

Truth or Consequences (Part 2)

By Wayne Vasilenko

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In part 1 of this series I brought out that many churches or denominations have a problem agreeing on even the basic tenants of the Christian faith. One would think that this would be an impossibility being that they all claim the bible as their source of information. I also pointed out that many denominations have a problem with what can be summed up as legalism as they impose rules and regulations on people who come to faith in Christ. This is not new, as we can see that even the disciples of Jesus in the early church struggled with this tendency having lived under the law for so long, it seemed they could not live without legalism in some form. Read Paul's admonition of Peter in the following passages.

Galatians 2:11-14 (New King James Version)

¹¹ Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; ¹² for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before *them* all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

It is interesting that the modern church seems to be following this same pattern... they talk out of both sides of their mouth, as some would say. They preach grace and then later direct converts back to the law. The Jews having been under the law for so long failed to realize that except for a relative handful of them at the time, that the law was not given to them for the purpose of salvation but rather to expose their sin. For many then and even to today, the thought of merely accepting Jesus as the atonement for their sin seemed too simple... too easy in comparison. If someone believes in God, it is inconceivable to me that anyone would *not* want to be on His "good side." After all, who in their right mind would want to oppose or antagonize the one that they acknowledge as the creator of the universe especially when many are taught to envision God as this mean ogre with His finger on the "Smite Button" just waiting to take you out or torment you somehow for disobedience! It is one thing to come to the realization that you are a sinner and unworthy of God's forgiveness; however it is quite another to realize that here is nothing one is capable of doing to make oneself right with God should you mess up. Our problem is that we (man) couldn't even follow one simple rule given by God back in the Garden of Eden! So why is it that so many people, from so many different denominations, are still hung up on performance? I can only speak for myself but I admit that I have sinned thousands of times during my lifetime... and I - ain't - done - yet! If we were still under the Old Covenant, I probably would have caused the extinction of the entire Dove population long ago. So, if you believe that Jesus died on the cross to atone for your sins, what happens the next time you sin? Many churches will tell you that you have to get that new sin "under the blood." Just how does one get their sin under the blood? Think carefully about this... for thousands of years we had the law given to the Jewish people along with the sacrificial system I just alluded to that was in place for the atonement when people messed up. This was how people got their sins "under the blood" during the old covenant; the blood was provided by the

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animals being sacrificed. During that time, you would think people felt better about themselves, but did they really? Maybe for a while... until the next time they sinned of course. Then they were "back to square one." Oops I sinned again... "I've got to get me another Dove."

Here is a question for those readers who believe that going to confession is the answer if you sin as some religions teach... Let's say you commit a sin (any sin) and you feel terrible. So you go to confession and the priest gives you a formula for atonement; let's say for the sake of argument, he tells you to recite a certain prayer 10 times and then tells you to give up your cell phone for a week. So you recite the prayers. I'll pause here for a moment, because most of us realize that the chances of anyone giving up their cell phone for an hour let alone a week are slim to none. Guess what... You'd be Toast if you made one call or sent just one text message! You did not satisfy the formula for atonement according to your religion. I can just hear you saying to the priest, "Come on... I need my Cell phone... it's my life... What else can I do?" *I am not trying to pick on, or make fun of a particular religion here but rather trying to illustrate how many people think or might react in this situation.* Many people would try and make some kind of deal. Maybe they'd offer to recite more prayers or perhaps offer to donate something of theirs to charity (that would usually be something that they didn't want or need any more)... anything but give up their cell phone! "Surely there is something else you can do to appease God - right? The problem everyone faces is the fact that you can't make deals with God. He states in His word that the Wages of Sin is Death. He applies his law equally to all. **Acts 10:34 (King James Version)** Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons...

Please understand... God does not wish to impose this penalty on anyone! Why do you suppose that God provided for animal sacrifice as a substitute? If a person really wants to follow the letter of the law; then if you Sin - You Die. You deserve the penalty - not a bird or some other animal, so why did God give us the Law and then the Sacrificial System as a way of atonement? God in His mercy shows His love and forgiveness towards us over, and over; but still, many of us just don't get it. First I must ask the following questions: **1. "Did the animal sacrifice provide a permanent solution as far as reconciling someone to God?" 2. "Did the sacrificial system have any effect between us and our relationship with our fellow man?"** We will address those questions in Part 3 of Truth or Consequences. I'll give you a hint... the answers lurk in "the shadows."