**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

Sermon

*Romans Series - Chapter 8*

***From The Foundation Of The World – God Knew***

*Pastor ~ Matthew Diehl*

September 15th In the Year of Our Lord 2019

(Unless otherwise noted, NAS text is quoted)

**Scriptural Context - Sinners at Birth?**

Some may point to passages of Scripture to support babies being born into the world sinners and dammed to hell. Here are the ones often quoted with contextual explanations.

**Psalm 51:5** [David speaking] Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.

The passage is understood in the context of David understanding his own sinful world. David, a man in his youth that was called a man after God’s own heart, fell victim to sin with Bathsheba. David knew that sin was crouching at his door. This is what God told Cain (Genesis 4:7). David knew the world into which he was born had sin crouching, waiting for him, and he fell into the very wrong that he knew was against God’s commandments. This is just like Paul, who proclaimed that he did the things he should not do (Romans 7). Through no fault of his son, David knew that his son died because of his own sin with Bathsheba and his hand in arranging the death of her husband (2 Samuel 11). He knew his son was innocent, yet he died due to sin abounding in the world, his own sin (2 Samuel 12:14-19). It was not David’s son’s fault that he was brought into the world through an adulterous and murderous relationship. David’s son, Solomon, could have said what David confessed in Psalm 51:5, because his mother is Bathsheba.

As far as David’s own birth and his view of coming into the world, Psalm 69 gives insight.

I have become **estranged** (Hebrew *zur*) from my brothers and an **alien** to my mother's sons. **Psalm 69:8**

**Estranged: Strong’s 02114a** זוּר *zur* )266b(

**Meaning:** *to be a stranger* **Origin:** a prim. root

**Usage:** adulteress(3), adulteress\*(1), alien(2), aliens(2), another(2), enemies(1), estranged(4), foreign(2), foreigners(2), illegitimate(1), layman(9), outsider(2), satisfied(1), strange(11), strange thing(1), strange things(1), stranger(7), strangers(22), turned away(1), unusual(1). **Notes:** 1 Lit *to* a Job 19:13-15; Psalm 31:11; 38:11

**Alien: Strong’s 05237** נָכְרִי *nokri* )648d(

**Meaning:** *foreign, alien* **Origin:** from the same as 5235b

**Usage:** adulteress (2), adulterous woman (2), alien (2), aliens (1), extraordinary (1), foreign (16), foreigner (15), foreigners (5), stranger (1). **Notes:**1 Lit *to* a Job 19:13-15; Psalm 31:11; Psalm 38:11

David’s circumstances of his father’s relationship with his mother is estranged due to his mother (Nitzevet) deceiving Jessie into sleeping with her after they had been living apart (divorced). Due to this deception, David is viewed by his brothers and community to be an illegitimate child. This is why David refers to himself in Psalm 69 as estranged from his brothers. Psalm 51:5 is another reference to the circumstances of David’s mother’s relationship with his father, Jessie. Psalm 51:5 is not a declaration that all people are born in iniquity or conceived in sin. It is a view to unique circumstances concerning his parents.

Here is a portion of an online article by [Chana Weisberg](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/1691/jewish/Weisberg-Chana.htm) at The Jewish Woman.org.

<https://www.chabad.org/theJewishWoman/article_cdo/aid/280331/jewish/Nitzevet-Mother-of-David.htm>

David’s Birth

Why was the young David so reviled by his brothers and people?

To understand the hatred directed toward David, we need to investigate the inner workings behind the events, the secret episodes that aren’t recorded in the prophetic books but are alluded to in Midrashim.4

**David’s father, Yishai, was the grandson of Boaz and Ruth.** After several years of marriage to his wife, Nitzevet, and after having raised several virtuous children, Yishai began to entertain personal doubts about his ancestry. **True, he was the leading Torah authority** of his day, but his **grandmother Ruth was a convert from the nation of Moab, as related in the book of Ruth.**

During Ruth’s lifetime, many individuals were doubtful about the legitimacy of her marriage to Boaz. **The Torah specifically forbids an Israelite to marry a Moabite convert, since this is the nation that cruelly refused the Jewish people passage through their land, or food and drink to purchase, when they wandered in the desert after being freed from Egypt.**

Boaz and the sages understood this law—as per the classic interpretation transmitted in the “Oral Torah”—as forbidding intermarriage with converted ***male*** Moabites (who were the ones responsible for the cruel conduct), while **exempting female Moabite** converts. With his marriage to Ruth, Boaz hoped to clarify and publicize this Torah law, which was still unknown **to the masses.**

**Boaz died the night after his marriage with Ruth. Ruth had conceived and subsequently gave birth to their son Oved, the father of Yishai. Some rabble-rousers at the time claimed that Boaz’s death verified that his marriage to Ruth the Moabite had indeed been forbidden.**

Time would prove differently. Once Oved (so called because he was a true *oved*, servant of God), and later Yishai and his offspring, were born, their righteous conduct and prestigious positions proved the legitimacy of their ancestry. It was impossible that men of such caliber could have descended from a forbidden union.

