

# THE PLAN OF GOD

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## *Preface*

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Before you begin your Bible study, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, be sure you have named your sins privately to God the Father.

If we confess our [known] sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our [known] sins and to cleanse us from all [unknown, or forgotten sins] unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

You will then be in fellowship with God, filled with the Holy Spirit, and ready to learn Bible doctrine from the Word of God.

“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in [the filling of the] spirit and [biblical] truth.” (John 4:24)

If you have never personally believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, the issue is not naming your sins. The issue is faith alone in Christ alone.

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey [the command to believe in] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

**T**HE WORD OF GOD is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and is a critic of thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)

All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God might be mature, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Tim. 3:16–17)

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

## SIX PROPOSITIONS

THIS IS THE BEGINNING of a basic study course. Our textbook will be the Bible. God does not reveal His plan to us today through visions, voices, dreams, or any form of direct revelation as He did to the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles. The Scripture is our only source of information about God's plan. All of God's revealed truth or doctrine is found in the Bible.

So, familiarize yourself with the Scripture using Hebrews 4:12 as an example. This is an easy task since both the Old and the New Testaments are divided into "streets and houses." Hebrews is the street; the house number is 4:12—chapter 4, verse 12. Hebrews is found in the New Testament. If necessary, look up the street location in the index. You should not be embarrassed by doing so.

Now before we begin our study, we should examine six introductory propositions about God. We are not seeking to prove them, simply to state them. These propositions are prerequisite to an understanding of the plan of God.

### *Proposition One: God Exists*

The assumption that God exists is the foundation for this study. Whether or not *you* think God exists is not a concern at the moment. What should concern you is maintaining logical and clear thought. If you say, “There is no God,” you are being arbitrary and foolish (Ps. 14:1; 53:1–2). A logical statement might be, “On the basis of rationalism or empiricism, God does not exist.” But if you dogmatically say, “I do not *believe* God exists,” you demonstrate inconsistent thinking. If you truly do not think God exists, at least express the concept by making a statement that shows you are a logical thinker.

There are three basic systems of human perception:

1. *Rationalism*—determines reality through reason.
2. *Empiricism*—determines reality through what you see, touch, taste, hear, and smell.
3. *Faith*—determines reality through confidence in the authority or veracity of someone.

At some time during your life you rely on all three systems of perception. But the system on which you rely the most will affect your grasp of reality.

Now when I say, “God exists,” I mean I believe by faith that He has always existed—not as a figment of my imagination, but as a Person who has no beginning or end. You may ask, “Who is God? What is God?” These questions can be answered because God has revealed Himself.

### *Proposition Two: God Reveals Himself*

If God exists, all-powerful and sovereign, then it follows that God had something to do with our being here. If God created man, logically He should reveal Himself to mankind. If God has always existed and He created mankind, then it follows that He will reveal Himself to mankind and He must reveal Himself in a way that man can understand.

### *Proposition Three: God Makes Sense*

If you continue with this study, you will learn that God reveals Himself to us in a way that makes sense. I am going to add something



to this proposition: God makes organized sense because God is totally organized. And God's organized sense is presented in the form of a plan we can understand.

### *Proposition Four: God Has a Plan*

God not only has a plan, but His plan is *perfect* and His plan includes *you!* Proposition five, then, shifts from God to you.

### *Proposition Five: You Are the Object of God's Plan*

If you can say, "I am a person, I am a human being, I belong to the human race," then you can say, "God has a personal plan for me." That is why you are here on this earth.

Here is the point: If there is a God, if He has revealed Himself, if He makes sense, if He has a perfect plan, and if He has a perfect plan for every human being including you, then you owe God a hearing.

### *Proposition Six: You Owe God a Hearing*

I want you to notice the word "hearing." Nothing is required of you except an open mind. There are no gimmicks—I only want to give you information God has provided through the Bible. All you need to do is listen to what God says through His Word. You have nothing in this world to give to God except a hearing. Whether or not you listen is strictly your choice.

This may be quite different from what you expected, particularly if you have been exposed to "religion." Religion is man's attempt to gain a relationship with God or the approbation of God by man's own works. Religion obscures the plan of God and deceives the human race. Religion was designed by Satan to make you antagonistic toward the biblical plan of God.

Notice, I said religion—not *Christianity!* Biblical Christianity asserts that only the work of God through Jesus Christ provides the means of salvation and an eternal relationship with God. As "the light of the world," Jesus Christ illuminates the plan of God (John 8:12). Christianity proclaims God's way of salvation for the human race.

Since the objective of this basic course is to develop the plan of God, let us review the points in our introduction.

1. God exists.
2. God reveals Himself.
3. God makes sense.
4. God has a plan.
5. You are the object of God's plan.
6. You owe God a hearing.

If you accept these propositions as true, then you recognize that God does have a plan for you. But remember, God's perfect plan must contend with your human nature, your flaws and imperfections. No matter how good you think you are, your human nature cannot meet God's perfect standard of righteousness. Your human nature creates a barrier that separates you from God; you can have no relationship with Him.<sup>1</sup> You cannot associate with God in your totally depraved condition. Therefore, God has found a way to bring you to Himself; He has designed a three-phase grace plan so that you might approach Him.

- Phase One:     Salvation  
 Phase Two:     Your lifetime as a believer  
 Phase Three:    Eternity

Under God's plan, God provides everything in grace for man from salvation until eternity.<sup>2</sup> Grace is the policy of God in bestowing His unmerited favor on sinful mankind. There is nothing mankind can do to earn the grace of God. Grace is all that God is free to do for mankind based on the saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross (Isa. 30:18).

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1. The barrier is an insurmountable bulwark that separates sinful man from perfect God and prevents him from having a relationship with Him (Rom. 5:12). The barrier consists of: sin (Rom. 3:23), the penalty of sin (Rom. 6:23a), physical birth (Eph. 2:1), man's relative righteousness (Isa. 64:6a), the perfect character of God (Rom. 3:12b), man's position in Adam (1 Cor. 15:22a). See R. B. Thieme, Jr., *The Barrier* (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2003). Hereafter, cross-references to my books will cite only author, title, date of publication (in the first reference), and page(s).

2. Thieme, *A Matter of Life & Death* (1990); *Giving: Gimmick or Grace?* (1990), Appendix A.

## PHASE ONE: SALVATION

God's plan for your life begins at the cross. The cross is the key to the plan of salvation. When Jesus Christ hung on the cross between heaven and earth, He was judged for every sin in the human race—past, present, and future (John 3:16, 36; 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 2:14; 1 Pet. 3:18). He became the substitute for our guilt; He received the penalty of sin for us. "He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the cross" (1 Pet. 2:24a). Any member of the human race can be saved and have an eternal relationship with God simply by believing in Jesus Christ as Savior.

"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved."  
(Acts 16:31)<sup>3</sup>

"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name. (John 1:12)

The first phase of God's plan reconciles the total depravity of human nature with His holiness, a word that refers to His perfect righteousness and justice. When teaching a basic theology course, I usually begin by exploring the character of God, His divine essence.<sup>4</sup> However, this time I will begin with a study of your essence so that you will know why God had to solve the problem of the barrier which exists between you and Him.

