

Chosen and Faithful

In the previous lesson you studied about being called. You learned that everyone who has ever come to God has been called by God. You learned that upon deciding to follow God, you should be baptized. But is that the end of it? Does being called mean you are guaranteed salvation? Once you are baptized, is that the end – the goal – of becoming a Christian? Or just the very beginning? That's...

LESSON 20: CHOSEN AND FAITHFUL

Start reading in **Matthew 22:1**; you've probably heard this parable before; a few simple truisms may have been taught about it, but you've never really UNDERSTOOD it. It was *impossible* to understand this parable until you first understood what it meant to be CALLED! But now you can!

Verses 2-3 describe a wedding supper, given by a "King" in the "Kingdom of Heaven". Who could that be? Don't guess! *Use the Bible!* Who is the King in the Kingdom of Heaven? **Matthew 6:9-10**. That means this wedding supper is given by the Father! It also describes how a great many people were "called" to the wedding. In Bible symbols, what does this wedding represent? Read **Revelation 19:7-9**.

Notice how that describes *the exact same event!* A group of people who were CALLED to the wedding of the Son, at a banquet hosted by His Father! Had you simply read **Matthew 22** and guessed, you could never have understood exactly what this meant. **The Bible interprets the Bible.**

But who was invited to the wedding banquet? Look at how the bride is dressed in **Revelation 19:8**: "in fine linen" which represents "the righteousness of *saints*". So this pictures the church, the bride of Christ, and those saints at this supper were *called* by the Father to be there. This supper is where those in the first resurrection are officially made a part of the kingdom of God.

But now go back and pick up the parable in **Matthew 22:3**. Here we see there were people called to that wedding *who refused to come!* Get that! **NOT EVERYONE GOD CALLED CAME TO THE WEDDING!**

Why not? What could possibly have been more important than this wedding? What excuses did they make? Read **verses 4-5**. Like most parables, this one was retold in another gospel and different details were included; so read **Luke 14:15-20**. Notice those excuses! Look what got in the way of coming to the wedding of the Lamb!

One had land, one had a wife, one had work to do! How many people do you know that let their job, their families, or their possessions get in the way of their service to God? Now turn back to **Matthew 22:6** to pick up the story again.

So what did the king do to those who were called, and rejected the call? **Verses 7-8**. Note this does not mean that people who reject the truth are killed by God **immediately**; it just means they will *ultimately* be killed **if** they don't repent (**Luke 13:5**). But regardless of their ultimate fate, if they reject the call then God says they are not *worthy* to taste of His supper – that is, they are not *worthy* to be a part of the first resurrection!

But what did the King do, did He just leave the wedding table empty? What was His command? **Matthew 22:9-10**. So when those who were first called rejected the call, God called other people – people less desirable, less worthy, *but people hungry enough to show up at the wedding!*

To get more details, now read the alternate version in **Luke 14:21-24**. So when those who are called reject the call, God calls others; the scum of the Earth if necessary, anyone who will listen. Salvation is open to EVERYONE today! But do these second-string guests still have to obey God? Read **Matthew 22:11-13**. What does the wedding garment represent? Remember **Revelation 19:8!** *We never guess at what the Bible means!*

Recap now; many people were called; some rejected the call; so new people were called. But these new people *had the exact same dress code as the first people!* They had to be “clothed with righteousness” (**Psalms 132:8-9**), **JUST LIKE THE FIRST!** And if the second group of people who are called reject the truth too, then they too will be “cast into outer darkness”.

What is the moral of this story? Interestingly, both Luke and Matthew record a different conclusion; **Matthew's** version is in **22:14** “*For many are called, but few are chosen*”. **MANY** are called by God and *offered* this reward, but only a **FEW** accept that call and actually make it to the wedding!

To learn **WHY** that is true, read **Luke's** version in **14:25-26**. If God calls you, and you make excuses like they made in **Luke 14:15-20**, you cannot be God's disciple. If you don't put God absolutely, clearly, unarguably first, you cannot be God's disciple. If you don't put Him above your family, your very life (and by implication, your job, your house, your prestige), you cannot be His disciple. Sooner or later, you'll make an excuse and you won't make it to that wedding.

And those are the twin morals of that parable.

CHOSEN

That parable is a perfect introduction to the concept of the “chosen”. Jesus said **MANY** are called, but **FEW** are chosen. Who are those “chosen”? When are they “chosen”? Why? By whom?

Does Jesus choose people, or do people choose Jesus? **John 15:16**. What are you chosen out of? **John 15:19**. Whom does God choose? **1 Corinthians 1:27**. Why? **Verse 28**. What must you be rich in to be chosen? **James 2:5**.

So to be “chosen” you must be rich in faith; you must be out of the world; and you must be personally “chosen” by Jesus. In some way, you must have done *something* to pass beyond the status of “called” and into “chosen”. What is that step? **1 Peter 2:9**.

That may not at first appear to answer the question, but look carefully; the “chosen” are a part of a “holy nation”, “royal priesthood”, and an example to others to reflect well on “Him who hath called you”. In other words, the “chosen” are a part of the true Church – true Christians.

The last lesson showed that before baptism, you are not a Christian. That before baptism you aren't a part of the family of God. That before baptism you must repent and have faith. And baptisms are always performed by Jesus Christ, even though it's a fallible human who does the actual ritual. Now compare those four facts with the verses at the beginning of this segment – it's a perfect match.