However, later in his life, doubt gripped at Yishai’s heart, gnawing away at the very foundation of his existence. Being the sincere individual that he was, his integrity compelled him to action.

**If Yishai’s status was questionable, he was not permitted to remain married to his wife, a veritable Israelite. Disregarding the personal sacrifice, Yishai decided the only solution would be to separate from her, no longer engaging in marital relations. Yishai’s children were aware of this separation.**

After a number of years had passed, Yishai longed for a child whose ancestry would be unquestionable. His plan was to engage in relations with his Canaanite maidservant.

He said to her: “I will be freeing you conditionally. If my status as a Jew is legitimate, then you are freed as a proper Jewish convert to marry me. If, however, my status is blemished and I have the legal status of a Moabite convert forbidden to marry an Israelite, I am not giving you your freedom; but as a *shifchah k’naanit*, a Canaanite maidservant, you may marry a Moabite convert.”

The maidservant was aware of the anguish of her mistress, Nitzevet. She understood her pain in being separated from her husband for so many years. She knew, as well, of Nitzevet’s longing for more children.

The empathetic maidservant secretly approached Nitzevet and informed her of Yishai’s plan, suggesting a bold counterplan.

**“Let us learn from your ancestresses and replicate their actions. Switch places with me tonight, just as Leah did with Rachel,” she advised.**

With a prayer on her lips that her plan succeed, Nitzevet took the place of her maidservant. That night, Nitzevet conceived. Yishai remained unaware of the switch.

After three months, Nitzevet’s pregnancy became obvious. Incensed, her sons wished to kill their apparently adulterous mother and the “illegitimate” fetus that she carried. Nitzevet, for her part, would not embarrass her husband by revealing the truth of what had occurred. Like her ancestress Tamar, who was prepared to be burned alive rather than embarrass Judah,5 Nitzevet chose a vow of silence. And like Tamar, Nitzevet would be rewarded for her silence with a child of greatness who would be the forebear of [Moshiach](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/332562/jewish/Moshiach-101.htm%22%20%5Co%20%22Moshiach%20101).

Unaware of the truth behind his wife’s pregnancy, but having compassion on her, Yishai ordered his sons not to touch her. “Do not kill her**! Instead, let the child that will be born be treated as a lowly and despised servant**. In this way everyone will realize that his status is questionable and, as an illegitimate child, he will not marry an Israelite.”

From the time of his birth onwards, then, Nitzevet’s son was treated by his brothers as an abominable outcast.6 Noting the conduct of his brothers, the rest of the community assumed that this youth was a treacherous sinner full of unspeakable guilt.

On the infrequent occasions that Nitzevet’s son would return from the pastures to his home in Beit Lechem (Bethlehem), he was shunned by the townspeople. If something was lost or stolen, he was accused as the natural culprit, and ordered, in the words of the psalm, to “repay what I have not stolen.”

Eventually, the entire lineage of Yishai was questioned, as well as the basis of the original law of the Moabite convert. People claimed that all the positive qualities of Boaz became manifest in Yishai and his illustrious seven sons, while all the negative character traits from Ruth the Moabite clung to this despicable youngest son.

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**Nitzevet** is listed in the **Babylonian Talmud 91a**

“The mother of David is Nizbeth the daughter of Adael.”

 The Nitzevet account is from the Mishna which is the Jewish Oral traditions believed to have been written down by the 2nd century A.D. The Oral Law or traditions of the Pharisees were common. The Pharisees overburden the people with their own made-up rules.

Jesus refers to the traditions of the Jewish Pharisees in Matthew 15:3-9 as an example of a set of rules not written in the Tora (Old Testament). Isaiah (700 years before Jesus) also noted the traditions learned by memory that only gave God lip service.

3 Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned *by rote*, **Isaiah 29:13**

 Some scholars see the story of Nitzevet was derived by religious leaders to address the Law forbidding intimacy unless a couple is married. Jesse had separated from Nitzevet and thus not married in the eyes of the community. So, their union that produced a child would be from an adulterous relationship. This is why David writes in Psalm 51:5 “I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.” David’s conception was like the account of Joseph and Mary who conceived Jesus by God’s Spirit. Jesus was not Joseph’s seed. Remember that Joseph was going to put Mary away secretly not wanting to disgrace her (Matthew1:19). We can see the consequence Joseph was concerned about in the life of David. The community rejected David until he was anointed King by Samuel. Even after David was anointed, he had to run for his life.