### *The Essence of Mankind*

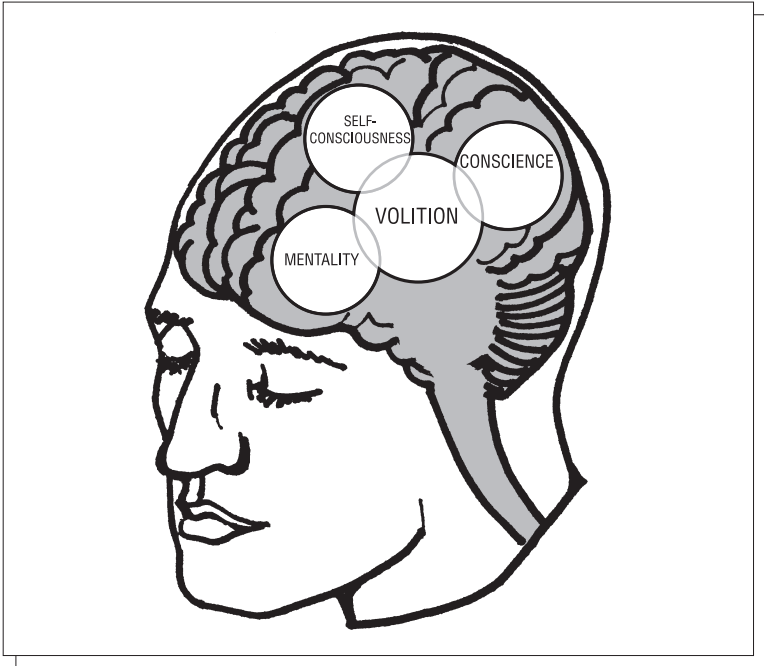
I will begin with you as you were at birth. You were not conscious of this reality, but at the moment of physical birth you became a person with a soul. The soul is the invisible, incorporeal essence of man,

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3. All Scriptures in this book are quoted from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). Bracketed commentary reflects amplification of the NASB translation taught in Bible class lectures (available on MP3 CD and tape from R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, Houston, Texas).

4. Thieme, *The Trinity* (2003), 5–16.

the real person. The diagram shows the essence of the human soul at birth as it comes from God.



ESSENCE OF THE SOUL

### *SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS*

When you were born, you were not aware of your existence. Later when someone called you by your name, you responded. When you saw yourself in a mirror, you associated your name with your face. Eventually, you became aware of yourself as an individual.

### *MENTALITY*

Obviously, the mentality of a newborn baby is not developed; otherwise, he could speak fluently at the moment of birth. Vocabulary must be learned; words must be put together. All conscious thinking is

accomplished by means of vocabulary, so your vocabulary greatly determines your ability to reason.

### *VOLITION*

Volition is the decision-maker of the soul. A baby's volition is completely controlled by his environment. Since he has no vocabulary, a baby cannot say, "I'm hungry." All he can do is open his mouth and cry. When someone forgets to feed him or change his diaper, a baby's volition becomes a vocal expression. But this is not a fully developed volition.

### *CONSCIENCE (NORMS AND STANDARDS)*

A baby is born without teeth, but they grow in. Likewise, a baby is born with a conscience, but it does not contain one norm or standard. These gradually develop through social, academic, and spiritual training. Just as the baby eventually acquires teeth, eventually he develops norms and standards. But those norms and standards are flawed because of the sin nature.

## *The Sin Nature*

The sin nature so utterly contaminates mankind that no one can approach God's perfect essence or please Him. Although *not* a part of the soul, the sin nature is the center of rebellion toward God, the source of temptation to disobey God. The sin nature seeks to influence and control the soul. This depraved nature came into existence as a direct result of Adam's original sin.

Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin [sin nature] entered into the world, and [spiritual] death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.  
(Rom. 5:12)

The sin nature resides in the cell structure of the body and is passed genetically by procreation from Adam to the rest of the human race (Rom. 6:6; 7:5, 18).<sup>5</sup> With the exception of Jesus Christ, every person

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5. The sin nature is the "old man" of Ephesians 4:22 (KJV); the Adamic nature of "flesh" of Romans 8:3-4; the principle of "sin" of Romans 7:8-20. See Thieme, *The Barrier; The Integrity of God* (1998), 49-53.

is born with a sin nature.<sup>6</sup> I was born with one; you were born with one. The sweetest little baby you ever saw has a sin nature!

Mothers may “ooh” and “ah” over their babies saying, “Isn’t he beautiful!” “Isn’t she adorable!” “Look at my precious baby!” But do you know God’s attitude toward babies? I am going to shock you. Babies are unacceptable to God. We look at the physical appearance of a baby, but God sees the sin nature. So, no matter how many people admire the beauty and innocence of a baby, remember: Only one baby has ever been beautiful to God—Jesus Christ!

The reason God found Jesus Christ beautiful but all other babies less than attractive is not because of how they look. Babies are unacceptable to God because they are born spiritually dead—separated from God (Rom. 5:12; cf., Eph. 2:1).<sup>7</sup> Jesus Christ was the only baby ever born without a sin nature and was therefore perfectly acceptable to God (1 Pet. 2:22). Let us look at babies from God’s viewpoint. I was born spiritually dead; you were born spiritually dead. With the exception of Christ, every person who has ever come or who ever will come into the human race is born with a sin nature and spiritually dead.

Some people have the erroneous idea that the first time you sin personally, you die spiritually. Not true! Even though you are born physically alive, at that same instant you are born spiritually dead. God does not condemn you for acts of personal sin. His attitude is not based on what you do, because as a newborn baby you have done nothing good or bad. God’s attitude is based upon the fact that your physical body is contaminated by the sin nature and you are spiritually dead.

As you develop physically and mentally, you begin to commit acts of personal sin. The first words you may say are “Mama” or “Dada.” Eventually you will say, “No, I won’t!” This is your volition responding to your sin nature. Every sin nature has many facets and produces extremes of both good and bad. Therefore, in order to understand yourself, you must understand your sin nature.

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6. Since the humanity of Christ was conceived by means of the Holy Spirit, He was born *without* the genetically formed sin nature (Matt. 1:18). See Thieme, *The Blood of Christ* (2002), 10–11.

7. Thieme, *The Barrier*, 5.

## *Production of the Sin Nature*

### AREA OF WEAKNESS

The sin nature has an area of weakness from which all temptation for personal sin originates.<sup>8</sup> There are three categories of personal sins.

*Mental Attitude Sins.* What are mental attitude sins? Pride, jealousy, bitterness, hatred, vindictiveness, implacability, envy, guilt feelings, fear, worry, anxiety, self-pity. These are the worst kinds of sins because they can quickly become a cluster of sins which are destructive to the spiritual life.<sup>9</sup> Since we all possess a sin nature, each of us will sooner or later succumb to some of these mental attitude sins.

Now, when I start to talk about sins, do not become defensive. If I ‘step on your toes,’ just remember, I have not been following you around. One secret in learning is to ‘stay loose.’ Relax! You may be a heavy mental attitude sinner. You are not alone. There is not one person in the human race, except Jesus Christ, who does not commit mental attitude sins periodically. Some Christians even become ‘chain-sinners.’<sup>10</sup> However, the point I want you to remember is that this is a *category* of sin. What you *think* can be a sin—a mental attitude sin.