Baptism is an act that Jesus personally does to “choose” you, which sets you apart from the world, and makes you a true Christian. Thus, **baptism is the moment at which you are “chosen” by God!**

WHAT HAPPENS AT BAPTISM?

The act of baptism itself changes nothing about you. Baptism is simply an outward demonstration of inward changes that have already taken place. Your baptism demonstrates to God your willing acceptance of your own death as the legitimate penalty for your sins. Before baptism, you have already repented of your sins; you have already committed yourself to the truth, to God, and to His law for the rest of your life. Baptism simply formalizes that agreement.

What are the two most basic doctrines of the true Church? **Hebrews 6:1**. And the second two, once a person has repented and demonstrated faith? **Verse 2**. What does Peter promise to those who are baptized? **Acts 2:38**. What happened after Paul baptized people? **Acts 19:5-6**. How exactly is the holy spirit given? **Acts 8:17**. But only to those who were baptized? **Verse 16**. To whom does God give the spirit? **Acts 5:32**.

“Laying on of hands” is a separate ceremony from baptism; but with a few exceptions, it always happened right after baptism, and that's how we do it today. It is the laying on of hands that gives you the spirit of God, not the baptism. Read **Mark 1:6-8**. John baptized with water – just as the disciples did, and we do today – but there is another baptism, one with the holy spirit.

Remember from the last lesson, “baptism” is copied from a Greek word that simply means “submersion”. You can be “baptized” in any substance; milk, dirt, bills, it doesn't matter – as long as you're covered in it, you're technically “baptized” in it. Most Bible baptisms are in water, but there is another kind John mentioned there, baptism in the holy spirit. Literally, that means Jesus would cover them in His spirit.

When did Jesus say that would happen? How does the Bible describe the event? **Acts 2:1-4**. What did Peter say about it? **Acts 2:16-17**. What must you do to be immersed in the spirit? **Proverbs 1:23**. Must you also have the spirit inside you as well as outside? **2 Corinthians 1:22**. What purpose does the spirit serve? **Ephesians 2:22**. Is it the spirit that baptizes you into the body of Christ (the Church)? **1 Corinthians 12:13**. What happens when you are “washed”? **1 Corinthians 6:11**. And what does that? (Same verse).

To summarize, after baptism the baptizer lays hands on you, in Jesus' place, and the spirit of God washes you spiritually in the same way the water washes you physically; which allows God to dwell in you, and allows you to understand Him (**1 Corinthians 2:9-16**).

How much of the spirit is given initially? **2 Corinthians 5:5**. [Note: World English Bible translates it best “...gave to us the *down payment* of the Spirit...”]. Is this “earnest”, or “down payment” called anything else? **2 Corinthians 1:22**. When are you “sealed” with that down payment? **Ephesians 1:13**. And is that all of our inheritance, or just the down-payment? **Verse 14**.

When you buy a house for \$100,000, you are required to put down “earnest money”, to show you are serious about buying it. If you decide to buy it, you make a down payment of perhaps \$10,000. But you don’t stop there – after that down payment, you make regular monthly payments until it’s fully paid.

Similarly, God shows you He is serious by giving you a tiny bit of the spirit to help you understand what He says; a small percentage of the total, *but one that will grow!* And *as you fulfill your side of the contract*, He continues to make payments! If you love what it shows you, you will be given more!

Is it possible for some people to have more of God’s spirit than others? **2 Kings 2:9**. Is it possible to grow in the spirit? **Luke 1:80**. To whom does God give His spirit? **Acts 5:32**. And what happens when you are fully obedient? **Luke 4:1**. Does God measure it out to the fully obedient? **John 3:34**.

The more obedient you are – the better you fulfill the contract – the faster the payments will come in. Like everything God does, when you know all the factors, it’s a mathematically precise formula.

Do good works make you fruitful and increase your knowledge of God? **Colossians 1:10**. Do you increase in knowledge by the spirit of God? **Ephesians 1:17**. Grace hides your sins of ignorance – does more grace result in more knowledge? **2 Peter 3:18**. If you want to be closer to God, what must you do? **James 4:8**.

More obedience brings more faith; more faith brings more grace. More grace means your sins are overlooked more, which makes you appear even more righteous to God. And more righteousness – more obedience – causes you to receive a larger portion of the spirit.

But can you lose all of that spirit? **Psalms 51:11**. Can you lose just *some of it*? **Psalms 119:43**. How do you do that? **1 Thessalonians 5:19**. How do you quench the holy spirit? **Acts 7:51**. What are some things which grieve the spirit? **Ephesians 4:30-31**. And how do you grieve His spirit? **Isaiah 63:10**. Is it a single sin, or a *long series* of sins, that grieves Him? **Hebrews 3:10**.

Each sin grieves God, and there is a price for every sin you commit, but God can get past them if you meant well. But “erring always in your heart”, “rebellion”, being “uncircumcised in heart” and “stiff-necked” – these things “quench the spirit” and drive God from you. God will put up with a limited amount of it, but when your actions prove that you really don’t want Him around, what will He do? **Romans 1:28**.

