This has been really, really good.

After the 144,000 are finished, they’re going to have one grand baptizing party, just like they did on the Day of Pentecost, and the 144,000 may be sealed on the Day of Pentecost. That’s a supernatural intervention. So, you get down to the ultimate question: Can God do anything He wants to? ***Yes! God can do anything He wants to!*** But, the only time He’s going to go around the things that He’s clearly shown ought to be done, is when He needs to do something that we would not be inclined to do ourselves and He has to show us. That’s what He did there in Acts 10.

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scripture References:

- 1) Acts 10:47-48
- 2) John 14:17, 15-17
- 3) Acts 2:38
- 4) Acts 5:32
- 5) Acts 11:2-4
- 6) Acts 10:1-48
- 7) Acts 19:1-6, 8
- 8) Acts 8:5-19
- 9) 2 Timothy 1:5-7
- 10) 1 Corinthians 3:3, 6-15
- 11) Luke 15:12-19, 24
- 12) 1 John 3:24
- 13) 1 Corinthians 5:1-5
- 14) 2 Corinthians 2:1-11
- 15) 1 John 1:7-9
- 16) Romans 14:7-13
- 17) 1 Corinthians 7:13-14
- 18) Romans 6:3-11
- 19) Romans 8:9-13

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- John 6:44
- Luke 1
- Revelation 2; 3
- Luke 15:11
- Ephesians 4
- 1 Corinthians 15

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