2 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner *stone*. **Psalm 118:22**

See <https://opentheword.org/2018/10/04/why-i-dont-believe-nitzevet-was-king-davids-mother/>

For another view. However, there is a reason David viewed his life as one opposed by others exampled in Psalm 8.

David saw his life as a product of Adam’s sin that was passed to him. In a reference to everyone will die, regardless of how righteous they are due to Adam’s sin, we can read the Jewish writings, **Sabbath 55b, and Ecclesiastes 9:1.**

**Sabbath 55b ~ The ministering angels said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, why did You penalize Adam, the first man, with** the **death** penalty? **He said to them: I gave him a simple mitzva, and he violated it. They said to Him: Didn’t Moses and Aaron, who observed the whole Torah in its entirety,** nevertheless **die?** The Holy One, Blessed be He, **said to them,** citing the verse: “All things come alike to all; **there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good** and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him who sacrifices, and to him who does not sacrifice; as is the good, so is the sinner; and he who swears, as he who fears an oath” ([Ecclesiastes 9:2](file:///C%3A%5CEcclesiastes.9.2)). Apparently, death is not dependent upon one’s actions. Everyone dies. <https://www.sefaria.org/Shabbat.55b.1?lang=bi>

**Ecclesiastes 9:1** For I have taken all this to my heart and explain it that righteous men, wise men, and their deeds are in the hand of God. Man does not know whether *it will be* love or hatred; anything awaits him.

 2 It is the same for all. There is one fate for the righteous and for the wicked; for the good, for the clean and for the unclean; for the man who offers a sacrifice and for the one who does not sacrifice. As the good man is, so is the sinner; as the swearer is, so is the one who is afraid to swear.

 3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men. Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they *go* to the dead.

 4 For whoever is joined with all the living, there is hope; surely a live dog is better than a dead lion.

 5 For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten.

 6 Indeed their love, their hate and their zeal have already perished, and they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun. [These words are attributed to King Solomon, David’s son]

 **CONTINUE IN ROMANS 8:18FF**

 **Suffering**

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

**Creation Suffers**

 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope

 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

**We Suffer**

 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even **we ourselves groan within ourselves**, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

**Spirit of God helps Hope in Us**

 24 For in **hope** we have been saved, but **hope** that is seen is not hope; for who **hopes** for what he *already* sees?

 25 But if we hope for what we do not see,

with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

**Spirit Helps Our Weakness**

 26 In the same way **the Spirit also helps** our weakness;

for we do not know how to pray as we should,

but the **Spirit Himself intercedes** for *us*

with groanings too deep for words;

 27 and **He who searches the hearts**

knows what the mind of the Spirit is,

because **He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of* God.**

**For Those who God foreknew love Him, He predestined for good**

 28 And we know

that God causes all things to work together for **good**

to those who **love God,**

to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

 29 For those whom He **foreknew**, [FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD]

**He also predestined** *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

 30 and these whom He predestined,

He also called; and these whom He called,

He also justified;

and these whom He justified

He also glorified.

 31 What then shall we say to these things?

If God *is* for us, **who *is* against us?**

 32 He who did not spare His own Son,

but delivered Him over for us all,

how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect?

God is the one who justifies;

 34 who is the one **who condemns?**

**Christ Jesus** is He who died, yes, rather who was raised,

who is at the **right hand of God**, who also **intercedes for us.**

**Separation. . . Never!**

 **35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ?**

Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

 36 Just as it is written,

"FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG;

 WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."

 37 But in all these things

 **we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.**

 38 For I am convinced

that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing,

will be able to separate us from the love of God,

which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**The Book of Life ~ Brief Notes**

**Book of Life from the Lamb, from the Foundation of the World. Is Your Name there?**

**11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.**

**12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.**

**13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.**

 **14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.**

 **15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15 KJV)**

 God’s Book of Life is at the core of the Lord’s Good News. By its very existence, it proclaims finality to God’s great love for those that freely choose Him, and it declares God’s great judgment on those who choose to reject His gracious love and righteousness. God’s Book of Life clarifies the great departure, the great schism for the eternal life. This can be seen in its finality in Luke 16:19-31 (a great chasm fixed v.26) as Jesus gives the account of the “Rich Man and Lazarus.” It is also clearly described in Revelation 20:11ff as the great White Throne Judgement.