*Sins of the Tongue.* This category includes maligning, judging, bullying, gossiping, criticizing, and lying. You may wish to classify some of these sins as malicious slander. Notice how the tongue is described in the book of James:

So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and *yet* it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell. (James 3:5–6)

8. The temptation to sin is not sin itself. Only when your volition succumbs to temptation do you commit a personal sin. The source of temptation is the sin nature. The source of personal sin is your volition.

9. Thieme, *Christian Integrity* (2002), 173–82.

10. Chain-sinning is building one sin upon another. See Thieme, *Isolation of Sin* (2000) 10–12.

One match, one ember, and you can burn down a forest. One word can spark complete havoc in your life and the lives of others.

*Overt Sins.* Overt sins involve other people, just as sins of the tongue do. So obviously, other people will be affected by your sin nature. Murder, adultery, drunkenness, and stealing are overt activities that the Bible names as sins (Ex. 20:13–15, 17; Rom. 13:9).

There also are many acts which misguided and self-righteous people call sinful, but the Bible does not. These questionable activities may amount to nothing more than taboos or personal prejudices. You may have taboos from your religious background and may honestly believe these taboos are sins. Just because *you* think something someone does is a sin does not mean *God* condemns it as sin. You must stay with what the Bible says.

If you think drinking a glass of wine is a sin and a person cannot be spiritual and enjoy a glass of wine at dinner, that is a taboo, not a sin. The Bible does not say, “Thou shalt not drink a glass of wine at dinner.” In fact, the Bible states that wine in moderation can be beneficial (1 Tim. 5:23). Only drunkenness is condemned in the Bible (Rom. 13:13).<sup>11</sup>

Neither is it sinful to wear red or black or to follow your own inclinations with regard to dress. And believe it or not, it is not sinful for women to dress attractively. Some of you will have difficulty with this because you have always considered women who wear certain types of clothing or makeup to be less than respectable. You may have condemned women whom you considered to have stepped over the line of propriety. Such condemnation is an example of tabooism and personal prejudice which falsely denounces Christians with tastes or backgrounds different from your own.

Many of you have a happy personality and some of you have a sad personality. Some of you are intense and some of you are naturally relaxed. Some are in-betweens, not quite happy and not really sad. The Scots call that dour. It is not a sin to smile; it is not a sin to frown. The Bible does not say, “Life for a believer is not a feather bed, brother; you had better put on a somber face. Never dare smile about anything because God abhors people who smile.” When Christians smile or seem to have a good time, tabooists may retire to a corner

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11. Some people should never drink any alcoholic beverage because of an inclination to alcoholism. See Thieme, *Daniel Chapters One through Six* (1996), Appendix H.



and say, “Look at those frivolous people; they are not very spiritual, are they?” Your personality is not the measure of your spirituality. To have a vivacious or gregarious personality is not a sin.

Just as the soul is invisible, so the sin nature is invisible. However, there is one Person who sees your sin nature moment by moment and that is God. While your sin nature tempts your soul in private and your soul succumbs to or resists temptation in private, whenever you commit a sin, whatever the category, God sees the sin.

### AREA OF STRENGTH

In addition to sins from your area of weakness, your sin nature also has an area of strength from which you produce good deeds. Called human good, these deeds are performed in the power of the “flesh.” Both believer and unbeliever using their own volitions produce human good. The good deeds produced by the believer under the control of his sin nature are indistinguishable from the good deeds performed by an unbeliever.<sup>12</sup>

The Bible mandates benevolent acts such as feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, giving to the poor and needy, and similar acts of kindness (Isa. 58:7, 10; Ezek. 18:7–8, 16–17; James 2:15–17; 1 John 3:17) under the laws of divine establishment. For the unbeliever, obedience to these laws is a source of temporal happiness, but the performance of these deeds in no way establishes any credit with God at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:12).<sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately, most people are doing good deeds simply because they want to impress God and get into heaven: they give money; they try to help humanity; they join churches.<sup>14</sup> Religion is a great sponsor of human good. But there is no place in the salvation plan of God for human good (2 Tim. 1:9). All the human good in the world will not save even one person.<sup>15</sup>

12. The believer with unconfessed sin in his life is not spiritual, but “fleshly,” controlled by his sin nature. See page 17. See also Thieme, *Reversionism* (2000), 14–18.

13. See page 12.

14. Such human good attempts to whitewash the devil’s world are sponsored by Satan and inevitably have evil consequences (Deut. 15:11; cf., Matt. 26:11; Mark 14:7; John 12:8). In this imperfect world, God provides the only lasting solution—the personal, spiritual one: faith in Christ and spiritual growth.

15. Thieme, *The Slave Market of Sin* (1994), 22–25.

How does God view human good? Isaiah 64:6*b* says: “All our righteous deeds [human good] are like a filthy garment!”—a euphemistic expression for something far more repugnant.

Since all human good emanates from the sin nature, it does not meet God’s standards, it has no spiritual or eternal value, and it is not rewardable in heaven (1 Cor. 3:11–15).

How can I illustrate God’s contempt for human good? Certainly all of you have had the experience of being around someone who was self-righteously proper. Did you appreciate them for it? Probably not! When I was growing up, my sister was this way. I can remember so many times when she was right and “rubbed my nose in it.” Of all the natural antagonisms I ever had, I remember this one the most. I can recall clenching my fists as my father warned me, “If you ever lay a hand on her, you will regret it!” By every standard she was right, but I did not appreciate her self-righteousness. At some time in your life you have probably had the experience of hostility toward a person whose pompous attitude obscured their correctness. By way of example, that is how God looks at human good: *A right thing done in a wrong way*—an antagonizing display of self-righteousness. God cannot abide this attitude.

The plan of God operates on divine good, never on human good (Eph. 2:10)!<sup>16</sup> Just as God condemns sin, so He rejects human good. When Christ died on the cross as our substitute, the sin problem was solved. At the same time, human good was rejected because Christ’s work was divine good.

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done *in righteousness*, but according to His mercy [grace], by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5, italics added)

The issue in salvation then is the work of Christ—divine good—versus human works—human good (Eph. 2:8–9).

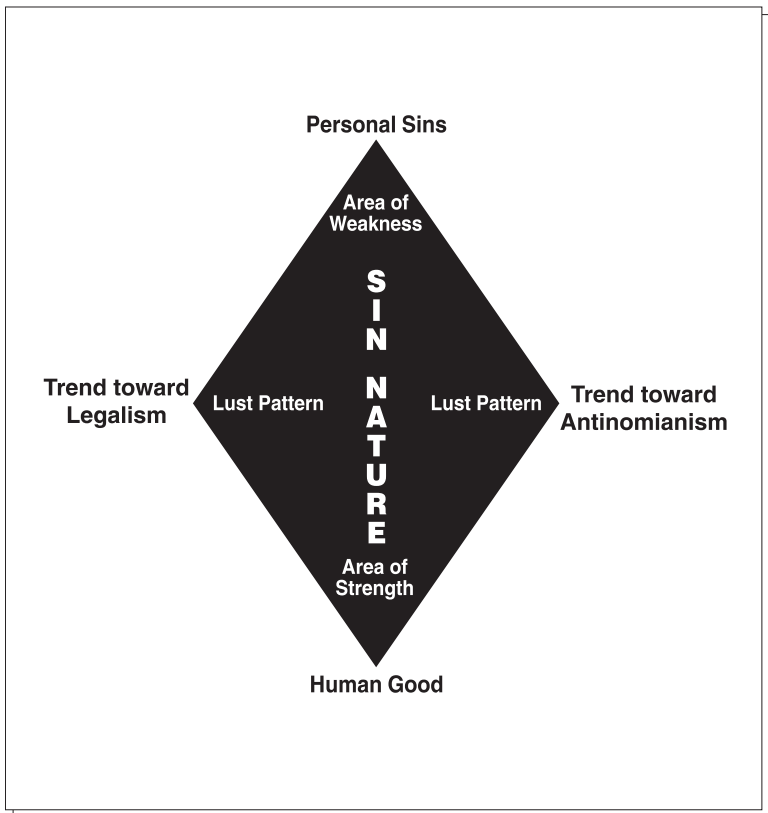
By now you should realize that you are carrying around quite a package in your body. But there is more. As if the areas of weakness and strength were not enough, the sin nature also has trends.