What must you do to maintain the spirit of God that you already have? **1 Timothy 4:14-15** [Note: this “gift” came by the laying on of hands, hence the subject is the spirit of God]. What must you continually do, to keep your relationship with God active? **2 Timothy 1:6**. Like with anyone, your relationship with God will stagnate if you ignore Him.

Does Jesus – that is, His spirit – live in you? **John 15:5**. Does He expect it to yield fruit in you? **Verse 16**. What happens if you do not bear fruit – do you get cut away from the vine? **Verse 2**. Who is the vine? **Verse 1**.

As I said, this is mathematically precise; if you obey God, God moves closer to you. If you disobey Him, He backs away. Obey Him perfectly, and you’ll be “full of the spirit” like Jesus was. Disobey Him too often, and you’ll be pruned off of the Vine.

The amount of God’s spirit you have at baptism is only the tiniest fraction of the amount you *could* have; it is only the *beginning* of your life as a child of God; a beginning of a long life of growing,

changing, developing into a new creature. **Receiving the spirit at the laying on of hands is your spiritual conception; the very beginning of your life as a spirit being.**

A NEW ELOHIM

Last lesson we touched on the idea that at baptism, you first became a member of the family of God – the Elohim. At that moment, you become a God-fetus, a member of the God-kind, as God promised to make you in **Genesis 1:26**.

But that isn't quite accurate; technically, it isn't the baptism, but the laying on of hands, that does that. To fully understand how spiritual conception works, let's use humans as a pattern – since, after all, we are made in the image of God, **how we work is how God works**.

When human conception takes place, the sperm and ovum combine to make a new life. But on a strictly physical level, this is just a chemical reaction; it can no more create a new life than a cancer tumor can. It can grow and change, and all the physical parts for that human fetus can be created by that chemical process *but that isn't sentient life!* James says, “*the body without the spirit is dead*” (**James 2:26**).

Without a *spirit* to inhabit that new mind, the newly-conceived baby will never be more alive than a vegetable. It will just be a machine, unable to think or feel or act because without the spirit the body is dead.

If baptism is the crucifying of our old nature, where does new life come from? **Ezekiel 37:14, 1 Peter 3:18**. What does that “washing” at baptism cause? **Titus 3:5**. [Note: This verse should be read in several translations; “regeneration” means “new birth”]. And what causes new life? (Same verse). Did Jesus ever teach this doctrine? **John 3:3-5**. Can we be born of the spirit in this life? **Verses 6-8**.

As you studied in Lesson 14, “born” has two meanings in Greek; “to conceive” and “to give birth”. We are not “born” of the spirit in this life. We *are* born of *water* at baptism, our “new birth”. And we are “**conceived**” by the spirit in this life. But when will we be born of the spirit? **1 John 3:9**. Can we sin today? **1 John 1:8-10**. What is the difference between someone who is *born* of God, and *conceived* [begotten] by God? **1 John 5:18**.

So at baptism, your old person dies; the spiritual infant who rises from the waters is “born of water”, and is a new creature; he bears no guilt for earlier sins, because that other person is dead. **But the new spiritual creature needs a spirit, or he will be stillborn – dead at birth**. The old human spirit won't do, because it was what caused the problem in the first place. And anyway, that spirit is dying now!

So at that moment God moves in with “the earnest of the spirit”, and deposits a bit of Himself in you. At that point, He is living inside you, and your life as an Elohim begins. Because now you literally are an Elohim because a bit of El is inside you.

WHAT THIS SPIRIT DOES

At baptism, the person you used to be (spiritually) dies. When you are pulled from the waters by Christ who is baptizing you, the sins of your previous life are gone, wiped away and forgotten by God. You are dead – but the old biological machine is still alive. And that biological machine still has that old human spirit in it – but with one change.

Without God's help, can you overcome your own sins? **Romans 8:7**. So what does His spirit do for you? **Ephesians 3:16**. And why is that necessary? **Verses 17-19**. Does that mean we can still sin? **Galatians 2:17-18**. [Note: We *shouldn't*, but we still CAN.] What then SHOULD you do from that moment on? **Verses 19-20**.

“Through the law” – that is, by the rules in the law – you are dead to sin, because the law says “the wages of sin is death”. That law has now been satisfied so you can live on – but only if you crucify your old nature every time it pops its head up to tempt you! Otherwise, you are “building again the things you destroyed” and are once again “a transgressor”!

See, symbolically, at baptism your old self, your old nature dies; but in reality, he lives on, *but mortally wounded*. He will die for good one day, because YOU WILL KILL HIM. Not suddenly, in a temporary fit of righteousness, but slowly, one sin dealt with at a time, you will “die daily” (**1 Corinthians 15:31**). God calls the moment of baptism your death because **He TRUSTS you to finish that process, just as you must trust Him to resurrect you when it's finished!**

Baptism and the laying on of hands does not mean God will force you to avoid sins. In fact, it won't seem any easier to resist temptation than it was before. But *you now have a guarantee from God that it will be POSSIBLE for you to resist temptation. It is now possible to overcome your carnal, selfish nature* because now you have the spirit of God working in you to help defeat it.

Therefore the life you live then will be not your life – the one led by the selfish spirit of your carnal nature, but it will be the life of Christ in you; you will constantly choose HIS way over YOUR way. Read **2 Corinthians 5:15**. Once you are baptized, you are signing your life over to God; you will still be the one making the choices, but you are agreeing to always submit yourself to Jesus' will – to use HIS choices as your guide.