 Therefore, God has fixed His determination for eternity from the beginning. When God set the Book of Life in place from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8, Ephesians 1:4, 5) there was and is a certainty to its contents. The all-knowing God knows whose name is recorded in His Book and who did not (will not) choose to be with Him. God will not make anyone choose to be with Him for an eternity who does not want to be. All those up-in-arms about the Christ Message in God’s Word need not be concerned. God will not make them come to His Heaven. They really need to stop their forceful objection. The love of salvation is for those that choose to surrender to God. The sting of guilt is eternal and is felt by those who have not surrendered to God. This sting is what people feel that brings them disgruntlement.

**Old Testament Reference to God’s Book**

Exodus 17:14-16 14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this in a **book** as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly **blot out the memory** of Amalek from under heaven." (NASB)

This reference here is for Moses to account for the action of Amalek in the book of Exodus. It is directed at giving Joshua a record. However, the event also points to God keeping a record of whose name is **blotted out/removed** from His memory, or within the entire biblical context, remove his name from the Book of Life. Thus, the words “blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.” See also Exodus 32:31-35; when God blots out those who built the golden calf. (Psalm 69:27-28; Psalm 139:16; Daniel 12:1-4)

Related New Testament Verses (NASB)

The seventy that Jesus sent in Luke 10:19-20. 19 "Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you. 20 "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."

Revelation 3:5 5 'He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Revelation 3:5 has the words, “*I will not erase his name from the book of life”,* leaving the impression that in the beginning everyone had their name written in the book of life; meaning at least two things. From the beginning God intended everyone’s name to be in the Book of Life. And that God does erase names from His Book.

An explanation: Everyone begins life with an “A” like Adam, but then Adam failed and was removed from God’s Garden. Adam and Eve were forcibly removed from the Garden so they would not eat from the tree of life and live forever Genesis 3:22,23). My view is that God did not want them to live in their fallen state forever. God’s grace gave them time to confess their sin and turn back (repent) to Him. Could it be that at that time their names were removed from God’s Book of Life? Or, God knew they would return to Him and left their names enrolled? In their future, they chose to return to God and surrender to Him as Abel demonstrated he had done with his “firstling” offering. The Bible does not declare Abel sinless. In Genesis 4:1, Eve gives praise to God when she birthed Cain. This is evidence that Eve had a relationship with God. God is all-knowing and knew that Adam and Eve would surrender to Him. So, from a human perspective, He left their names in His book? For those whom God knows will not return (surrender to Him) He erases their names and never adds them again. By Scripture, we know all of this took place from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13: 8-9; 17:8; 20:12-15).

 God asked, and He reveals His will wanting all of us to return to Him (Romans 1:18ff, 10:13; 2 Peter 3:9). Only God knows who will humbly (heartfelt) surrender to Him. This frustrates man. Man wants to know and control God’s Book of Life. In fact, intended or not, the state church was set-up by people to achieve the goal of being the gatekeeper to God’s Heaven and man’s state. In a short time from the state church’s inception, membership into their religious order was forcefully mandated. This was a sign that you were a compliant good citizen.

God presents the Truth that sets us free from man’s church. The Gospel presented in 1 Corinthians 15 is the Good News. God is the gatekeeper (John 10:9, 14:6). God, as Jesus, stated clearly that He knew (not man) from the beginning the intent of people (John 6:64). God does not force people to surrender to Him. God does know who will surrender and who the pretenders are. Jesus knew who would walk away from Him from the beginning. He also knew who would return, like Peter.

People who worship evil do not have their names in the Book of Life. Hence, John is clear in unveiling the truth. Concerning the Beast in Revelation 13:8-9, John wrote:

8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, *everyone* whose name **has not been written from the foundation of the world** in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. 9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear. (NASB)

See also Revelation 17:8; 20:12-15; 21:22-27

 The Book of Life is a very special book that is noted in several passages throughout the Bible. It is distinguished from other books such as the Book of the Law (Joshua 1:8) and the books of Deeds (Revelation 20:11-15).

 This Book of Life is at the core of the relationship between man and God. This book contains the names of those who are going to God’s Heaven. And, at the same time, reveals that if a person’s name is not in the Book of Life, they will be placed in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:15). The teaching from God’s Word is direct and cannot be misunderstood. If you are going to Heaven, then your name is in God’s Book of Life. If your name is not in God’s Book of Life, it is in the book of Deeds, then you are, as they say, “going to Hell” (Lake of Fire). This is stinging to a world that rejects Godly love and judgment. Again, God does not make anyone come to Him or spend an eternity with Him. This is all detailed in Revelation 20:11ff at the Great White Throne.

