

Christ on Calvary's cross and believe He bore in His body (1 Peter 2:24) the penalty of our violations against God's law, we can be saved from the just punishment we deserve.

TODAY NOT LATER -- God confronts each of us to make a decision NOW! "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). We are not guaranteed an opportunity tomorrow (Prov. 27:1). We are not granted an opportunity after death. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). If we reject this salvation now, it will result in hardness of heart (Heb. 3:7-13 Proverbs 29:1). **GOD'S SIMPLE PLAN OF SALVATION:** Admit you are a sinner justly deserving of God's wrath and judgment (Romans chapters 1-3:20). Believe that Jesus Christ bore your judgment on the cross of Calvary (Romans chapters 4-8). In prayer, repent of your sins and acknowledge to God that you are fully trusting only Christ for your salvation (John 1:12, John 3:16, Acts 16:31, 4:12, Romans 10:9,10,13). Based on 1John 5:13, praise God that you are a Christian and your sins are forgiven; and that you "know" you "have" eternal life.

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The CORNERSTONE

BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Religion or Christianity



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Since the Garden of Eden, man has sought to cover the guilt of his sins and make himself right with God through religious efforts. Adam and Eve attempted to cover their nakedness and guilt before God with fig Leaves (Gen. 3:7). God clearly revealed that their efforts were in vain, when He made them a new set of clothes out of animal skins (Gen. 3:21). The difference between religion and Christianity can be explained in one word -- blood! God reveals in Hebrews 9:22: "without shedding of blood is no remission" of sin. The clothes God made required the shedding of blood. This act of God, along with all the required blood sacrifices of the Old Testament were a shadow of the blood sacrifice of the lamb of God on the cross of Calvary (Hebrews 9:1-15 10:1-18). A man is not saved by his religion but by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ's shed blood as payment for his sin (I Peter 1:18,19).

FAITH OR WORKS -- Man is made right with God, not by what he does for God, but by what God has done for him. Man cannot save himself by good works or religion. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Romans 3:20). Nicodemus, was a religious man, but he wasn't a saved man (John 3)! A man can be in church every Sunday, be sincere, live a good moral life and still spend eternity in hell! Note the warning in Matthew 7:22-23. "Many will say to me in that day (judgment day), Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out demons? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Those who are trusting in their own goodness to enter the kingdom of heaven will discover to their utter dismay, that they will be eternally separated from God. Jesus came to save sinners (Mark 2:17)! The Bible says, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). All men need a Saviour! Jesus Christ's humiliation and death on the cross of Calvary is all in vain if man can save himself (Galatians 2:21).

make if he were to drink the whole bottle?" The doctor replied, "I don't see what you're getting at." Brother Hankins: "it wouldn't make any difference. The man would be dead either way." Then Brother Hankins explained, "doc, a lot of people in this country think they have to commit every sin in the catalog to be lost. The truth is, they are lost whether they ever commit another sin or not." **LACK OF PEACE BECAUSE OF HUMAN EFFORT** -- Many don't have peace in their life because they are trying to gain God's acceptance or favor by what they do for God. Their relationship to God is based on a system of works. They think that if they Live a good enough life, if they keep the ten commandments, if they do the best they can, if they live like Jesus wants them to live; then they can obtain God's blessing and be made right with Him. In the midst of all their moral efforts and religious activities they still have no peace in their life because they know they can never attain to God's perfect standard of righteousness and holiness. "ALL have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). "There is none righteous, no not one" (Rom. 3:10). As hard as a person might try to please God by his human efforts of good works, he never quite measures up! The Bible clearly says, "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (Rom. 3:20). God didn't give the Ten Commandments and the law so that by the keeping of them people could be saved; He gave the law so that all people would recognize their need of a Saviour because of their inability to keep God's Law. Suppose a neighbor is trespassing on your property. You go out and buy a no-trespassing sign and post it on the boundaries of your property. It informs all those who come near your property where your boundaries are and that you intend to prosecute those who trespass to the fullest extent of the law. Your neighbor continues to trespass as before. Your sign didn't make him a trespasser. He was already in violation of the law. Your sign revealed his violation and gave you proper grounds for charges. God's law doesn't produce sin in us. It reveals sin! We stand justly charged as guilty of trespassing God's Law. Our only hope is to look away from the law to the one who suffered the curse of the law for us (Gal. 3:13). As we look to the Lord Jesus

your sin and guilt when He hung on Calvary's cross for you (1Peter 2:24). "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). If you will call upon His name (Rom. 10:13) and receive His salvation, you will indeed find peace and rest for your soul (Matt. 11:28,29).

HOW THE VIOLATION OF ONE SIN KEEPS US FROM GOD'S PEACE AND SALVATION -- What was Adam and Eve's violation that brought sin into the world? Was it adultery, murder, jealousy, anger, envy, etc.? No, the violation was the eating of a piece of fruit! But it was the one piece of fruit in the whole garden upon which God had put a restriction. Think about it! There were not hundreds of commands to obey. There were not thousands of instructions to follow! The issue was whether or not they would yield their will to God's will concerning just one command. Suppose you live an almost perfect Life. The only sin you ever commit in your entire life is a swearword that you say when your boss makes you angry-- just one swearword in your whole lifetime. According to God's Word, if you have sinned in just one area of Life, you are guilty of all. "For whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. "For he that said, 'do not commit adultery,' said also, 'do not kill.' Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law" (James 2:10,11). If the Philadelphia Phillies baseball team loses the World Series by one run or 50 runs, either way, it is recorded a loss in the record books. They don't get the trophy! Dr. Curtis Hutson in his book "Salvation" relates the following illustration: Dr. Joe Henry Hankins once asked his doctor: "Doc, what is the strongest poison known to man?" The doctor replied, "potassium cyanide. Brother Hankins said, "doc, how much potassium cyanide would a man have to drink in order for it to kill him?" The doctor's answer was, "brother Hankins, it is so strong that if a man took the stopper out of a bottle of potassium cyanide and touched underneath his tongue where the blood vessels are nearest the surface, he wouldn't live to get the stopper back into the bottle." Brother Hankins continued, "what difference would it