Don't misunderstand! Your way will still sound better to you! Sin will still be appealing! But you will be guaranteed that there is ALWAYS a way out, ALWAYS a way to follow the spirit of life, and not the dead flesh – a way that is within YOUR POWER TO FIND! Because you're no longer alone in your battle against your selfish nature!

But it will still be hard! Paul called it a WAR in his body, not a scuffle! But you now have the POWER to overcome what before you were powerless to defeat. With baptism and the laying on of hands, you are given a promise from God that no matter what your weaknesses may have been, it is now POSSIBLE for you to obey Him; that now you have the knowledge, the understanding, and the power to kill that carnal human spirit.

ARE YOU NOW “ALWAYS SAVED”?

At that point, you've been called, you've been chosen, you've received the spirit of God and are a member of the Elohim. Does that mean no matter what you do, you cannot lose salvation? There are some verses that seem to imply that. For example...

Can anyone pluck you out of Jesus' hand? **John 10:28**. Once God starts to work on your soul, will He give up? **Philippians 1:6**. Will God leave you? **Hebrews 13:5**. Is Jesus with us always, no matter what? **Matthew 28:20**.

Those certainly look like God will make sure you get saved, no matter what, once you are saved. But now look at scriptures that indicate the opposite:

Must you always be on your guard against falling away from the truth? **1 Corinthians 10:12**. Can you depart from God? **Hebrews 3:12**. Can you fall short of the mark? **Hebrews 4:1**. Was Paul's salvation a sure thing? **Philippians 3:12-13**. Was it possible for Paul to be disqualified from salvation? **1 Corinthians 9:27**. If you *don't* diligently work at it, is your salvation SURE? **2 Peter 1:10**.

There are hundreds of verses that talk about people who were once a part of the truth, fell away, and lost out on salvation; but what about the other ones, that speak of Jesus' unfailing help? Are they a contradiction? Certainly not. Why? Because baptism is a contract between two parties, you and God. **And God's promises *only guarantee His end of the contract!***

Picture yourself on one side of the conference table and God on the other. You've signed a contract. In all those verses above, God promises that NO MATTER WHAT, He will not break the contract. And what's more, He will not let anyone or anything FORCE you to break *your* end of the contract (**Romans 8:35-39**). He will ALWAYS make sure there is a way you can escape IF YOU WANT TO ESCAPE! (**1 Corinthians 10:13**).

But none of those verses say you can't CHOOSE to break your end of the contract! Just because God will never break His side, and will not allow *anything* to FORCE you to break yours, it doesn't mean He will MAKE you keep your end of the bargain! You still have free choice. God will not "possess you" and force you to obey His will (**1 Corinthians 14:32**).

And just like any earthly contract, **there is a termination penalty if you back out**. But if you're willing to pay the fine, you are free to break the contract. So what exactly is that penalty?

Is it possible to be saved, then again be entangled in the world *and overcome by it*? **2 Peter 2:20**. And what is the "fine" for breaking that contract? **Verse 21**. How does describe such people? **Verse 22**. When God gets fed up with people who break their contract, what happens? **Hebrews 3:10-12**. What will God think of such people? **Hebrews 10:38**. Can such people be renewed to repentance again? **Hebrews 6:4-8**.

If you break your contract with God, you are dead to Him. Nothing you do can get you back in His good graces again. Only your death will satisfy the law at that point. Without Jesus paying for your sins (which was on the contract you rejected), you'll have to pay for them yourself.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

Have you committed it? If you break the contract, is that the unpardonable sin? Many believe it is. But which of your sins are so unique and so horrible that even God can't forgive them? **Colossians 2:13**. Will He forgive us ALL our sins? **1 John 1:9**. Can God forgive ALL of the sins, even a whole nation's worth? **Psalms 85:2**. Which of your law-breakings are excepted? **Psalms 103:3**.

That doesn't sound like your own special sins are going to be excepted from that list, does it? But there are three passages in the Bible that appear to contradict it, and speak of sins so horrible even God can't forgive them.

The first such verse is **Matthew 12:31-32**. Everyone *thinks* that says, "if you blaspheme the holy spirit in this life, you have to die forever". That if you say, "the holy spirit is stupid!" God will never forgive you for it – not now, not in the second resurrection, never. But that isn't what it says!

Here is a simple principle. What are the wages of sin? **Romans 6:23**. So the price of sinning is death. If you sin, you must die. Here's the question though... *how many times?* How many times must you die to satisfy the law? To pay for your sin, must you die ten times? Five? Two? *Or does the scripture only require one death for sin?* **Hebrews 9:27**.

That means if you sin in this life, if you murder, rape, pillage, commit genocide, and yes, even blaspheme the holy spirit... you earn *only ONE death!* And when you die, *your debt to sin is paid in full!* It is impossible to carry sin-debt from this world into the next **because death pays for all sins!** And if God resurrects you for any reason, you're a NEW person, with a NEW life, and NO DEBTS OF ANY KIND!