**Entrance into God’s Book of Life is by Works?**  The Book of Hebrews has defining chapters identifying who will be in God’s Book of Life. God instructs that through Christ, like all of us, the Jews can be brought into the covenant of the Cross (Hebrews 9:1-20).This book, noted here in Hebrews 9, is of the covenant-law given through Moses. The Jews misunderstood the Law. They thought that through works of the Law, such as the animal sacrifice, sins were actually taken away. Jesus came to fulfill the Law (Matthew 5:17) which was accomplished by His one perfect sacrifice on the Cross. Jesus is the one sacrifice that did take away the sins of the world.

**Hebrews 10:10-131**0 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; 12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, 13 waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. (NASB)

 This is a critical verse that clearly states that the Law was never intended to save. David prayed to the Lord in Psalm 51 for forgiveness concerning his sin with Bathsheba. About five hundred years after the Law was given through Moses, David, the King of Israel, a man described as having a heart after God’s, understands what God really wants. Like the passages in Hebrews declares, sacrifice cannot take away sin, but a broken and contrite heart will.

**Psalm 51:16,17** 16 For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. (NASB)

**Psalm 40:6**Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired; My ears You have opened; Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required. (NASB)

**Hosea 6:6** For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. (NASB)

**1 Samuel 15:22**  22 Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And* to heed than the fat of rams. (NASB)

 So, whatever man-made theocratic system demands you to do for salvation or for the forgiveness of sin is contrary to Scripture. God simply wants a confession from an honest contrite heart. This is a faith issue: Faith in God to restore a person to Him. God is faithful to forgive Believers who humbly come to Him (1 John 1:8-10).

Speaking of faith, Paul writes in Galatians 3 that Jews and Gentiles are saved by the same promise given to Abraham. God preached the Gospel to Abraham seeking to justify all the nations by faith (Galatians 3:8-19).

God never intended for the Law of animal sacrifice to bring salvation (*Galatians 3:22-26, Hebrews 10:11).*This “faith” justification is brought forth as exampled in Abraham (Genesis 12). There isn’t any work of the law to forgive sin or gain salvation. This is the reason Ephesians 2:8-10 (saved by grace through faith) is vital to understand*.* Verse 9 explains that God doesn’t intend for anyone to brag about how their good deeds justified their life to Him. This leads us to verse 10 which declares that God has plans for you in which to work, that are His plans and not yours. So, the good works you achieve is the result of God working in you. Not you working in you. Therefore, Scripture is very powerful as it is God’s Word manifesting in the lives of Believers.

 God calls for us to work-out our salvation with fear and trembling. Many misinterpret Philippians 2:12. Why should a person have fear and trembling in them when they work-out their salvation? This does not mean to earn your salvation. This is directed at a Believer’s sanctification. (The process of maturing.) The clarifying verse is the very next verse. “For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” So, there isn’t any “fear and trembling” for the Believer to be afraid of God. Or that the Believer is in fear of losing their salvation. This fear is an intense reverence to the living God at work in a person. God is THE supernatural power at work in the lives and hearts of Believers. When Believers go ‘all in’ for God, we experience achievements in life that we could not otherwise do.

 God’s Spirit speaks through Paul in Romans 3:21-25. Paul is clear that no person will be justified by their works. The payment for sin at the Cross is applied to a person through faith. Therefore, redemption is through Gods’ grace and faith.

 It is clear that water-baptism is a work just like meritorious acts under the Law were to the Jews. Jesus **did not** come to fulfill the Law for us by going to the cross to pay the price for our sins to **then add additional works for us to complete.** The Cross is sufficient. Jesus said from the Cross that **IT IS FINISHED** (John19:30). **The Gospel is not the Cross plus do something else to gain salvation**. Anyone who saw the movie the “Passion of Christ” (Mel Gibson) needs to seriously ask themselves what can you add to the Passion of Christ. Like, that is not enough? Seriously? God came in the flesh to go through all the passion of the Cross and left something for you to do to gain salvation?

The teaching that there are “venial” and “mortal” sins and a person has to complete a work of penance to remove the penalty of these sins is biblically unsupported. What this teaching accomplishes is to demand that you pay the institution of man a price for your sins. This is ludicrous and denies the intent and power of God’s passion on the Cross. To achieve this fraud, men have to acrobatically manipulate the context of God’s Word and add to Scripture. Then reason through church councils and through the force of the sword creating eternal fear that mandate its swallowing. What these false teachings are saying is that God’s passion on the Cross is not good enough; it is insufficient. But they have the answers for a price! Those who teach such nonsense are all about fear and control and money.

Many traditions add works to the Cross of Christ in order for a person to gain salvation and then to keep salvation. This is in direct conflict with Scripture. The only baptism required is Spiritual baptism which man cannot control and has no ritual. I fully believe, without any doubt, that when Jesus tells Nicodemus that he needs to be re-born of Spirit, we can identify this as Spiritual baptism (John 3). This is the same as “cut hearts” in Acts 2:37, as in “Circumcision of the heart” in Deuteronomy 30:6. In addition, consider Ezekiel 36 where God will place His Spirit in people and give them new hearts, if they ask Him. This is proof of the consistency in God’s salvation plan that has not changed from the Old Testament to the New.