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16. Divine good is any deed or deeds performed by the believer under the filling of the Holy Spirit. Only divine good is acceptable to the perfect standards of God. Only divine good has intrinsic and eternal value and therefore receives recognition and reward from God in heaven.

## *Trends of the Sin Nature*

There are two trends in every sin nature: one toward asceticism—self-denial leading to self-righteousness; the other toward lasciviousness—self-gratification leading to licentiousness. Generally, a person will move in the direction of his habitual trend when he is under the control of the sin nature. That is why there are ascetics on the one hand, and hedonists on the other. However, there is no fixed pattern. One can have a general trend toward asceticism and sometimes move toward lasciviousness, or be lascivious and suddenly develop an area of self-righteousness.



## *Lust Pattern of the Sin Nature*

Another characteristic of the sin nature is the lust pattern. What is lust? Lust is an illicit, sometimes insatiable desire. This desire is such an intense motivator that lust can consume you and influence all your thoughts and actions.

Approbation lust—the desire to be recognized, to promote oneself—is the most basic motivation. This is why youngsters dare each other to do certain things—to get attention among their peers. Adults with approbation lust are just like children, even though their means of gaining attention may be more sophisticated. But whether child or adult, each operates within his own framework to gain attention. For instance, recognition may commence with some spectacular physical, academic, social, or professional achievement. Such recognition becomes an all-encompassing motivator in life.

Unfortunately, the encouragement of approbation lust may be instigated right from the beginning of the Christian life. Often new, VIP (very important person) believers are asked for a dramatic testimony on how they found Christ as Savior. Everyone wants to hear from the captain of the football team, the beauty queen, the successful professional, or the famous socialite. This may be good public relations, but it is not necessarily Christianity. This type of recognition could act as a catalyst to promote human good and stimulate the lust pattern. Just because believers are VIPs in the human realm does not make them more important in God's view than an unknown individual who never receives attention from anyone. When "Mister Little" accepts Christ, he is just as important in God's eyes as "Mister Big."

And opening his mouth, Peter said:

"I most certainly understand *now* that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears [respects] Him and does what is right [executes the plan of God], is welcome to Him." (Acts 10:34–35)

Approbation lust leads to power lust. Once people begin to get attention, they desire to organize those who give them attention so that they can control and manipulate them. Some people are consumed with sexual lust which they often substitute for romantic love. Others have materialism lust, a condition that consumes many in our society

with the insatiable desire for possessions. There are other lusts, but these are the basic ones.

Our inherent sin nature is a constant, grim companion. No matter which trend is dominant or how our sin nature operates, there is nothing *we* can do to remove it. Only God in His grace provides the solution to our sin problem.

He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf,  
that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.  
(2 Cor. 5:21)

God's plan provides the solution to sin in both phases one and two, for not only are we saved by grace, but we execute the Christian way of life by grace (2 Pet. 1:3–4).

## PHASE TWO: THE BELIEVER IN TIME

The moment you believe in Christ, you have the privilege of entering immediately into phase two of God's plan which I call "Operation Grace." This plan is designed for you to appropriate God's happiness through learning and applying the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). The mind of Christ is available to every believer as Bible doctrine. Although the sin nature never will be removed or shed in phase two (Rom. 7:14–25), through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16) and spiritual growth in Bible doctrine (2 Pet. 3:18) the sin nature can be restrained so that you can spend progressively more time serving the Lord and sharing His happiness.<sup>17</sup>

### *Something Old, Something New*

The moment you accept Jesus Christ as Savior, God does at least forty things for you in phase two.<sup>18</sup> But there is one thing He does not do for you—He does not remove the sin nature! You have, borrowing an expression from a wedding, "something old and something new." The indwelling and filling of the Holy Spirit are brand *new* and your

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17. Thieme, *Old Sin Nature vs. Holy Spirit* (2000).

18. See Appendix.

sin nature is the *old* holdover from your physical birth.<sup>19</sup> You are said to be “born again” (John 3:7). The theological term for born again or spiritual birth is regeneration. At the moment of salvation, you pass from spiritual death to spiritual life (John 3:6) and God the Holy Spirit creates in you a human spirit for the imputation of eternal life. (John 3:3–8; Titus 3:5) You are therefore reborn into the family of God (John 1:12); you are His child (Gal. 3:26); you are made righteous because of the work of Christ on the cross (Rom. 3:21–22; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9); you will reside with Him forever (Rom. 8:38–39). Regeneration makes you “a new creature in Christ” with a permanent family relationship with God (2 Cor. 5:17).<sup>20</sup>

Not only that, you start your Christian life with a clean slate. Let us say that at the time you believed in Jesus Christ, you were twenty years old. Over that period of time you accumulated a number of sins and good deeds—say several thousand. When Christ died on the cross all of those sins were poured out on Him and judged—every one of them. The moment you accepted Christ as Savior, all those thousands of sins were blotted out.

But you still have the sin nature which tempts you to sin and lose fellowship with God. You still can be motivated by lust. When you

19. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a permanent, absolute status acquired at the moment of salvation by every Church Age believer (Rom. 8:10–11) that transforms his body into a temple (1 Cor. 6:19) for the simultaneous permanent indwelling of Jesus Christ as the Shekinah Glory and permanent indwelling of God the Father (1 Cor. 3:16; 1 John 4:13–15). See Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History: Dispensations and the Church* (1999), 131–33.

The filling of the Holy Spirit, a temporal, absolute status acquired at the moment of salvation by every Church Age believer, controls or influences the soul of the believer (John 14:26) and is the divine power for executing the Christian life (Eph. 5:18). This absolute status is lost through sinning and recovered through rebound (1 John 1:9). See pages 22–24. See Thieme, *Rebound and Keep Moving!* (1993), 11–13; *Old Sin Nature vs. Holy Spirit*, 6; *Christian Integrity*, 25–26.

The Church Age is the current dispensation which began on the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the Crucifixion of Christ (Acts 2:1) and will terminate with the Resurrection or Rapture of the Church (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 1:10; 2:1, 5, 8–9; Col. 1:25–26). A dispensation is a period of human history defined in terms of divine revelation that reflects the unfolding of God’s plan for mankind (Rom. 16:25) and constitutes the theological interpretation of the divine viewpoint of history (Eph. 2:7). See Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History*, 3, 63–68.