But that new person can sin again in that new life! And he can blaspheme the holy spirit again in that life! And if he does it again *the penalty is the same because God never changes!* (**Hebrews 13:8**). So how **Matthew 12:31-32** should be understood is, "if you blaspheme the holy spirit *in this life*, you will not be forgiven *in this life*. And if you blaspheme the holy spirit *in the next life*, you won't be forgiven *in the next life either!*"

But what exactly is blasphemy against the holy spirit? Have you already done it? Read **Hebrews 10:26-29**. This is talking about the same situation as **Matthew 12**, saying anyone who "*insults the spirit of grace*" (NKJV) cannot ever receive a sacrifice for his sin; and without a sacrifice for his sins, he "hath not forgiveness, neither in this world or the world to come". So this verse speaks of the same penalty (no hope of forgiveness) for the same crime (insulting/blaspheming the holy spirit).

And the answer is the same: if you insult the holy spirit *in this life* you won't be supplied with a sacrifice – receive forgiveness – *in this life*. And after paying for this life's sins with your own death, if you blaspheme in the next life, you won't be forgiven then either. How simple!

How can you know if you've already blasphemed the holy spirit? Read **Hebrews 6:4-8**. Notice the conditions you must meet in order for it to be "*impossible to renew them to repentance*". Count them up! In order to blaspheme the holy spirit and be unforgivable, you must fulfill **FIVE** separate conditions! If you haven't met each of those conditions, and THEN fallen away, you are in no danger!

Have you understood the complete truth of God, and been enlightened? Received the gifts of God? Received the holy spirit (and for that to happen, you must also have been baptized into the true church)?

Have you tasted the fruits of God's way of life? Have you seen God's POWER in your life? Miracles, healings, answers to prayer? If you haven't fulfilled ALL of these conditions *you could not POSSIBLY have committed the unpardonable sin!* **You can't blaspheme the holy spirit if you don't have it, or if you don't even know what it is!**

But let's suppose you did all those things; suppose you were in the true church, saw the fruits of living God's way, felt the power of God in your life, and then willfully sinned and blasphemed the holy spirit. It does happen! And after that, it is quite impossible for you to return to repentance, and be forgiven by God... *in this life*. **God only calls people ONCE in a lifetime.**

Remember why you're called in this life; you're offered a chance at the first resurrection. That is the birthright that God has offered you. If you reject that, it is gone forever. But when you're resurrected with everyone else in the second resurrection, you'll be offered a new reward; a smaller one of course, but a reward nonetheless.

Read **Deuteronomy 21:17**. Look at the difference between the firstborn and secondborn; this is a law of God! The firstborn gets exactly twice the birthright of the secondborn. But suppose the firstborn is disqualified from the birthright for some reason; then the birthright goes to someone else. Now read **Hebrews 12:15-17** for an actual example of that.

Esau would have inherited all the blessings; a double portion of his father's estate. But Esau sold that for a single meal, and although he bitterly repented, he couldn't get that birthright again. It had already been given to someone else! You've been offered that double portion today, and if you sell it for a job, a house, a meal, a family member, or anything else, it is gone! Gone forever! God will reject you and go invite someone else to His wedding supper!

But even if that does happen, you'll have a chance to obey God again in the next life; when things are easier. You'll have a chance at a single portion of God's blessing, just as Esau got a pretty good blessing from Isaac... just not the awesome blessing Jacob inherited.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO "SELL YOUR BIRTHRIGHT"?

Don't misunderstand this! **Your first sin after baptism doesn't put you in the same class as Esau.** Your first complaint to God isn't blaspheming the holy spirit! Your first ignorant sin doesn't earn you a permanent death penalty! Yes, it is possible to turn away from God – but no one rejects God all at once, in a single day!

What happens if you begin to stray and be disobedient? Does He cast you out of His sight? **Hebrews 12:5-11**. Does this punishment mean God hates us? **Proverbs 3:12**. What happens when we break God's laws? **Psalms 89:30-34**. How does He correct His sons – magically, with plagues and such? **2 Samuel 7:14**.

God seldom punishes men with lightning and earthquakes and boils. He corrects us *using other men*. Our peace and happiness depend heavily on the favor of our government and employers and family. And when we are obeying God, we receive that favor (**Proverbs 16:7**).

But it is just as easy for God to revoke that favor and suddenly our enemies remember they hate us and abuse us in some way or another; in this way, God "chastens us with the rod of men". If you accept that punishment and repent, God is happy to forgive you; but if you stubbornly resist it, well... we'll get to that in a moment.

Do people still sin after choosing this way of life? **1 John 1:8**. Is there anyone who doesn't sin? **2 Chronicles 6:36**. Did Paul find it a constant battle to avoid sin? **Romans 7:14-25**. And what was Paul's conclusion? **Romans 8:1**.

As long as you draw breath, there will be a battle in your soul between the things God's spirit shows you, and the things **your own spirit** lusts after. That's the point of this life, to make you choose a side, and to teach you to battle sin. You will make mistakes, you will be weak, and you will be stupid. And then you should learn the error of your ways and do better.

And that's what grace is for – to overlook your sins of ignorance. Read **Romans 4:3-8**. If you have faith, God does not count your sins against you. But that doesn't mean you can sin all you want and have God overlook your sins! That grace only comes by FAITH. And faith only comes by *knowing you have repented and knowing you are obeying God in every way you know*.

Without a pure conscience, no man can have faith. If you're knowingly sinning, you won't have a pure conscience; therefore you won't have faith; therefore you won't have grace; therefore your sins are counted against you.