People from the “Church of Christ” often point to Acts 2:38 as proof of a mandatory water-baptism. Their tradition calls for them to ignore the “cut heart” in verse 37. Remember that God’s circumcision of the heart is part of the Law (Deuteronomy 30:6), the Torah, the first five books. Therefore, the intent of the Law and the witness in the New Testament are the same. I pray people receive this teaching. They will be set free from their spiritual bondage of works-based salvation through man-made institutions.

The Church of Christ members have verse thirty-eight memorized. However, they don’t have any teaching or observation about verse thirty-seven. At least, they did not talk about verse thirty-seven to me. I had to bring their attention to the verse which adds context that must be included. I have written elsewhere in this book about this verse also. I will be brief here.

 “They were pierced to the heart”. The Greek word is katanusso. (See Strong’s **2660 κατανύσσω** *katanusso;* **Meaning:** to prick violently). It is not a stretch to see that their hearts had been cut. In other words, circumcised. God calls for this in Deuteronomy 30:6. God also clearly says in Ezekiel 36 that He will replace hearts if asked to do so. God requires our response. The Jews in Acts 2:37 are calling-out to Peter, who is preaching under the influence of God’s Holy Spirit. They become convicted by God’s Holy Spirit (John 16:8) and now they can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). What follows after Holy Spirit conviction is repentance and water-baptism. The point of salvation, surrender to God, is when the heart is laid bare (cut/circumcised) and there is total capitulation. Now with the power of God’s Spirit working in them they can repent (turn their hearts and minds) and seek water-baptism. These in Acts 2 had just accepted that they killed the Messiah. Instead of stiffening their necks and displaying uncircumcised hearts (Stephen: Acts 7:51), they capitulated. They totally surrendered. Therefore, they were saved by grace for the murder of Jesus the Messiah (Acts 2:36).

The other account applicable to the “Church of Christ” is when Peter was directed by the Holy Spirit to go to Cornelius’ house in Acts 10. Here, the audience begins to speak in tongues while Peter is preaching. This is evidence of the Holy Spirit indwelling them like the Apostles experienced at Pentecost. Peter then states, “who can hold them back from the baptismal waters.” Once again, water-baptism did not save these people (Acts10:43ff). They spoke in tongues under the convicting powers of the Holy Spirit before they were water-baptized.

It may seem that the tradition in America known as the Church of Christ is being scrutinized. I have had them stand in my office and tell me that I am going to Hell. This is most unfortunate. I felt heavy-hearted for them. I have never told a person from the Church of Christ that they were going to Hell and I will not. Again, I believe they are Christians who need to be released from their bondage of tradition.

**We Will All Be Judged by God**

The Lord God has determined that the Hebrew people and the Gentiles shall be judged by Him. This means everyone. He is the only one who possesses the Book of Life. It is hard for people in the modern scientific age to accept a force, an authority outside of their understanding and forces of what they see in nature. Yet, God is here with His plan for the world.

Moses is a great example to us that God will journey with us a long way in our life of sin. Moses believed he had failed God as a leader (Exodus 32:31-35). But God did not see Moses as failing Him. In His righteous judgement, he held those responsible for their own actions (Revelation 20:11ff). God will be the one to make the decision of who He will blot out of His book.

**Understanding Original Sin and Salvation (Made Righteous, Approved by God)**

**This discussion will be in the form of questions and answers, after an introduction.**

 Sin takes place in a life that is in rebellion to God. This statement places all people in rebellion to God. Sin is manifested in acts, thoughts and held beliefs that oppose God’s plan and rule in a person’s life. As noted below in many Scriptures, Adam and Eve are the first people to “choose” opposite of God and suffered the “just” consequences of their free choice. This was spiritual corruption that introduced sin to the rest of humanity. Adam and Eve take the blame; however, all humanity was created with a “free will choice.” It is easy to see that if Adam and Eve would not have joined Satan in his rebellion against God, then their offspring would have been the likely next candidates to fall first. Because of God’s great love, He created us to choose to love Him. Thus, He designed the creation with a choice against Him. Love would not be love without a choice. God is love (1 John 4:8). Therefore, sin and death are present. Love is a choice from the heart, not a programmed response.

**Question** – Is a person’s life at conception doomed to Hell?

**Answer:** No. Christ claims the children (*Mark 10:13-16, Luke 18:16, Matthew 19:14).*  All people have an opportunity to surrender to God (Romans 1:18ff). Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved (*Romans 10:13, Joel 2:32, Acts 2:21*).

