

A fresh look at Truth or Consequences (Part 1)

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This teaching was originally posted in 2018; however, since "Truth" is always being questioned these days, perhaps it is time to revisit this topic to shed light on some "Real Truth." One of the ways I gauge where a person stands spiritually is by asking them a simple (yet profound) question. I ask them, "If you were standing before God, and He asked you why He should let you into heaven, what would you say?" Many people rarely if ever think about this, at least until they are getting older, or perhaps they have acquired serious health issues, perhaps Cancer, or even Covid-19. The truth concerning the reports concerning Covid-19 seems to be elusive as only one side of the various issues are being reported as fact, while others questioning or refuting what is reported are suppressed, or even banned completely from public view. Assuming the "Pandemic" is as dangerous as some say, perhaps it is prudent for all of us who say we are "Christian" to consider our reply to God concerning the question above; what about you, how would you answer? Why should God let you into heaven?

Those classifying themselves as "Christian," surprisingly will vary widely with the answer to that question, but how could that be, don't we "Christians" all believe the same thing? Anyone who has ever visited churches of different denominations would have to conclude, no - even people who call themselves "Christian" do not necessarily believe the same thing! Everyone may be entitled to their own opinions concerning most issues; but somewhere down the line, doesn't it get down to the Truth vs. Falsehood, Right or Wrong? An opinion is opinion - truth is truth, it really is, that simple. One's opinion may, or may not, be grounded in truth, but I say again, and I believe most would agree, truth is truth. Throughout history, many denominations or religions have come into being, all claiming to proclaim the truth, but one has to ask, "What is their proclamation based on?" Some religions teach that you have to follow certain rules in order to be worthy to enter into heaven. Others teach that certain rituals must take place. Some teach that your ticket to heaven is a free-gift; all you have to do is accept it! What is your opinion? There is that word again... opinion. ***The Encarta Dictionary gives the following definitions of the word opinion: 1. Personal view, 2. Estimation, 3. Expert view, 4. Body of generally held views, 5. Conclusion of fact.*** This last definition concerning "fact" refers to how it applies in a legal setting, i.e. "it is the opinion of the court a law was broken." The key here is that the opinion in this case (definition #5) relies on the facts as stated in the law. As far as the judge is concerned, your personal view of what the law says does not matter; your estimation of what the law might mean does not matter, even if you are considered an "expert." Nor does it matter what the consensus of a law may be in the public view... any righteous judge will go by what the law says. The majority of religions generally accept the bible as God's communication method with man, thus in order to determine the accuracy of their religious beliefs, it is the bible, which is the standard to be used.

Getting back to the question of why God should let you into heaven... surely by now you must have thought of a few answers you might have given Him if asked. Did any of your answers refer to your own actions or behavior? For example, did any of your answers sound like this... "I have been trying to do what is right" or perhaps "I don't do this or that." Did any of your answers give an account of your church attendance, or perhaps how much you donate to charity? These examples are what I refer to as "Stock Answers" and sorry to say... according to God's Word, you just won't make the cut! This last statement may offend some people, but the bible actually makes it quite clear as to what "qualifies you" to enter into heaven or more accurately stated, into God's presents... perfection! To any of us who gave an answer based on our performance that is real bad news. I make that statement referring to the following passage out of the bible: **Romans 3:23 (King James Version)** For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God... In light of this verse, how can any one person or group say that their particular formula for salvation ***apart from Grace*** is "The one and only" way to God?

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The problem stems from trying to blend the Old and the New Covenant (The Old and New Testament) into one. Yes, they are connected and interdependent, but consider the following. Most "Christian" Churches agree that salvation is by the Grace of God through faith, however, many direct people right back to the "Old Testament Law" immediately after a person accepts God's gift of salvation thru faith and grace! People who say that they have accepted salvation by grace are then almost immediately told by various churches and religions that yes - Jesus died for your sins, but now that you accepted Him, now you have to do this-this- and this or you could lose your salvation! They'll give you a new book of rules and regulations to follow and warn you that if you don't keep them - you're toast, or at the very least God will be mad at you and your prayers will just bounce off the ceiling until you get your sins "Back under the blood!" Do any of these statements sound familiar to anyone? If you agree with this kind of doctrine, then how would you explain the following passages...?

Galatians 5:4 (New King James Version)

You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

James 2:10 (King James Version)

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all.

Galatians 5:4 makes it clear that you are justified either by the law, or by grace... one or the other! James 2:10 once again makes it clear that the law must be kept to perfection and that counts you (and me) out. For those of you who still feel that performance is the key to salvation I will leave you with the following passages... Take the time to think about how your doctrine fits with the Truth of God's word. We will explore this further in Part 2 of Truth or Consequences.

Colossians 2:11-23 (New King James Version)

¹¹ In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³ And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. ¹⁶ So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. ¹⁸ Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God. ²⁰ Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations-- ²¹ "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," ²² which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men? ²³ These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

I know that is a lot to take in, especially for those who aren't into reading the Bible on a regular basis, but take the time to read these passages over again, one verse at a time. When you do, ask yourself, "What do these passages say... what do they mean... and what do they mean to you. Then consider how they compare to what you may have been taught in the past. After that, once again consider the question, "Why God should let you into heaven." Selah