God is remarkably patient; He understands we are made of dirt (**Psalms 103:14**), and puts up with a lot from us. But what He won't tolerate is rebellion. Conscious rebellion, fully comprehending the choice before you, is the true unpardonable sin.

WILFULL SIN

God classified sins broadly into two types in **1 John 5:16**. And God expects us to recognize the difference between the two types; the one for which there can be forgiveness, and the one which is beyond hope. Earlier in **Hebrews 10:26** you read about "willful" sin. Now study it in this translation:

Hebrews 10:26 (Philips) *Now if we sin deliberately after we have known and ACCEPTED the truth, there can be no further sacrifice for sin for us.*

Here, you see the same qualifications of **Hebrews 6**; you have to have sinned AFTER knowing and ACCEPTING the truth. And sinned deliberately. Now some people say, "well, I knew that stealing was wrong, but I did it anyway". And so the question is, did you REALLY know it was wrong? Do you REALLY understand God? Read **1 Corinthians 13:9, 12**.

To perfectly commit a willful sin you must have perfect knowledge of God. Since even Paul saw God dimly, like looking at Him through a foggy glass, none of us have perfect knowledge of God. We "know in part" only. Thus, it is impossible to commit the "perfect sin". All we can do is "sin in part".

We can only sin against what we know; and the more we know, the more God holds us accountable. (**Luke 12:47-48**). What we don't know, God covers with grace. We're all deceived to some extent, all ignorant to some extent, all under pressure to sin from many sources. And so when God tallies up how much sin-debt we owe, He factors those things in and applies grace accordingly.

When you sin in ignorance, God says to Himself, "*they know not what they do*", and overlooks it completely. When you do understand and repent, He gladly forgives you on the spot. On the other end of the spectrum, when you sin with complete knowledge of what you are doing, God refuses to pay for any of it; you knowingly chose to sin, therefore God says, "*Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you*" (**Judges 10:14**).

The better you know your Lord's will when you break it, the more stern will be your penalty. Because the more you know, the more serious your rebellion. And the more you know, the more you are responsible for your sins. **However, no man has ever had complete knowledge of God, nor fully understood the fruits of sin. Therefore no man has ever committed the perfect sin. Therefore every man can be forgiven.**

So suppose you were 60% convinced that something was wrong, and did it anyway. You will have to pay 60% of the curse yourself, and Jesus will pay the other 40%. It's really pretty simple. And the great news is that none of us know enough to endanger our eternal lives. There is always some doubt, some question, that allows us at least 1% of ignorance – enough to escape eternal punishment. **We have to work pretty hard to alienate God beyond forgiveness even in this life (2 Peter 3:9, Exodus 34:6).**

So now let's look at a case in point. Suppose it's between stealing a loaf of bread and seeing your child starve. What will you do? Will you stand on your conviction that stealing is wrong and trust God to provide? I hope so – that IS the right answer – but you might not. Any of us might not.

So let's say, hypothetically, you WERE in that situation. Knowing that stealing is wrong, you STOLE that loaf of bread. This was a sin. And since you knew, going in, it was a sin, it was a WILFULL sin. Wasn't it?

No, it wasn't. It was an act you THINK was PROBABLY wrong; because you were told so by preachers who MAY have known what God was like; who read it in a book that MAY have been written by men 2500 years ago; who MAY have been inspired; by a God who MIGHT EXIST! **The only thing of which you are TRULY certain is your child is hungry!** Under the circumstances, you might have been only 30% convinced that stealing was the wrong thing to do!

And while God doesn't condone stealing, even in those circumstances, He does understand it; read **Proverbs 6:30**. But **even though He understands it, He still punishes you for it** as **verse 31** says. And that's the point of all of this; if you break the law, you'll pay a price. The more you know, the heavier price you'll pay. But paying the ultimate price is very hard to do, because it's very hard to attain ultimate knowledge.

That's why God makes us PROVE TO HIM, with EACH STEP we take, that we LOVE the knowledge He has given us, before He gives us more! (**Isaiah 28:9-10**). By giving you understanding a little bit at a time, and watching how you handle it, He prevents you from fully knowing Him, and avoids risking YOUR ETERNAL CHANCE AT SALVATION by exposing you to too much, too soon.

CALLED, CHOSEN, AND....

But there is a third group; many are called, few are chosen; or to put it clearer, many understand at least a portion of the truth of God – but very few actually follow through and are baptized. But even after that point, it is clear that not all the chosen make it to that wedding supper. So what is the third qualification of those who meet Jesus at His return? **Revelation 17:14**.

So not only must you be called; not only must you be chosen; you must also prove FAITHFUL. What does Jesus say those who desire salvation must do? **Matthew 24:13**. How long must we obey God? **Hebrews 3:6**. When we are chosen, we have the “beginning of our confidence”. How long do we have to keep that? **Hebrews 3:14**. Who will receive power over the nations? **Revelation 2:26**.

Must you make your “choosing” certain? **2 Peter 1:10**. [Note: “election” is the act of God choosing you.] Does everyone who runs this race get the prize? **1 Corinthians 9:24**. Are the righteous easily saved? **1 Peter 4:18**. Must you continually examine yourself to make sure you're still faithful? **2 Corinthians 13:5**.