20. Thieme, *The Prodigal Son* (2001).

sin in phase two, you are controlled by the sin nature and God despises that condition.

You must understand that the sin nature has nothing God can use. A Christian's life should operate on the basis of being filled or controlled by the Holy Spirit, not being controlled by the sin nature (Eph. 5:18). When a person is controlled by his sin nature after salvation, the Bible calls him a carnal Christian. "Carnal" is an old English word, a real antique. Hundreds of years ago, carnal meant fleshly, and "flesh" is sometimes a designation for the sin nature. A carnal Christian is any believer—you or me—when he has sinned.

The first time you sin after being saved may shock you. But after a while, sinning will become second nature. If you live your Christian life without spiritual growth—and by that I mean you never learn Bible doctrine—you will cultivate and refine your sin nature in carnality. For example, you might find out the ground rules in a certain local church—what people will accept and what they will not accept—so that you learn to hide your areas of weakness. If you remain ignorant of doctrine and of how to restrain the sin nature, you will develop into a first-class phony. Today, Christian hypocrisy is everywhere and any smart unbeliever can spot it immediately. New believers must therefore be taught that God has provided the means to avoid cultivating the sin nature.

### *Stall Recovery*

Through learning and applying Bible doctrine you can increasingly resist the constant temptation of the sin nature in your life. But sin will inevitably occur (1 John 1:8, 10) and when you sin, you must learn how to escape the subsequent control of the sin nature. The bad news is that the sin nature cannot be eradicated. But here is the good news: We have the means of controlling our sin nature. Learning about flying an airplane provides a wonderful illustration.

Your flight instructor initially takes you to an aircraft and says, "This is an airplane"—much in the same manner as when I said, "God exists." Of course, you already know it is an airplane. It has basic controls—a rudder and stick, a bank indicator, and a throttle. As you are shown the various parts the instructor explains, "This performs a certain function . . . that performs a certain function." Eventually, you get into the plane where he shows you how to strap yourself in, and then he takes you on a familiarization flight.

In the course of flight school, the first technique you must learn is how to recover from a stall. A stall means the aircraft is not maintaining flying attitude. In other words, the plane has a bad attitude which could become instant disaster. Therefore, you first must learn to recover the right attitude. Why does the instructor teach you this technique first? So you will not break his neck, as well as your own.

The recovery can be as dramatic as the instructor wishes to make it, depending on the nature of the aircraft and the instructor's grit. Many instructors like to push the stick forward, go into a good dive, and then pull back on the stick which makes the plane sit on its tail while you sit there with your stomach pressed against your backbone. Then, "Whoom!" You go into a hammerhead, a violent stall in which the nose of the aircraft drops past vertical and you end up on your back. Or the instructor simply may pull the throttle back, chop it off, and suddenly you can hear nothing but the wind—the noise of the engine is missing. Down you plunge as your stomach now goes to your head. Stall training can be sensational!

The believer trying to live the Christian way of life under the control of his sin nature is in a stall. Just like flying a plane without knowing the stall recovery technique is courting disaster, so the believer who does not know how to control the sin nature faces disaster. That is exactly why I cannot teach you anything else until you know 'stall recovery.'

You do not learn to fly in a stall, in a dive, or in a spin; you learn to fly when the plane is moving on a normal course. In God's plan you cannot learn spiritual truths when you are in a stall, under the control of your sin nature. You learn Bible doctrine, as we shall see shortly, only in the way that God has designed.

Some Christians have the misconception that once you accept Christ, your problems are over; you never will sin again and you will be happy. Consequently, when a believer without doctrine fails, he may assume he really was not saved at all. He reasons he must have been mistaken. He does not understand that once he *believes* in Christ, in spite of subsequent sins and failures his salvation never can be lost (Rom. 8:38–39).<sup>21</sup> Believers who repeatedly question their eternal security will try different methods for reassurance and reaffirmation, but never will really solve the predicament. What is required to correct

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21. Thieme, *The Prodigal Son*, 31–32.



their misconception is the doctrinal briefing concerning Corinthian carnality that the Apostle Paul gave in 1 Corinthians 3:1.

### *The Carnal Corinthians*

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men,  
but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. (1 Cor. 3:1)

Paul is speaking here as a teacher to students and he says, "And I, brethren." The word "brethren" refers to persons who have made the greatest of all decisions—the decision to believe in Jesus Christ—to receive Him as Savior. Brethren refers to members of the family of God. We become members of His family by accepting Christ as Savior (Gal. 3:26). However, just because the Scripture calls us "brethren," does not mean you need to run around calling everyone "brother" and "sister." The word brethren is significant only because it means that all believers are members of the same family.

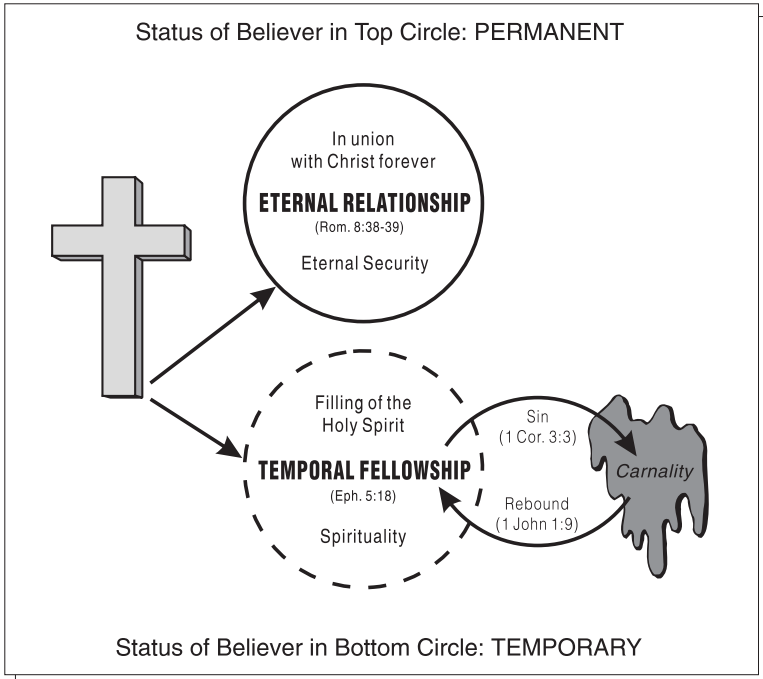
"And I, brethren, could not speak to you." Here is Paul, the greatest teacher of all time, and he cannot speak. Why? Because these people were not spiritual. Immediately you think, "Well, who and what is spiritual?" You might even say to yourself, "I don't feel spiritual." How does it feel to be spiritual? Is it a dreamy feeling up on 'cloud nine'? A consciousness of the presence of God? A satisfaction with your righteousness? Not at all! You are spiritual when you are controlled by the Holy Spirit and how you feel has nothing to do with it. If God the Holy Spirit controls your life, you are spiritual.

Spirituality is an *absolute*. At any moment, either you are filled with or controlled by the Holy Spirit or you are controlled by the sin nature. You can be spiritual with a sinus headache; you can be spiritual and feel depressed; you can be spiritual and feel good; you can be spiritual and sleepy; you can be spiritual and alert. How you feel has nothing to do with spirituality. Spirituality is the Holy Spirit's control of your life (Eph. 5:18).