**Question**: Is it true that everyone who was ever born (at conception, at birth) is not guilty in the eyes of God?

**Answer**: Yes, everyone begins life not guilty. There isn’t any original sin passed biologically. For review, go back to read in this same chapter about God’s Book of Life. People are born sinless, like Adam. The Biblical account presents Adam as created and not birthed. The point is that Adam and Eve were created in a sinless state. Therefore, we, like Adam & Eve in the Garden before the Fall, are innocent and under God’s care as recipients of His Grace. However, like Adam and Eve and due to Adam and Eve (Romans 5:12-14, 19-21, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22), there comes a time in life when a person sins and ushers the “law of sin and death” into their life. (See below on discussion about infant baptism.)

 **Question**: Is All the World guilty according to God’s Word and in need of a Savior?

**Answer**: Romans 3 – All the World guilty. Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3

**Question**: How do we respond to our guilt? Why do some denominations baptize babies?

 **Answer:** Some churches practice a *"baptism of confirmation"* for children. This ceremony is intended to be a covenant between the parents and God on the behalf of the child. The parents promise to raise their child in the Faith until the child is old enough to make their own personal confession to God. Some traditions also teach that infant baptism removes original sin from the baby. Thus, if the baby dies, it will go be with Jesus and not go to Hell. However, this ignores Jesus’ atoning work on the Cross. There isn’t any work we can perform to save ourselves (Ephesians 2:8). Also, a baby cannot make a surrendering faith decision for God’s Holy Spirit to be in their heart. The first church council record concerning infant baptism is from the Carthage Council in 257 AD. Church members wanted their children to be under the “Grace of God.” This was their way of showing that status. However, there is not one specific or general reference to infant baptism in the New Testament. Infants and little children have always been under the Grace of God (Mark 10:13-16, Matthew 19:14:). Bishop Cyprian of North Africa instituted infant baptism in the mid-3rd century. Cyprian predates Augustine and the Roman State Church supremacy. However, infant baptism is a practice of today’s remnant State Church. *Keep’em* coming from cradle-to-grave. This also instills fear into a population. The State Church taught that only through them could sin be removed. So, you had better do what they say, if you do not want your child to go to hell. And to top things off, this became a politically driven method of insuring a person’s affiliation with the State Church from birth. Infant baptism was brought into the Roman Church universally as early as the 4th century. Again, this was a response to a high infant mortality rate and people wanted to know where their babies went after death since they were obviously not of a “knowing age” to make a decision to surrender to the Lord. Through the philosophies of the world, the reasons for infant baptism were created.

The “seminal theory” of original sin (Augustine of Hippo, 354 AD – 430 AD) was taught. Of course, this is not true, lacking biblical support, but this officially generated the practice of infant baptism to remove original sin. By its very name, the thought carries the philosophy that sin (matter being evil - Plato) is passed from one generation to the next physically through reproductive cells. This makes logical sense to fallen human perceptions. However, the Bible tells us in Ephesians 6:11-12 that there is a spiritual battle that opposes us, and thus, we are saved by a spiritual renewal, not physical. Obviously, Jesus calls for a spiritual rebirth, not physical, like Nicodemus theorized (John 3). Water-Baptism is a physical act by a confessing person in Christ. Some believe in proxy water-baptism. This calls for a person to stand-in for another. The Mormon Church practices proxy-baptism. Scripture tells us clearly that we cannot be saved through our works (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is not in our doing; it is in the Lord’s doing that we spiritually surrender. We have nothing to boast in our ability to save ourselves by our acts or the merit of another (1 Corinthians 1:30-31; Romans 4:1-3).

 As well-intended as anyone in history was in saving infants from Hell, the Lord has already taken care of it (Mark 10:14, Matthew 19:4). God’s grace keeps the children in Him. For fallen adults, God made a path for people of surrendering faith to return to Him. God removed mankind from the Garden, so they would not eat from the Tree of Life and live in a physical fallen state forever (Genesis 3:22-24). Remember, God’s original plan and intent was and still is for all humanity to be with Him for eternity. God does not want to lose one person to sin and death (2 Peter 3:9).

**Question:** What is the one “saving element” God is seeking in us that is evident in the Scripture from Genesis to Revelation?

**Answer:** Heart Surrender (cut heart (Duet 30:6, Acts 2:37) to His grace gift of faith (Ephesians 2:8). This is spirit baptism, a rebirth of spirit Jesus witnesses to Nicodemus in John 3.

