

BORN AGAIN MYTHS

In the gospel of John, chapter 8, verse 44, Jesus called Satan “*a liar*”, and “*the father of it (lies)*” We all know what a lie is – it is an untruth that is designed to cause the person being lied to, to come to the wrong conclusion, or to accept something in their minds as fact, that just isn't true. It seems that it is human nature to believe the first thing that comes along that *sounds right*, or that makes you *feel good*, so what follows here may upset some of you who have grown comfortable in what *makes sense* to you, but may not be scripturally sound. I challenge you to become like the Bereans; “*... in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily [to see] whether those things were so*”. – Acts 17:11b KJV. Please don't evaluate the message on the merits of the messenger. I'm just a student of the Bible; Ezekiel chapter 3:17 - 19 tells us that we are the watchmen, and are supposed to give people a warning from God, and if we fail to do so; if we fail to sound the alarm, the wicked will die in their sins, but their blood will be required at the hand of the watchman. I don't want your blood on my hands. I have the obligation to reveal the truth to you, and you will decide whether or not you act upon that truth.

If Satan is a liar (and he's *the father of lies*), what do you suppose he lies about the most? Being God's enemy and seeking to destroy God's plan of salvation since Adam and Eve, it would seem logical that Satan's plan is to keep us from *true* salvation by inventing *false* salvations. He does this by spreading lies, false doctrines, and “*damnable heresies*”. Satan “*... the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field...*”, the Bible tells us in Genesis 3:1. Those who are lied to and deceived do not know they're being deceived. Satan is master of the half-truth; the lie that rides “*piggyback*” on what is logical, or what seems right because it makes us feel good. Let us expose some of the half-truths that have been accepted by most Christians, and see how we can correct those errors with the truth of the Bible:

MYTH #1: “Sin is doing bad things”.

Now while all of us would agree that doing bad things is a sin, does that mean “*doing bad things*” is the definition of sin? When we think of “*bad things*”, we usually mean things that are culturally unacceptable, and the danger here, is that our culture has accepted as “*normal*”, some very creepy behavior. So things like homosexuality become accepted by calling it “*an alternative lifestyle*”. The murder of abortion is socially accepted as “*choice*”. They, among a litany of other evils, are accepted, and we risk the danger in not seeing the sin for what it really is; as “*One Nation Under God*”, we've become *spiritually insensitive*.

In Ephesians 2:1 it says that we “*...were dead in trespasses and sins*”. The following verse tells us that “*...the prince of the power of the air [is] the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*”. In Romans 5:21b it says “*...death is passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*”.

Our deeds; what we do or don't do, cannot save us. In Isaiah 64:6b we are told, “*...all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*”. Isaiah 59:1 says, “*...the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear*”. So we see that the Lord can save, and He can hear our prayers, but the problem is described in verse 2: “*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you that He will not hear*”. Take note of the word “*separated*”. So sin *separates* us from God, and Psalm 51:5 says, “*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity: and in sin did my mother conceive me*”. In other words, we are *born that way*. Now it is difficult for us to believe that a newborn baby can do *bad things*, so we say that a baby cannot sin; he is innocent of any *culturally unacceptable* thing, and therefore is acceptable by our “sin” definition. I submit to you that while doing bad things is sinful, even a baby is “*conceived in sin*” because our accepted definition is only half the truth.

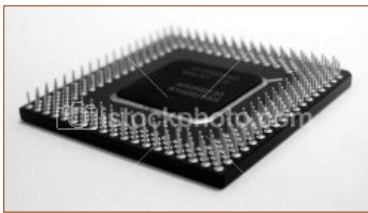
In John 3:4a, it says “*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law*”. In verse 8 it says “*He that committeth sin is of the Devil; for the Devil sinneth from the beginning*”. So we have an apparent conflict between a newborn baby who is innocent of wrongdoing being “a sinner”; “sin” being defined as “doing bad things”. Sin, then, must be something else. Let me give you a better definition:

“Sin is the state of separation between a perfect God and an imperfect person. Doing bad things or bad behavior is the result – Sin is what we do in that state of separation from God”.

So sin has nothing to do with behavior; it is about being separated from God; and when we are separated from God, the result is that we tend to do bad things; and the bad things are culturally unacceptable and sometimes against the law, and so it is sin, but sin is really the cause and not the effect of bad behavior or “doing bad things”. In Isaiah 53:6 it says, “*we have all gone astray*”, and if we have all strayed, then we are separated and in a state of sin from the moment we are born.

