

Major Bible Themes

52 Vital Doctrines of the Scriptures Simplified and Explained

Adapted from the book *Major Bible Themes*
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Salvation from the Power of Sin

- A Salvation for Christians Only
 - Salvation from the power of sin is God's gracious provision for those whom He has already saved from the penalty of sin.
 - ✦ This doctrine in its application is limited to believers.
 - ✦ Believers still have the disposition to sin, and do sin.
 - ✦ Based upon the fact that believers do sin, the New Testament explains the divinely provided way of deliverance from its power.
 - Many new believers are surprised, even alarmed, to discover that they are still capable of succumbing to the power of sin.
 - The presence of sin in the life of the believer should not be an excuse to surrender to its power in a life characterized by sin nor should it lead to doubt concerning eternal security.
 - Other than the good news message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, there is no more important theme of the Bible for the human mind to comprehend than how a believer might live to the glory of God.
 - ✦ Just as with the gospel, there is great need for accuracy in the teaching of the doctrine of salvation from the power of sin.
 - ✦ Ignorance or misunderstanding of this important doctrine may result in tragic spiritual failure for the believer.
 - ✦ Sadly, many churches today, including Bible-teaching churches, have done a poor job of teaching this vital spiritual truth.
- The Problem of Sin in the Life of the Believer
 - Having become partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4) while still retaining the old nature, every believer has two natures.
 - ✦ The believer is a new creature in Christ (2 Cor 5:17) and this new self which is born of God does not sin (1 John 3:9).
 - ✦ However, the same epistle warns believers against the erroneous thought that they are no longer capable of sin (1 John 1:8, 10).
 - ✦ The believer who wishes to live to the glory of God must decide to lay aside the old self and put on this new self (Eph 4:17-24).
 - This struggle with sin is also described as a battle between the desires of the flesh and the indwelling Holy Spirit, opposing forces vying for the attention of the believer (Gal 5:16-17).

- Two Conditions in the Life of the Believer

Positive	Negative
New self (Rom 6:4; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10)	Old self (Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22; Col 3:9)
Spiritual (1 Cor 3:1)	Carnal (1 Cor 3:1, 3)
Walking in the Light (Eph 5:8; 1 Jn 1:7)	Walking in darkness (1 Jn 1:6; 2:11)
In fellowship with God (1 John 1:7)	Out of fellowship with God (1 John 1:6)
Filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18)	Dissipation (Eph 5:18; 1 Pet 4:3-4)
Walking by the Spirit (Gal 5:16, 25)	Carrying out/Indulging the desires of the flesh (Gal 5:16; Eph 2:3)
The fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)	The deeds of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21)
Abiding in Christ (Jn 15:4-5; 1 Jn 2:28)	Apart from Christ (Jn 15:5)
Walking in a worthy manner (Eph 4:1; Col 1:10; 1 Thess 2:12)	Walking according the course of this world (Eph 2:2; 4:17-19; 1 Pet 4:3)

- Law versus Grace as a Rule of Life

- Israel functioned under the Law as a rule of life.

- ✦ Israel was called out as an earthly nation by God and operated under the commandments (Ex 20:1-26), the judgments (Ex 21:1-24:11) and the ordinances (Ex 24:12-31:18).
- ✦ No special personal empowerment was given to the people of Israel to enable them to live in obedience to the Law, so they had to attempt to follow the Law in the power of the flesh.
- ✦ The Law was designed to highlight the fact that no effort of the flesh could measure up to the righteous standards of God and call attention to the need for God's grace (Gal 3:24; Heb 7:11; 10:1).
- ✦ In the future, all Israel will receive the Holy Spirit to empower them to successfully follow Kingdom Law (Joel 2:28-29; Matt 5-7).

- The Church functions under Grace as a rule of life.

- ✦ The Mosaic system of Law and the future Kingdom Law are not the guiding principles of the Christian today (Rom 6:14).
- ✦ Believers today are held to an even higher standard than the Mosaic Law, but we are given the personal ministry of God the Holy Spirit who indwells us so we can attain to that standard.
- ✦ The motivation of believers today is not based upon an attempt to gain favor with God, but instead comes from a response to the favor (grace) which God has already poured out upon us.
- ✦ Just as we were saved by grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9), we also live (stand) by grace through faith (Rom 1:17; 5:1-2; 1 Pet 5:10-12).