You have to be controlled by the Holy Spirit in order to learn and apply Bible doctrine and execute phase two, just as you have to be flying on a level course to learn and apply the principles of flying. The most difficult aspect of flying is to hold to a straight course in crosswinds or bad weather. Likewise, spirituality is maintaining your fellowship with God under all circumstances. You cannot learn and

apply Bible doctrine and live the Christian way of life when you are controlled by the sin nature. Therefore, you must learn the stall recovery technique to be controlled by the Spirit, for it is God the Holy Spirit who teaches doctrine to your human spirit and empowers the spiritual life (1 Cor. 2:12–13).<sup>22</sup>

The stall in the Christian life is being out of fellowship in a state of carnality. Paul expresses his frustration with the Corinthian believers when he says, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men [controlled by the Holy Spirit], but as to men of flesh [carnal].” Because of their carnality, these “babes in Christ” knew very little Bible doctrine and had not advanced in the Christian way of life.



22. See Thieme, *Giving: Gimmick or Grace?*, 14–16; *Freedom through Military Victory* (2003), 52–53.

Let me illustrate with two circles. The top circle portrays eternal relationship with God; the bottom circle, temporal fellowship with God. Every believer is put into union with Christ at the moment of salvation and can never get out of the top circle (Ps. 37:24; John 10:28). There is nothing you can do to lose your salvation. The bottom circle represents the Holy Spirit's control of your life and is called "fellowship" or "spirituality." Outside of the bottom circle you are in the state of carnality where the sin nature controls your life. The spiritual believer is inside the bottom circle of fellowship and the carnal believer is outside the bottom circle.

Paul says, "When I am speaking to you and you are outside the circle of fellowship, I cannot get through to you. When you are inside the circle of fellowship, I can get through to you." Paul cannot *make* them get back in the bottom circle. He cannot force them back into the circle. No one works his way back into the circle. No one goes through a system of penance or pays money to get back into the circle. Getting back into the bottom circle requires the stall recovery technique. We call that technique "rebound."

Before you can *learn doctrine*, you have to *understand rebound!* Paul says:

I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able. (1 Cor. 3:2)

Paul really blasts the Corinthians. In effect he is saying, "Look, you were out of fellowship. You were not able to take in doctrine, and you still are not able to take it in." Then he adds: "For you are still fleshly" (1 Cor. 3:3).

The moment you are born into the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ, God the Holy Spirit puts you into union with Christ. At the same time, you are filled with the Holy Spirit, inside the circle of fellowship in the status of spirituality, until you sin. When you sin, out you go! Remember, you still have your sin nature. You are out of the bottom circle when you sin, but you can recover at any time. You need to know how to go from outside the circle to inside the circle—from carnal to spiritual. Recovery requires the rebound technique—the stall recovery procedure. Rebound is the basis for learning doctrine and the key to living in God's plan and producing divine good.

For you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? (1 Cor. 3:3)

Paul describes a type of sin which the Bible condemns many times: jealousy. How did the Corinthians get out of the bottom circle? Jealousy! Jealousy is a mental attitude sin that produces a chain of sins. Once outside of the bottom circle, strife develops. What is strife? Strife is dissension and fighting. When a person is jealous, he may become implacable and seek revenge. Such a person wants to hurt, malign, ostracize, and judge; he generates an attitude of total antagonism.

What happens when a group of people are involved in sin? They start with mental attitude sins and end up with strife. Strife is the complete antithesis of a relaxed attitude. Inside the circle of fellowship, anyone can have a relaxed attitude. Outside the bottom circle, believers are “tied up in knots,” fighting each other. This is why Paul could not teach doctrine to the Corinthians. They had the mental attitude sin of jealousy which they converted to “strife and divisions.”

Paul continues: “Are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?” (1 Cor. 3:3). What is the one possession you brought with you into the Christian life? Your sin nature. Every believer does! The phrase, “walking like mere men,” means that you are out of the bottom circle. “Mere men” is simply a technical title for anyone who has not accepted Christ as Savior. In other words, when you are out of fellowship, you walk or live like an unbeliever. It may be a moral or an immoral unbeliever, a religious or a nonreligious unbeliever, a foolish or a smart unbeliever, but you are living just like any unbeliever.

The sin nature is your enemy, but it is part of you—it is inborn. You will not be relieved of the sin nature until you die and enter phase three. Until then God provides the stall recovery procedure, the rebound technique.

### *Rebound, the Key to Fulfilling God's Plan*

If we confess [name] our sins, He is faithful and righteous [just] to forgive us our [known] sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [wrongdoing]. (1 John 1:9)

The first word “if” introduces what is called a third-class condition in the Greek. A third-class condition means maybe you will and maybe

you will not confess your sins. Using the volition of your soul, you have to decide for yourself what you are going to do. You can make positive or negative decisions. When you do what 1 John 1:9 says to do, you exercise positive volition. “We” refers to all believers in Jesus Christ; every believer has this option.

The next word “confess,” simply means “to cite, to name, to acknowledge, or to identify.” Originally the Greeks used the term to mean “to cite a case.” The case referred to in 1 John 1:9 is the cross. “Our sins” were judged on the cross and we simply cite or name these sins privately to God the Father. Confession or naming your sins requires no penance. Confession does not even mean to feel sorry for the sin or to beg God for forgiveness. Just name the sin to God, privately—not to anyone else.

Why just to God? Because every believer is a priest and must deal directly with God. As a believer-priest you have a right to your privacy to live your life as unto the Lord (1 Pet. 2:9).<sup>23</sup> As a priest you are responsible to the Lord for your sins, but to no one else. David committed adultery, he murdered, he committed all kinds of sins. But when he finally rebounded, he said, “Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight” (Ps. 51:4). Sin is against God, an offense against the character of God. Other people may be involved in some way, but the believer-priest confesses directly to God the Father.

“If we confess our sins, He [God] is faithful.” “Faithful” means God responds the same way every time. God always responds in grace and forgives us. He has never been inconsistent. Never! Faithfulness is one of God’s eternal characteristics: He is always consistent.

“He [God] is faithful and righteous [just] to forgive us our sins.” God is righteous and just to forgive our sins because our sins were poured out or imputed to Christ at the cross (1 Pet. 2:24).<sup>24</sup> God the Father judged every sin at that moment and no believer will ever be

23. In the Church Age, every believer is a member of the royal family in union with Jesus Christ the High Priest (Heb. 6:17, 20) and shares His priesthood (Heb. 7:1, 3). As such, every Church Age believer represents himself personally before God. The royal priesthood is the invisible side of the Christian life which includes acknowledging sin privately to God (1 John 1:9), prayer (Heb. 4:16), learning and applying doctrine (2 Pet. 3:18), and communion (1 Cor. 11:23, 26). See Thieme, *Christian Integrity*, 101–04.