**Question:** Is there a place in Scripture where this is clearly stated?

 **Answer:** Hebrews chapter 11 “Hall of faith” starts with Abel.

The Hall of faith in Hebrews 11 begins with Abel and then moves to Enoch, Noah and then to Abraham. This shows that the covenant of God’s grace gift of faith was from the beginning and has never changed. These listed in Hebrews 11 surrendered their hearts to God. This is evident in their works of righteousness. The text in Hebrews declares that the people are approved by God. By faith, Abel offered works to God (sacrifice). This gave Abel a righteous witness. In other words, in the modern evangelical nomenclature, these people were saved by faith. Abel showed his faith by his works (James 2:18). Cain had not surrendered to the Lord. Cain did works but not from his heart. Cain brought his sacrifice to God “in the course of time” and not his “first fruits” like Abel did (Genesis 4:1ff). Water-baptism can be a work produced by faith but not the act that saved you.

**Hebrews 11:2-4** 2 For by it the men of old gained approval. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. 4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

All are in need of salvation. Let us look at those who may have lived a sinless life. The list of sinless people recorded in the Bible is short. Five are a given. Two may be considered sinless through a process of deduction.

 **Adam and Eve** - Sinless before the Fall.

 **Enoch** – The Bible does not declare him sinless, however the text lends to God taking Enoch to be with Him and not through a physical death. Physical death is the result of sin.

 **Elijah** – Elijah falls into the same category as Enoch. God took him like an ascension. Therefore, no physical death took place as the price for sin.

 **Jesus** - God in the flesh.

 Therefore, all the rest of humanity falls under Romans 3:10 – “all the world guilty.” Adam and Eve became guilty after the Fall is obvious. They eventually died physically, which is the price for sin. They spiritually died right away. By God removing them from His direct presence in the Garden, He signified that they died spiritually. This is exactly what God told Adam would happen in Genesis 2:17.

 **Question:** Can you lose your salvation?

 **Answer:** NO! The loss of salvation is politically motivated by the state church. Basically, people who say you have to earn your salvation also teach that you have to work to keep it. Of course, they determine all this for you. It is through them. This is a total corruption of God’s Word. The Dark Ages in Western man represent this kind of oppression. They created a cradle to grave vice on a population from whom they withheld the Word of God. What does Scripture say? Paul, speaking for God, tells the Believers in Ephesus that their salvation was sealed when God’s Holy Spirit promised them at the time they heard and believed the word of truth, the Gospel of their salvation (Ephesian 1:13). See also John 10:28,29. Jesus also knows who really believes from the beginning and who the pretenders are (John 6:64).

**In Review** Admittedly, it is a lengthy explanation to make sense of the fact that the names in God’s Book of Life have been there since the foundation of the world. We know that all have sinned (save Adam and Eve before the Fall and Jesus). Enoch and Elijah were taken by God and did not die a death like the rest of fallen humanity. However, the Bible does not say they were sinless. In Ecclesiastes 7:20 we read *“Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins*. It would appear that this verses places Enoch and Elijah in the sin column. Even though Ecclesiastes is written centuries after Enoch lived but before Elijah. So, why are there any names left on the list?

 Adam and Eve’s fall from grace is our Biblical example presenting a structure that directly affects the placement of people’s names in God’s “Book of Life.” From the foundation of the world all names are listed in God’s “Book of Life.” Again, Adam started life with an “A.” However, because all chose to sin after the age of a child (Age of Accountability - Knowing sin), we are ‘dropped off’ the role in God’s “Book.” However, since God knows all, He knows who will eventually surrender to His grace by faith, therefore becoming righteous (approved) in His eyes (Romans 1:16-17; 5:19-21). God knows who to keep enrolled in His “Book of Life.” This is why the names in God’s Book have been there since the foundation of the world. In fact, God does not want to lose one person (2 Peter 3:9). It is man that chooses to walk away from God and not return.

**Foundation of the World Scriptures:**

**Pertaining to Christ** - 1 Peter 1:20; Matthew 13:35; Luke 11:49-51; Hebrews 4:1-7

**Pertaining to individuals** - Ephesians 1:4-5; Revelation 13:8, 17:8; 20:12-15; 21:27

The only way to remain on the birth-list is through the surrender and acceptance of God’s Grace Gift of Faith, thus, being made righteous and acceptable to God. Being on the list Believers are assured of and can be confident that God who began a good work in them will perfect that good work until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6). These, by faith, are on the list that was from the foundation of the world. These are the names recorded in the Book of Life at the Great White Throne Judgement (Revelation 20:12. No one is able to take them away from God, because they have accepted and surrendered to Him. God knew who they were from the beginning.

*John 10:27-30; Revelation 13:8; Revelation 17:8; Matthew 25:34; John 17:24; Ephesians 1:2-5; John 6:64*