- The Only Way of Victory
 - It is said that the Christian will be compelled to live to the glory of God if he observes sufficient rules (following man-made laws), but this fails muster because success depends upon the very flesh from which deliverance is sought.
 - It is also erroneously taught that the believer can seek and secure eradication of the old sin nature and be permanently free from sin.
 - ✦ No Scripture supports this teaching.
 - ✦ No human experience supports this teaching.
 - ✦ Instead, Scripture exhorts even the most mature believer to walk by the Spirit so as not to allow sin to reign (Rom 6:12-13).
 - Some Christians believe that simply because they are saved they can live to the glory of God.
 - ✦ This view ignores the need for the empowerment of the Spirit.
 - ✦ Paul addressed this exact issue in Romans 7:15 – 8:4.
 - He knew what was good but practiced evil anyway (Rom 7:19).
 - At his best on his own he was defeated by the ever-present law of sin in the members of his body (Rom 7:23).
 - Though we are saved, it is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus that sets us free from the law of sin (Rom 8:2).
 - The requirements of the Law are fulfilled *in* us as we walk according to the Spirit, not *by* us (Rom 8:4).
 - The Scriptures teach that believers must be under the control of the indwelling Holy Spirit to live a victorious life.
 - ✦ Believers today must love up to a heavenly standard of life.
 - The child of God (Eph 2:19) as a member of the Body of Christ (Eph 5:30; 1 Cor 12:27) is called upon to act in accordance with his heavenly position (Phil 3:20).
 - This is an extremely high standard (John 13:34; 2 Cor 10:5; Eph 5:20; 1 Thess 5:16-17) which can only be achieved by depending upon the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:4-5).
 - ✦ Our adversary (Satan, ruler of this world) will defeat us if we are not strong in the Lord (Eph 6:10-17; 1 John 4:4; Jude 9).
 - ✦ As we have seen, the Law taught us that we are powerless to control the old sin nature on our own.
 - ✦ To achieve victory we must live by means of the Spirit (Gal 5:16).
 - ✦ As believers we cannot lose the indwelling of the Spirit, but we can hinder His control (filling) in our lives.
 - We can grieve the Holy Spirit (Isa 63:10; Eph 4:30).
 - We can quench (resist) the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 5:19).
 - Since we have this ability to hinder His control in our lives, we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18).

- Living by means of the Spirit
 - We have established that believers have two opposing natures, can exist in two conditions (one of which is pleasing to God and the other of which is not) and must rely upon the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit to overcome Satan and the old sin nature in order to achieve the heavenly standards required of us and live a victorious life.
 - We have also established that we can hinder the Holy Spirit's control over our lives through our personal sins.
 - So, if we find ourselves to be grieving or quenching the Holy Spirit, what must we do to once again be under His control?
 - The answer: Ps 32:1-5; 51:1-10; Dan 9:4-20; 1 John 1:9.
 - ✦ These Scriptures highlight the need for cleansing and forgiveness of sin (present tense forgiveness) in the life of a believer.
 - ✦ This same idea was taught by the sacrifices required under the Mosaic Law (Lev 5:5-10).
 - These sacrifices were required of believing Jews for forgiveness of their post-salvation sins.
 - The high priest himself had to make an offering for his sins before entering the Holy of Holies (Lev 16:6).
 - The sacrifices were not the key – God desires obedience from the heart (1 Sam 15:22-23; Ps 40:6-8; Hos 6:6).
 - ✦ Jesus taught this lesson to His disciples in the Upper Room the night before He went to the Cross (John 13:10).
 - The primary lesson in John 13:5-17 is that true disciples ought to have a servant's heart.
 - In teaching this lesson, Jesus could have poured them a glass of water, brought them food, anointed their heads with oil, etc., but He chose the act of washing their feet because He had another important spiritual lesson to teach them (verse 10).
 - Those who are “completely clean” are believers, who still need cleansing (feet washing) as they get “dirty” in their walk.
 - Why do believers need forgiveness of sins?
 - ✦ Personal sins have both eternal and temporal consequences.
 - The penalty of sin is death (separation from God) for all eternity in the Lake of Fire (Rom 6:23; Rev 20:15).
 - The temporal consequence of sin in the life of a believer is loss of fellowship with God (1 John 1:6).
 - Sins may also result in divine discipline which is intended to bring about repentance and restoration (Heb 12:4-11).
 - ✦ While forgiveness from the eternal penalty of our sins occurred at the moment of our salvation, the temporal consequence of our sins requires forgiveness day-by-day as we live out our lives.