At baptism and the laying on of hands you begin your life as a child of God. **But that's only the beginning!** Does God then compare you to a newborn baby, and command you to grow? **1 Peter 2:2**. How? (Same verse).

In order to receive the reward God has promised, you have to endure persecutions, temptations, and hardships; you have to “grow in grace and knowledge” (**2 Peter 3:18**), until you “measure up” to Christ's standard (**Ephesians 4:13**). Bottom line, you have to prove FAITHFUL after a lifetime of living this way of life to be saved!

You might be called, get baptized, be a perfect Christian for twenty years until Satan finds a weakness in you and uses it to lead you away from Christ. If that happens, you were not faithful and not worthy to attend that wedding supper. This life is about testing – God will run you through every trial necessary to make SURE that once at that supper, you will never “want a divorce”, so to speak.

But what is the real goal here? What is God producing with you? You already know many answers – the best of which is “God is building a family”. But on a more individual level, what is He trying to make out of YOU? What is YOUR future, if you are one of the precious few who are called, chosen AND faithful?

You’ve read many things in your Bible by now that you would have once thought were blasphemy. But now you’re about to learn the most blasphemous thing imaginable – and yet, in reality, it isn’t blasphemy at all. It’s the most fundamental purpose of the plan of God.

As you should have memorized by now, **Genesis 1:26** showed the sole purpose of Jesus and His Father when the Father said, “*let us make man in our image, after our likeness*”. I quote it in every lesson **because it is the most fundamental scripture in the Bible. ALL of God’s plans are summed up in that one verse!** But now let’s take that thought all the way to its logical conclusion.

SPIRITS

Are angels made of spirit? **Hebrews 1:7**. Will we be above the angels? **1 Corinthians 6:3**. Is God a spirit? **John 4:23-24**. Will we be like Him? **1 John 3:2**. When we are born again, will it be of water, flesh, or spirit? **John 3:6-8**. Will we have a body of flesh, *or a body made of spirit*, in the resurrection? **1 Corinthians 15:35, 44**.

Will that spirit body be incorruptible? **Verse 42**. Will that body be powerful and glorious? **Verse 43**. Will it be immortal? **Verse 53**. Will we look like, literally BE LIKE the Beings in heaven (God and Jesus)? **Verse 49**. Is God the Father of fleshly sons, or sons made of spirit? **Hebrews 12:9**. Will we sit with Him in His throne? **Revelation 3:21**. And will we rule with Him there? **Daniel 7:22, 27**.

Our future body will not be made of flesh, it will be made of the same material God is – spirit. As you’ll remember from Lesson 14, we have our own spirit; and at the resurrection God will transplant that spirit into a new body, one made entirely of incorruptible, immortal, powerful, glorious spirit! And give that spirit – that saint – a place in His throne room, ruling at His side!

HOLINESS

Is anyone but God holy? **Revelation 15:4**. So then we can’t be holy? **Leviticus 20:7, Leviticus 11:45**. But surely we can’t be holy *in the same way as God*? **1 Peter 1:15-16**. Is the temple of God holy? And what is that temple? **1 Corinthians 3:17**. Will we be unholy when Jesus presents us to God? **Colossians 1:22**.

Sanctified means “made holy” according to Strong’s and various dictionaries. We cannot make ourselves holy; but can God, who alone is holy, *MAKE us holy* (sanctify us)? **Jude 1:1**. How does He make us holy? **Hebrews 10:10**. When we are washed (baptized), are we made holy? **1 Corinthians 6:11**. Once you are a part of the family of God, does God consider even your unconverted spouse and children holy? **1 Corinthians 7:14**. And what exactly is it that makes us holy? **Romans 15:16**.

God alone is holy. But we are a temple of God – a place where God lives. We are holy because God is IN us! And when He dwells in us, we become a child of God; a member of the Elohim; this does not contradict the statement that God alone is holy, for God said “ye are Gods” [Elohim]. *If we are a member of the family of God – the Elohim – we are holy.* **In fact, if we aren’t holy, we are automatically disqualified as a temple of God, and no longer a child of God!**

PERFECT

Can we ever be perfect? **John 17:23**. Can we ever “grow up” into a perfect man? **Ephesians 4:13**. What does it take to be perfect? **James 3:2**. Had Paul achieved perfection? **Philippians 3:12**. Did God command us to be perfect *in the same sense that He is perfect*? **Matthew 5:48**. How can that happen? **1 Peter 5:10**.

There is more to be said about perfection, but that’s for another lesson. Suffice it to say, ultimate perfection will not be achieved in this life. But God will MAKE us perfect “after we have suffered awhile”. What must happen first, before we can be made perfect? **Hebrews 12:23**.

Our spirits must be made JUST. What makes patience? **James 1:3**. And what does patience create? **Verse 4**. So it is that “suffering awhile” which helps to make our spirits just – and then God converts that “justness” into PERFECTION. When? **Hebrews 11:40**. Those men were not yet made perfect, therefore *the resurrection will make them and us perfect!* How? **1 John 3:9**. And how does that happen? **Verses 1-3**.

At the resurrection, God will take the spirit of a just man and make it perfect. A “just” man is one who has sincerely tried to obey God his entire life, a man who has resisted temptation and struggled to be righteous in a world diametrically opposed to God.