MYTH #2: “Depravity is doing really bad things”.

It stands to reason that if we say that “sin is doing bad things”, then depravity – someone who is depraved by our cultural standards, is someone who does something *really* rotten, evil, sick, perverted, and really extremely morally wrong and criminal. The Bible says: “*The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?*” – Jeremiah 17:9 KJV. Take note of the word “*desperately*”. A more accurate translation of the Hebrew word used here would be “*incurable*”, “*intractable*”, or “*incorrigible*”. This one verse should forever prohibit the idea that psychology, or the law, or the fear of punishment will ever keep people from “doing bad things”. We are born imperfect and thus we are separated from a perfect God, and in our separation from that perfection, we do “bad things” or we do “really bad things”.



Suppose I was a computer salesman, trying to sell you Pentium computer chips, and I told you that just ONE of 3.4 million microscopically small transistors on each chip was burnt out, but the chips worked anyway. I could sell you the chips for ½ of what a Pentium chip costs. Would you buy those chips from me? Probably not. Therefore, we see that *any* imperfection is cause for rejection. In this case, the chip is 0.000001% “bad”, and so we call it “bad” and reject it; the chip is unsuitable for use. In James 2:10 it says, “*For whosoever shall keep the whole law...*” which is impossible for us to do – for who can even name all of the 613 Levitical Laws? “*...and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*”. The analogy to a computer chip is easy to see here. Philippians 2:5 tells us, “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*”. Therefore, if we, in whatever miniscule degree are not completely like Christ, then we are not like Christ at all. There is a deficiency or a defect. The defect is cause for rejection. We need a new definition:

“Depravity is primarily a deficiency, not debauchery; it is the lack of complete righteousness before God”.

MYTH # 3: “Guilt is a bad feeling about doing bad things”.

Because Man was created (literally) “*in the image and likeness of God*”, he has a conscience that troubles him about “doing bad things”. When Jesus was asked what He would do, by the Pharisees who had caught a woman *in flagrante delicto*¹ of committing adultery (John 8:3 - 11), He said nothing, but stooped down and wrote something in the dirt with His finger (verse 6). After they had asked Him again, Jesus challenged them, and said that he who was without sin should throw the first stone (verse 7b).

¹ *In Flagrante Delicto* - (Latin) “In the very act”

The scripture is not explicit, but it is apparent that **Jesus was probably writing their sins in the dirt**, and when the Pharisees were confronted, their own consciences convicted them, and they fled. Did they have “a bad feeling” for their sins? Obviously they did. The question is this: Is that bad feeling – the thing that caused them to drop their stones and turn away – is that “bad feeling” guilt? The Bible says “no”. Think of this logically for a moment: if guilt is a feeling, then we can absolve ourselves in this society by making all of the bad things we do – all the violence, illicit sex, abortion, drugs, homosexuality, false witnessing, libel and slander, thievery, murder, infanticide, *etc.* – make it all legal and socially acceptable so that nobody ever needs to “feel guilty” about the bad things they do, because “everybody does it”. You can see how dangerous this line of reasoning is. This is precisely the path this society has taken, and it is the reason that we are in so much trouble today.

God did not make laws or give commandments in order to create a workable social structure; His laws are a reflection of His nature. If stumbling in one point of the law makes us guilty of violating **all** of it, then we are not like God at all, and are not worthy to stand in His presence.

The Bible says that *“The wages of sin is death”* – Romans 8:23a, and “sin” being separation from God – not necessarily “doing bad things”, or “really bad things”. We are all destined to Hell, unless we are born again – unless the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to us (see John 3:3). It would seem then, that we are in need of a new definition:

“Guilt is a fact in God's mind, and in the books of Heaven, not a “feeling bad” about doing bad things. Guilt is the state of being in debt to God's perfect justice”.

So you see the equation we have created here: We are all separated from God, and in that state of separation, we do bad things, and **really bad** things.

By God's perfect standard, we all fall short; we all have a deficiency and we have broken the entirety of the law. Therefore we are depraved because of our deficiency and our lack of **complete righteousness** before a perfect God. Furthermore, we are sinners and are guilty even if we don't **feel** guilty, never broke the law, or have lived a life of total debauchery. Born that way? Yes, **born that way!** – all of us!.