- What does it mean to “confess” our sins?
 - ✦ The Greek word in 1 Jn 1:9 for confess is ὁμολογέω (homologeō).
 - The basic meaning of this word is “agree with”.
 - This word was used in a legal sense to confess to a crime.
 - There is a similar Greek word ἐξομολογέω (exomologeō) with the prefix “ex” which means an outward act, but ὁμολογέω can be expressed either outwardly or internally.
 - This word does not mean to merely “cite” or “name” sins.
 - This word in 1 John 1:9 means to acknowledge one’s sins while agreeing with God about those sins – this requires a contrite heart (Ps 51:16-17) and the forsaking of sins (Pr 28:13).
 - ✦ We do not need to “confess” our sins to a priest because every believer in this dispensation is a priest (1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6).
 - ✦ “Confession” necessarily involves a change of mind (repentance – μετανοέω, metanoēō) because while we are sinning there is an implicit rebellion against God.
 - ✦ This change of mind about one’s sins must be accompanied by the acknowledgement of those sins to God.
 - ✦ Individual sins do not need to be named (Daniel stated only categories of sin), but this can be an effective way to acknowledge sins if it is accompanied by a heart attitude of agreement with God.
 - ✦ Acknowledgment of our sins before God can be as simple as saying in your heart to Him that...
 - you have been sinning and need His forgiveness and cleansing.
 - you realize you have been serving the old self and its sinful lusts rather than living according to the righteousness of the new self.
 - you have been living your life in the darkness of sin, not in the Light of Christ and in fellowship with God.
 - the Holy Spirit has convicted you deep in your soul that you have been walking in the power of the flesh producing sin rather than by means of the Spirit yielding His fruit of righteousness.
- Conclusions
 - In order for us to live a life which is pleasing to God and brings glory to Jesus Christ, we must overcome the power which sin can have over us in the course our daily lives.
 - We cannot accomplish this in our own strength.
 - Only through the empowerment of God the Holy Spirit who indwells us can we gain victory over sin.
 - At the moment of our salvation God the Holy Spirit indwells us and will never depart from us, but as we live out our lives as believers we must choose whether we are going to submit to His control of our lives or follow after the desires of the flesh.
 - When we choose to remain under the control (filling) of God the Holy Spirit, He will keep us from sinning.

- When we quench the Holy Spirit by choosing to follow the desires of the flesh, He is grieved by our rebellion and our sins and our fellowship with God is interrupted.
- The Holy Spirit is not rendered powerless by our sins, but because we have submitted to sin as our master He focuses on convicting us of our need for forgiveness and cleansing.
- God, in His grace and mercy, has provided the means to be restored to fellowship as we acknowledge our sins to Him.
- God's design for the lives of believers is not centered around confession of sin – He desires for us to remain in constant fellowship with Him, abiding in Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, and enjoying the full spectrum of His spiritual blessings.
- It is only when we are walking in this manner that we are able to live a life which is pleasing to God.
- The works we accomplish while controlled by the flesh might seem like they are “good” to other people, but nothing that comes out of the strength of the flesh is righteous in God's eyes and these self-empowered deeds cannot glorify Christ.
- Believers who are constantly sinning and confessing are carnal (fleshly) believers who are able to handle only the milk of the Word and will not experience significant spiritual growth.
- This sin/confess/sin/confess cycle can only be broken when believers are willing to forsake their sins, recognizing the ugliness of sin and the damage that it does to the soul.
- God has empowered us to escape the power of sin by creating in us a living human spirit which does not sin and giving us the indwelling Holy Spirit to be our guide.
- Just as in our salvation, God supplies everything for victory and it is up to the individual to make the right choice.
- Questions
 - What is the deliverance from sin for Christians only?
 - To what extent is sin a problem for Christians?
 - What evidence is given in Scripture that a Christian has two natures?
 - How does the Holy Spirit relate to the old sin nature?
 - To what extent were believers under the Law lacking enablement?
 - Why is the Christian not under the Mosaic system of Law?

- Why is a Christian not striving to be accepted by God?

- Why should a child of God not attempt to live by the energy of his own flesh?

- To what extent is grace revealed in salvation by grace and what is involved on God's part?

- How is grace related to the safekeeping of the believer?

- How is grace a complete rule of life?

- Why was the Law as a principle doomed to fail?

- What objections can be raised to the theory that the old sin nature can be eradicated?

- Why is it an error to conclude that just because one is saved he can easily lead a victorious Christian life?

- By what means is deliverance from the power of sin made possible? How is this related to Jesus Christ? How is this related to the Holy Spirit?

- How is salvation from the power of sin dependent upon faith?

- How does the standard of life for the believer today make necessary a life of dependence upon the indwelling Holy Spirit?

- How does the power of Satan relate to a believer's need of deliverance?

- How does the power of the old sin nature require deliverance?

- Can a believer lose the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?

- Can a believer lose the filling of the Holy Spirit?

- Can a believer lose fellowship with God?

- How does a believer grieve or quench the Holy Spirit?

- What does God require of the believer in order to be forgiven and cleansed from sin?

- Why does the believer even need to be forgiven of his sins?

- Is it necessary to try to name every sin we can remember when we confess?

- Did God intend the Christian life to involve confession on a regular basis?

- Will a believer who is under the control of the Spirit commit sin?

- How can a believer remain under the control of the Holy Spirit and abide in Christ?

- Is the forsaking of sin important in the life of the believer?

- What are the benefits for the believer whose life is characterized by walking in the Light?