24. Imputation is the action of the justice of God whereby condemnation or blessing is assigned, credited, or attributed to a human being. See Thieme, *The Integrity of God*.

judged for his sins again. Because of Christ's work on the cross, the righteousness and justice of God the Father were satisfied and He is free to forgive our sins and "cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

"Forgive" means "to forget and to blot out." God not only forgives the named sin which we call a known sin, but at the same time He forgives all unknown sins and purifies us of all "unrighteousness." Unrighteousness refers to all of our unknown sins and the sins we have forgotten.

This is your stall recovery; the rebound technique.<sup>25</sup> You should always keep short accounts with God. When you sin, immediately use 1 John 1:9 so that you will be restored to fellowship and under the control of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19).

For the believer who fails to utilize the rebound procedure, he is in a state of perpetual carnality. Although he is carnal, he has not lost his salvation. God loved him when he was in the bottom circle and still loves him just as much outside that circle because he is still a member of God's family. But at this point, he will receive divine discipline; he is going to be spanked.<sup>26</sup>

"FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,  
AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."

It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? (Heb. 12:6-7)

How can he recover? By using 1 John 1:9—the stall recovery procedure!

First John 1:9 is *not* a license to sin, but a license to serve. For the believer, only those deeds performed in the power of the Holy Spirit will qualify as divine good and receive recognition from God as bona fide Christian service at the Judgment Seat of Christ.<sup>27</sup> Rebound allows the believer to operate in the power of the Holy Spirit—to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), to walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-18). *Rebound is the divine asset which makes the Christian way of life function.* This is God's grace provision for controlling the sin nature and for advancing His plan in phase two (2 Pet. 1:3, 8).

25. Thieme, *Rebound and Keep Moving!*

26. Thieme, *The Prodigal Son*, 17.

27. See page 26.

## *Grace Is God's Plan*

Phase two of the plan of God provides every believer with a blueprint for how to live the Christian life and glorify God in time. But unless we understand who God is, who we are, and what He does for us, His plan remains obscure. None of us earn or deserve what God gives us—everything depends on His grace. In fact, a synonym for God's plan is grace.

The first step to glorifying God in time is to utilize consistently the grace technique of rebound. But God's grace does not end with regeneration and rebound. Exercising rebound is only the beginning. God has freely provided to every Church Age believer advantages and privileges that stagger the imagination (Eph. 1:3, 18; 3:20).<sup>28</sup> Learning to use God's grace provision should be the goal and purpose of every believer in phase two. Our Christian lives cannot advance to maturity without the wisdom of Bible doctrine as our guide. Only Bible doctrine reveals the treasures of God's plan to us. As we advance from "babes in Christ" to spiritual maturity, only then can we begin to fully understand and execute the plan of God in phase two, for His plan mandates us to:

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. (2 Pet. 3:18)

## PHASE THREE: THE BELIEVER IN ETERNITY

Phase three, eternity, is guaranteed to every believer (1 Pet. 1:4–5). At the moment you depart from this life, you are "face-to-face with the Lord" forever (2 Cor. 5:8). You will receive a resurrection body at the Rapture, a body like that of the resurrected Christ. The resurrection body will be without a sin nature (1 Cor. 15:35–45) and will forever free the believer from the slavery and imperfections of phase two. The Bible describes phase three in these words:

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28. The Church Age is the time period from Pentecost (Acts 1:8) to the Rapture of the Church. See Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History*, 64–66, 79–139.

“And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be *any* death; there shall no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first [old] things have passed away.” (Rev. 21:4)

Relatively few descriptions of heaven exist in the Bible. However, from those which do exist we know His plan for our eternal future is far beyond our wildest expectations. Our heavenly dwelling places are described as “mansions” (KJV) in John 14:2. The new Jerusalem, which comes down “out of heaven” (Rev. 21:2), is described as a city of pure gold with streets of gold, walls of every kind of precious stones, and gates of pearls (Rev. 21:16–27).

Furthermore, all Church Age believers will be evaluated at the Judgment Seat of Christ, so we may be rewarded according to our “deeds” (2 Cor. 5:10). Our rewards are called “crowns.” These crowns are spectacular and eternal reminders of our phase two spiritual growth and faithfulness in executing the plan of God (1 Cor. 9:24–27; 2 Tim. 4:7–8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10, 28; 22:16).

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones [divine good], wood, hay, straw [human good], each man’s work will become evident; for the day [Judgment Seat of Christ] will show it, because it is *to be* revealed with fire [human good will be consumed, divine good remains]; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. (1 Cor. 3:11–13)

The Judgment Seat of Christ takes place in heaven after the resurrection or Rapture of the Church. Sins are not the issue at the Judgment Seat of Christ since all sins were judged at the cross. Instead, you will be judged on how you lived your Christian life and whether your good deeds qualify as divine good.

If you spent your life in phase two out of the bottom circle in a state of carnality, all of your good deeds are as “wood, hay, and straw.” Are you aware that as a believer in Jesus Christ you are going to live with God forever and He will *not* allow one human good deed into heaven? Humanity may honor you for those deeds, but God will not honor any of them. All of your human good will be consumed by fire, but He won’t burn you! Neither will you receive any rewards.



However, if you maintained your spiritual life inside the bottom circle in phase two and advanced to spiritual maturity, your production is “gold, silver, and precious stones.” Your Christian service qualifies as divine good and will not be consumed by fire. Because you executed phase two of the plan of God, you will receive your eternal rewards.

## AFTER SALVATION, WHAT?

What is God’s plan for you following your personal faith in Christ? To glorify God in time—to realize the peace, happiness, and contentment that come from learning Bible doctrine and advancing to spiritual maturity (Rom. 12:2). Only through learning Bible doctrine will the absolute truth of God’s Word become the measure of your conscience, thinking, and the source of your mental attitude.

Bible doctrine is the mind of Christ. When you learn who and what Christ is, you begin to share His thinking (1 Cor. 2:16). God commands you to think divine viewpoint so that His gracious purpose can be fulfilled in your life.

God keeps you alive after salvation so that you can fulfill your personal destiny—to become a mature believer as an expression of God’s glory in both time and eternity. Only as a *mature* believer can you consistently glorify God by receiving the highest and best that He has prepared for you (Eph. 1:3–6). The quality and impact of your life on earth and your rewards in heaven depend on your execution of phase two.

You advance spiritually by consistently learning, thinking, and applying Bible doctrine. Your persistent spiritual growth from Bible doctrine resident in your soul expands your capacity for life, for love, for Christian service, for blessings, for happiness.

For I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Phil. 4:11b–13).



## Appendix

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# THIRTY-NINE IRREVOCABLE ABSOLUTES AND ONE REVOCABLE ABSOLUTE

Compiled by Lewis Sperry Chafer  
Revised by R. B. Thieme, Jr.

## IRREVOCABLE ABSOLUTES

- I. The believer resides in the eternal plan of God and shares the destiny of Christ. He is:
  - A. Foreknown (Acts 2:23; Rom. 8:29; 1 Pet. 1:2).
  - B. Elected (Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:2).
  - C. Predestined (Rom. 8:29–30; Eph. 1:5, 11).
  - D. Chosen (Matt. 22:14; 1 Pet. 2:4).
  - E. Called (1 Thess. 5:24).
- II. The believer is reconciled (removal of the barrier between man and God):<sup>29</sup>
  - A. By God (2 Cor. 5:18–19; Col. 1:20).
  - B. To God (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:20; Eph. 2:14–17).
- III. The believer is redeemed, purchased from the slave market of sin<sup>30</sup> (Rom. 3:24; Col. 1:14; 1 Pet. 1:18).