CONDEMNATION OR JUSTIFICATION -- Most people mistakenly believe that they can't know for sure that they will go to heaven when they die. They think that one-day after their death, they will be judged by God to determine if they have lived a good enough Life to allow them entrance into heaven. But the Bible declares all men to be under the judgment of God already (Rom. 1:18). The man or woman who admits his sin before God and trusts Jesus as his personal Saviour has eternal life and is freed from the wrath and judgment of God (John 3:36). Those who have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour (John 1:12), have no condemnation before God (Romans 8:1). Furthermore, they have peace with God and are justified (made righteous) in His sight. God promises that they can know that they have eternal Life (1John 5:13). There is no fear of death for the Christian (Hebrews 2:14,15). The moment a Christian dies, he immediately goes to be with Christ in heaven (2Corinthians 5:8, Philippians 1:23). But for those who reject Christ, they already stand condemned before God. This condemnation is not because they haven't lived a good enough life, but because they refuse to trust the Son of God as Saviour and Lord of their Life (John 3:18-21).

FOR ME OR AGAINST ME -- The Bible informs us that no man can be neutral towards Jesus Christ. No man can say, "I don't know if I am ready to trust Christ as my Lord and Saviour." Jesus said, "he that is not with Me is against Me" (Matthew 12:30). To refuse to trust Christ, or delay to trust Christ is to reject Christ. It is the same as saying, "we will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). Men reject Jesus Christ because they love darkness and hate light. They refuse to come to the Light (Jesus Christ) "lest their deeds should be reprov'd" (John 3:20)! A man is either in the kingdom of darkness or he is in the kingdom of light. A Christian has been delivered out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:13). Light and darkness are totally contrary to one another. Light expels the darkness. There is no gray! No middle ground! To refuse the kingdom of light is to remain in the kingdom of darkness.

NARROW WAY OR BROAD WAY -- The way that leads to destruction is broad and many go down that pathway (Matthew 7:13,14). Satan doesn't care if you destroy your life and go to hell because of drugs, alcohol, immorality, the occult, materialism, or even religion. He offers you many choices! But Jesus Christ offers the narrow way! When a person repents of his sin and trusts Christ as Lord and Saviour, Jesus becomes his shepherd. Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me! A Christian yields his will to the Saviour's will. A Christian has been bought with a price -- the precious blood of Christ (1Peter 1:18,19). He no longer is boss of his own life (1Corinthians 6:19,20), but joyfully offers his obedience to the Lord who bled and died for him. Those who truly understand the Saviour's love manifested at Calvary, respond with grateful obedience. Jesus said those who love Him will obey Him (John 14:15).

GOD'S PEACE AND SALVATION IS AVAILABLE TO SINNERS -- "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1Timothy 1:15). To admit you are a sinner is to admit to God that at the very core of your being you have a nature that is rebellious towards Him. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). You don't become a sinner when you sin. You sin because you are a sinner. A dog doesn't become a dog when he barks, a dog barks because he is a dog. From the moment of our conception in our mother's womb we have a sin problem within us that Leads us away from God. "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies"(Psalm 58:3). "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). Man has a heart problem! His heart is full of sin. "But thanks be to God Who offers us a new heart through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ (Ezk. 36:26, 2Cor. 5:17). This explains why Jesus said it is imperative that a man be "born again" (John 3:7). Just as we had a physical birth and inherited a sinful heart, when we believe on Jesus Christ we inherit a new

heart of righteousness -- the righteousness of the perfect Son of God. His blood cleanses us from our former iniquities and we have new life in Christ (Isaiah 1:18; 2Cor. 5:17). If you will confess your sins to God and receive His cleansing of your guilt, you will find the peace with God that He offers in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ (1John 1:8-10, Heb. 10:19-25).

THE OFFER OF GOD'S PEACE AND SALVATION THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST

-- The peace and security that God offers to every individual must be received from God as a gift (Rom. 6:23). It is not granted as a reward or payment for righteous living. Those who have peace with God receive it by faith. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." What is it that keeps us from peace in life? It is the awareness of our guilt before God. We carry the weight of sin's guilt with us throughout our Life until we recognize and believe that God has made a way for our sins to be forgiven through the shed blood of His Son. "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. 1:20). When you acknowledge your sin and guilt before God, and confess that you are indeed worthy of His judgment, then you have taken the first step to find peace. You must recognize it was your sinful ways that nailed Jesus to the cross. Realizing what your sin did to the Son of God, you repent of it. You turn from it to the Saviour who can cleanse you of your guilt and sin (Heb. 10:19-25), and make you a new person able to have victory over sin. Then and only then is your heart in a condition that you can receive the peace that Jesus spoke of: "My peace I give unto you" (John 14:27). Maybe peace and security are lacking in your life because you are caught up in the "works system" of trying to make yourself right with God. Will you believe today that God has done for you what you cannot do for yourself? Will you admit you cannot save yourself? Will you acknowledge you cannot make yourself right with God by good works? Will you receive God's "gift" of salvation (Rom. 6:23)? Will you let Him lift the burden and weight of sin? Jesus bore all