Not a man that never sinned, never made a mistake, but a man who OVERCAME those mistakes and made his spirit into the best copy of God’s spirit that he could. And it is THAT man’s JUST spirit which God will take and make PERFECT LIKE HIS OWN!

God will not make the spirit of Charles Manson perfect. He won’t make the spirit of Joseph Stalin perfect. **He won’t make the spirit of every lazy, half-hearted seat-warmer who calls themselves a Christian perfect!** He will make *only* the spirits of JUST men and women perfect, when He resurrects them as members of His family!

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

What does James compare the word of God to? **James 1:23-25**. So when you heard the word of God – which you can’t understand without the spirit of God – it is like looking at yourself in a mirror. It shows you how dirty you are, and where you need to change! So what is the purpose of the spirit of God? **2 Corinthians 3:17-18**.

When we have the spirit of God in us, it’s like looking in the mirror and seeing *in that mirror the glory of the Lord!* It gives us the opportunity to have a PERFECT pattern to compare ourselves to! As you learned long ago in Lesson 4, His spirit exists alongside our spirit and gives us the chance to compare our conscience to His!

But there is more to be learned from that verse! Read **2 Corinthians 3:18** again. The NASB renders it “*beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, [we] are being transformed INTO THE SAME*”

IMAGE". The RSV says we "*are being CHANGED INTO HIS LIKENESS from one degree of glory to another*".

Did you get that? We can see the glory of the Lord in this spiritual mirror, *and WE are being transformed into THAT SAME GLORIOUS IMAGE! ONE DEGREE OF GLORY AT A TIME!* Each time we leave sin behind and follow that spirit instead of our own, we are one step closer to finishing our creation, and being made in the image and likeness of God!

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

When a human baby is conceived, it starts as a single cell. And that's where you are at baptism – just at the beginning of your gestation, with a "single cell" of the spirit of God. But that grows rapidly, if you nurture it, just as a human baby doubles and redoubles and redoubles its size until it fills the mother's belly.

When you are conceived as a spirit being by the laying on of hands, you have a single tiny down-payment of the spirit. But as you obey God and learn more and more, you will rapidly double and redouble your "size" in the spirit. Ideally, you will stand out as a giant in the church – up there with Paul, Peter, Noah, Daniel and Job.

And when that happens, *even if you can keep it up for the rest of your life*, you will not be finished! You will JUST THEN, at the resurrection, be BORN! *This life is the gestation period for the sons of God!* And even after we are born, we will still have a lot to learn – that's one of the things the millennium is for – but we will have proven we are worthy to be sons of God, and we will always choose the way of God over every other temptation in the universe for all time.

God is the Father of spirits (**Hebrews 12:9**). And He has created many individual spirits; not only the angels, but every person alive has their own spirit. It is this spirit that makes an individual unique from everyone else. And as you saw above, these spirits will be made perfect. They will be like God. And they will be *holy*. We already look like God; and with our help, God is changing our natures, our *spirits to be JUST LIKE HIS!*

God's true purpose in creating man is to create unique, incorruptible, righteous, perfect... HOLY SPIRITS!

There are two holy spirits in the universe now – Jesus and the Father – but they want MORE! They want YOU to be a part of their family and be JUST LIKE THEM!

We are to look at God's GLORY – His unique, incorruptible, righteous, perfect holy spirit – in the mirror of our soul and LET IT TRANSFORM US INTO THAT EXACT SAME IMAGE! So that we are changed into HIS LIKENESS, so that we can be LIKE HIM – in every possible sense!

Now that won't happen in this life; but we WILL have made our spirit *just* in this life; and when we are born, God will make it PERFECT. And as sons of God, spiritual temples of God, we will be holy; and as spirit beings, we will be spirits. **What else could we be, but holy spirits?**

And so when the sons of God are born, no longer will there be only two holy, perfect spirits of God in the universe; for the spirit of *every saint born to God will be a perfect HOLY SPIRIT!* These spirits will never supplant God; never push Him off His throne. But they will rule with Him in that throne.

That is blasphemy, the worst heresy imaginable, to every false Christian on Earth. But so is most of what the Bible says. This is in your Bible – you read it there today. You are not a holy spirit today, and you have a lot of changing to do before even God could transform you into one... *but that is why you were born, so if it doesn't happen eventually, to some of us, God failed at His purpose in creating mankind!*

Many are called. Few are chosen. Far fewer prove faithful... but those precious few who endure unto the end will be made into something incredible. For the first time ever, beings of dirt will be made into incorruptible beings of light. Men will become Gods.

If this makes sense to you, you have been called. If you have repented of your sins, and stopped committing those sins, the next step in your spiritual development is to be baptized by someone qualified to represent Jesus at your baptism, someone able to lay hands on you in Jesus' place and give you the holy spirit to begin your life as a child of God.

Your job will then be to prove fruitful; take what God has given you, and add to it; show it to others, make yourself into a shining example of what “[He] that called you” is like. And if you then manage to remain faithful, throughout a lifetime of persecution, tribulation, and challenges...

If you can hold on to God no matter what... then you can be one of God's new holy spirits.

This work is completely non-denominational and is meant to fulfill Christ's great commission to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (**Mark 16:15**). **This publication is not to be sold**; "*freely ye have received, freely give*" (**Matthew 10:8**).

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