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29. Thieme, *The Barrier*.

30. Thieme, *Slave Market of Sin*.

- IV. The believer's condemnation, or eternal judgment, is removed (John 3:18; 5:24; Rom. 8:1).
- V. The substitutionary spiritual death of Christ on the cross paid the penalty for all sins (Rom. 4:25; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 2:24).
- VI. Every believer receives propitiation for sins; God is satisfied with the work of His Son (Rom. 3:25–26; 1 John 2:2; 4:10).
- VII. The believer is dead to old life, the sin nature, but alive to God, retroactive positional truth. He is:
  - A. Crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20).
  - B. Dead with Christ (Rom. 6:8; Col. 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:24).
  - C. Buried with Christ (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).
  - D. Raised with Christ, current positional truth (Rom. 6:4; 7:4; Col. 2:12; 3:1).
- VIII. The believer is free from the Mosaic Law. He is:
  - A. Dead to the Law (Rom. 7:4).
  - B. Delivered (Rom. 6:14; 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:6–11; Gal. 3:25).
- IX. The believer is regenerated (John 13:10; 1 Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:5). He is:
  - A. Born again (John 3:7; 1 Pet. 1:23).
  - B. A child of God (Rom. 8:16; Gal. 3:26).
  - C. A son of God (John 1:12; 2 Cor. 6:18; 1 John 3:2).
  - D. A new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 2:10).
- X. The believer is adopted by God, placed as an adult son because of positional truth (Rom. 8:15, 23 at resurrection; Eph. 1:5).
- XI. The believer is made acceptable to God (Eph. 1:6; 1 Pet. 2:5). He is:
  - A. Made righteous by imputation (Rom. 3:22; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9).
  - B. Sanctified positionally (1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11).
  - C. Perfected forever (Heb. 10:14).
  - D. Qualified for inheritance (Col. 1:12).
- XII. The believer is justified, declared righteous (Rom. 3:24; 5:1, 9; 8:30; 1 Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:7).
- XIII. The believer receives the unique availability of divine power (2 Pet. 1:3).

- XIV. The believer is guaranteed a heavenly citizenship based on reconciliation (Luke 10:20; Eph. 2:14–19; Phil. 3:20).
- XV. The believer is delivered from the kingdom of Satan (Col. 1:13a; 2:15).
- XVI. The believer is transferred into the kingdom of God (Col. 1:13b).
- XVII. The believer is now on a secure foundation (1 Cor. 3:11; 10:4; Eph. 2:20).
- XVIII. Every believer is a gift from God the Father to Christ (John 10:29; 17:2, 6, 9, 11–12, 24).
- XIX. The believer is delivered positionally from the power of the sin nature (Rom. 8:2; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:11).
- XX. Every believer is appointed a priest unto God. We are:
  - A. A holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).
  - B. A royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6).
- XXI. The believer receives eternal security (John 10:28–29; Rom. 8:32, 38–39; Gal. 3:26; 2 Tim. 2:13).
- XXII. The believer is given access to God (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18; Heb. 4:16; 10:19–20).
- XXIII. Every believer is within the “much more” grace care of God (Rom. 5:9–10). We are:
  - A. Objects of His love (Eph. 2:4; 5:2).
  - B. Objects of His grace.
    - 1. For salvation (Eph. 2:8–9).
    - 2. For keeping (Rom. 5:2; 1 Pet. 1:5).
    - 3. For service (John 17:18; Eph. 4:7).
    - 4. For instruction (Titus 2:12).
  - C. Objects of His power (Eph. 1:19; Phil. 2:13).
  - D. Objects of His faithfulness (Phil. 1:6; Heb. 13:5b).
  - E. Objects of His peace (John 14:27).
  - F. Objects of His consolation (2 Thess. 2:16).
  - G. Objects of His intercession (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24).
- XXIV. The believer is the beneficiary of an inheritance as an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17; Eph. 1:14, 18; Col. 3:24; Heb. 9:15; 1 Pet. 1:4).
- XXV. Every believer has a new position in Christ (Eph. 2:6). We are:
  - A. Partners with Christ in life (Col. 3:4).

- B. Partners with Christ in service (1 Cor. 1:9).
1. Workers together with God (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1).
  2. Servants of the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3:6).
  3. Ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20).
  4. Living epistles (2 Cor. 3:3).
  5. Servants of God (2 Cor. 6:4).
- XXVI. Believers are recipients of eternal life (John 3:15; 10:28; 20:31; 1 John 5:11–12).
- XXVII. The believer is created a new spiritual species (2 Cor. 5:17).
- XXVIII. The believer is a light in the Lord, part of the angelic conflict<sup>31</sup> (Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:4–5).
- XXIX. The believer is united with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are:
- A. In God (1 Thess. 1:1; cf., “God in you,” Eph. 4:6);
  - B. In Christ (John 14:20; cf., “Christ in you,” Col. 1:27);
    1. A member in His Body (1 Cor. 12:13).
    2. A branch in the Vine (John 15:5).
    3. A stone in the Building (Eph. 2:21–22; 1 Pet. 2:5).
    4. A sheep in the Flock (John 10:27–29).
    5. A portion of His Bride (Eph. 5:25–27; Rev. 19:6–8; 21:9).
    6. A priest of the kingdom of priests (1 Pet. 2:9).
  - C. In the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9; “the Spirit in you”).
- XXX. Every believer is the recipient of the ministries of the Holy Spirit. He is:
- A. Born of the Spirit (John 3:5–8).
  - B. Baptized with the Spirit (Acts 1:5; 1 Cor. 12:13).
  - C. Indwelt by the Spirit (John 7:39; Rom. 5:5; 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Gal. 4:6; 1 John 3:24).
  - D. Sealed by the Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 4:30).
  - E. Given spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:11, 27–31; 13:1–2).
- XXXI. The believer is glorified (Rom. 8:30).
- XXXII. The believer is complete in Christ (Col. 2:10).
- XXXIII. The believer is possessor of every spiritual blessing granted in eternity past (Eph. 1:3).

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31. Thieme, *Anti-Semitism* (2003), 10–12, 87–91, 93–95, 101–04.

- XXXIV. The believer receives a human spirit along with the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 7:13; 1 Thess. 5:23).
- XXXV. The believer has all sins and transgressions blotted out<sup>32</sup> (Isa. 43:25; 44:22).
- XXXVI. The believer is the recipient of efficacious grace (Eph. 1:13).
- XXXVII. The believer is guaranteed a resurrection body forever (1 Cor. 15:40–54).
- XXXVIII. The believer is the beneficiary of unlimited atonement (2 Cor. 5:14–15, 19; 1 Tim. 2:6; 4:10; Titus 2:11; Heb. 2:9; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 2:2).
- XXXIX. The believer has equal privilege and equal opportunity under election and predestination (Rom. 12:3; Eph. 3:16–19).

## REVOCABLE ABSOLUTE

- XL. The believer is filled with the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation (Gal. 3:3). The filling of the Holy Spirit received at salvation is revoked when the believer sins. The filling of the Holy Spirit is recovered when the believer rebounds.

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32. Thieme, *Reversionism*.





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