MYTH #4: ***“In order to be saved, I have to believe some facts”.***

By far, this is the most dangerous myth of all, because it lies at the core of God's solution to the sin problem, and thus it is the primary focus of Satan's deception. If I were to write an epistle to the Church on this issue, it would be something like this:

*Brothers, I would not have you ignorant of the facts; I must tell you that by the perversion of the English language in our time, the gospel of Jesus Christ has been diluted. You have read in the scriptures and heard it preached from the pulpit – that we are “saved by faith”. This is simply not so, and let me tell you why; it is **not** that we are not saved by faith; not that faith in Jesus Christ won't save us, but because of what the word “faith” has come to mean; how it is defined. Many of you will say that “faith” is the same as “belief”, and that belief is merely to accept some empirical facts as what they are – the truth. You therefore reason in error that to accept some immutable facts as true, you are saved.*

*Dearly beloved, **the Devil and his demons accept the facts and tremble.** By this line of reasoning, Satan also believes, and has perhaps a thousand times more “faith” than you or I. We know that the Devil is not saved by this kind of “faith”, and neither are we. Understand this, dear brothers and sisters; that the facts are self-evident. That God exists, and that He created the universe, the Earth, and all that we see around us, is only denied by a lunatic or a fool. The Devil himself knows and believes what cannot be denied.*

Therefore, we must be careful with our words – even such a simple word like “faith” that we think we know the meaning of. I implore you to be vigilant of the perversion of the language that you may correctly divide the Word of truth, which is written in the gospels.

Yes, “...faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen”. – Hebrews 11:3

However, because we accept the facts – facts that are true whether we accept them or not – does not mean that we have “faith unto salvation”. In the original Greek text of the Bible, the words used for “believe” and “belief” are “*pistis*” and “*pistuo*”, which do not mean, “to accept facts as true”, they mean “to transfer trust”. That, my dear brethren, is an entirely different thing. To “have faith” as is written in the Bible – as the original languages of the Bible were meant to convey it; “faith” means to transfer trust. We must trust the Lord completely; putting our very lives into His hands.

Trust is not believing that God *IS*; that is a *fact*. Trust is not even believing that God can do something, or has done something, or will do something. Trust believes that God can and will do something *for YOU*. In this case, it is trust that God's grace by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ has “*bought you at a price*” (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23), and paid your ransom from the gates of Hell. We are told, “*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding*”. – Proverbs 3:5 KJV

Trusting God is saving faith. We can only trust completely when we love completely. We cannot trust without love. Therefore, show your trust. Love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love your neighbor as you love yourself. We know a tree by its fruit; we know a brother or sister in Christ by their love. We can tell what someone believes by what he does, not by what he says.

MYTH #5: “*Righteousness is living a sinless life*”.

With this misconception, many people look upon Christians and see them struggling with some temptation, or fall into some aberrant behavior, and judge them to be “hypocrites” and thus they have an excuse to avoid fellowship in the Church.

Like the Pharisees who condemned the woman caught “*in the very act*” of adultery (John 8: 3 - 11), we tend to hate in others what we secretly see in ourselves. Jesus knew the sins of those who stood ready to stone the adulterers, and ***I believe*** that He wrote them in the dirt with His finger. Therefore, when someone persecutes us for what we've done, we know that the persecutor sees his secret sin reflected in our revealed weakness.

The truth is that it is impossible for a human being to live a totally sinless life, and so righteousness in any degree, can not be earned by “living a clean life”. There is no such thing as a partial righteousness before God; we are either perfect, or we are flawed – there is no middle ground. God deals in absolutes – in much the same way as we would deal with a Pentium computer chip – any deficiency, any flaw, or any defect is cause for rejection. The only way to be “righteous” in the eyes of God is to have that righteousness imputed (given freely) to us by God:

“For He [God] hath made Him [Jesus Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him [Jesus]”. – 2 Corinthians 5:21 KJV

Therefore, our faith and trust in Jesus Christ, allows us to stand boldly before God, claim a state of complete righteousness, and be worthy of eternal life because of Christ's sacrifice for us. We therefore, also need a new definition of righteousness:

“Righteousness is the state of imputed perfection in which although sinners and depraved in our own weakness, we appear sinless and perfect in the eyes of a loving God, whose only begotten son paid the ultimate price for our redemption”.

Therefore, the righteousness of a Born-Again believer is not affected by the fact that he occasionally falls into some sin in his human weakness. The Christian's “walk” is a journey that demands increasing trust in God; it is never a destination of perfection by one's own strength.

“For by grace ye are saved through faith [trust]; and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of our own works, lest any man should boast”. – Ephesians 2:8, 9 KJV



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A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'David John Todeschini'.