

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS - 72554 EDITION

BI-MONTHLY PERIODICAL OF MAMMOTH SPRING CHURCH OF CHRIST

JULY-AUGUST 2022

Do Children Inherit the Sin of Their Parents?

Kyle Butt - www.apologeticspress.org

Understanding the nature of God's interaction with man is no small task. The sincere Bible student often comes across things in the biblical text that are puzzling. Others, who are perhaps somewhat less sincere, twist these initially puzzling passages "to their own destruction" (as described in 2 Peter 3:16). One such idea that has been abused is the alleged contradiction between how Jehovah dealt (and still deals) with the children of sinful people. Steve Wells, author of the *Skeptic's Annotated Bible*, insists that there is a discrepancy in the Bible regarding this subject. He lists Exodus 20:5, which states: "For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me." Wells then presents Ezekiel 18:20 as a contradictory verse: "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself" (Wells, 2003).

Is there a legitimate contradiction between these verses? Or, to pose the question differently, "Is there any possible way that both these statements can be true?" The fact of the matter is that both statements can be true, without a contradiction occurring. What Mr. Wells and others who twist these verses into an alleged contradiction do not recognize is that there is a difference between bearing the guilt of a parent, and suffering negative physical and emotional consequences due to that parent's bad decisions.

It often is the case that the children of wicked people suffer terribly. Sometimes these children suffer because the parent physically or emotionally abuses them (in direct violation of Scripture; cf. Matthew

7:12; Colossians 3:21). At other times, the child suffers as a result of the parent's irresponsible behavior. For instance, suppose a man addicted to gambling wastes his salary on gambling, instead of using it to feed his family. As a result, his children suffer hunger, shame, and poverty.

Yet, even though the children of sinful people often suffer physical consequences, they do not inherit the **sin** of those parents. The book of Jeremiah provides an interesting commentary on this subject. In Jeremiah 16:1-6, God told Jeremiah that the prophet should not take a wife and/or have children in the land of Israel. God explained His reasoning to Jeremiah as follows: "For thus says the Lord concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place.... 'They shall die gruesome deaths; they shall not be lamented, nor shall they be buried, but they shall be as refuse on the face of the earth' " (16:3-4).

*"Bearing the **guilt** of sin is altogether different than bearing the **physical consequences** of the actions of others"*

Why was this going to happen? Wells is quick to refer to this chapter, especially verses 10 and 11 where the children of Israel pose the question, "Why has the Lord pronounced all

this great disaster against us" (vs. 10)? Wells then records Jeremiah's answer: "'Because your fathers have forsaken Me,' says the Lord" (vs. 11). Wells, however, does not cite the very next verse (12), which states: "And you have done worse than your fathers...."

These Israelites were suffering due to the sins of their fathers—and **due to their own sins**. Their children were going to die gruesome deaths. The skeptic is quick to seize upon this fact, and demand

...continued on top of next page...

Do you have a Bible question you would like answered?



Send us an email! We'll write a response or record a podcast episode!

that any time innocent children die, it is a travesty against justice that a loving God never would permit (a fallacious idea that I have refuted elsewhere; see [Butt, 2004](#)).

Do children sometimes die horrible deaths due to their parents' wrong decisions? Absolutely. The Israelites had adopted the practice of sacrificing their own children to a false god named Baal (Jeremiah 19:5). The iniquity of the parents, then, can be visited upon the children in the form of physical suffering. But do those children bear the guilt of that sin? Absolutely not! Ezekiel wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "The **soul** who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the **guilt** of the father, nor the father bear the **guilt** of the son" (Ezekiel 18:20, emp. added). Notice the words *soul* and *guilt*. Does the Bible ever

insinuate, for example, that a child is guilty of idolatry because his parents were idolatrous? No (read Matthew 18:3-5; Luke 18:16-17). Bearing the **guilt** of sin is altogether different than bearing the **physical consequences** of the actions of others. As is often the case, the skeptic has confused the two, and has alleged a biblical contradiction where, in fact, none exists. This is yet another example in which the allegation against the Bible fails, but "the Word of the Lord endures forever" (1 Peter 1:25).

Endnotes

Butt, Kyle (2004), "The Skeptic's Faulty Assumption," [On-line], URL: <https://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/2230>.

Wells, Steve (2001), *Skeptic's Annotated Bible* [On-line], URL: <http://www.skepticsannotatedbible.com/1cor/index.html>.

Things That Save Us

Barry O'Dell

The law of Moses concluded that all men were under sin and needed to be saved (Romans 3:9-20). The problem for humanity was that the Law of Moses could not justify (Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16). It is only the gospel of Christ that is able to make man right before God (Romans 8:1-3). The question then becomes, "How?" How does God save us? Is it just at the point of faith? Is it when a person turns away from sin? Is it when a person is buried in baptism? We know very well that the religious institutions that exist today teach and practice different things.

Here's the thing - not one thing, by itself, saves man from his sin. Here is a list of things that we are told "saves" us...

- Christ's words - John 6:63, 68.
- Faith - Romans 10:10.
- Repentance - Luke 13:3, 5.
- Confession - Romans 10:9.
- Baptism - 1 Peter 3:21.
- Grace of God - Titus 2:11.
- Calling on the Lord's name - Acts 2:21.
- Jesus' name - Acts 4:12.
- The resurrection of Christ - Romans 4:25.
- Christ's death - Romans 5:6-8.
- Hope - Romans 8:24-25.
- Hearing the gospel - Romans 10:15-17.
- Preaching - 1 Corinthians 1:18.
- The gospel - 1 Corinthians 15:1-2.
- Grace and faith - Ephesians 2:8-9.
- Our obedience - Philippians 2:12.

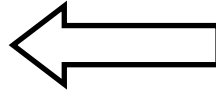
- Love of the truth - 2 Thessalonians 2:10.
- Jesus - 1 Timothy 1:15.
- Heeding doctrine - 1 Timothy 4:16.
- God's mercy - Titus 3:5.
- Obedience - Hebrews 5:9.
- Jesus' blood - Hebrews 9:14-15.
- Works of faith - James 2:14-26.
- Your words - Matthew 12:36-37.

As you can see, the word of God identifies many things that "save" man from sin. Some churches will teach that you're saved by "grace alone." Some will teach that you're saved by "faith alone." You can know that both of those teachings are false because no one is saved by one thing "alone." Some will teach that you're saved by "grace alone, through faith alone." You can know that this teaching is false, too. Why? If you're saved by grace "alone," what does alone mean? By definition, alone means "*having no one or no thing else present.*" To say that man is saved by grace alone, through faith alone is self-contradictory - not only grammatically, but also Scripturally. No one is saved by one thing alone! And, if it's by two things (grace and faith), then it can be neither thing "alone." Don't buy into bumper-sticker religions such as "grace alone, through faith alone." Did you know that "faith alone" is found only one time in Scripture? "*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*" (James 2:24). Always be willing to check what you believe and/or what you are taught with what the Bible actually says (Acts 17:11).

Would You Like to Study the Bible?

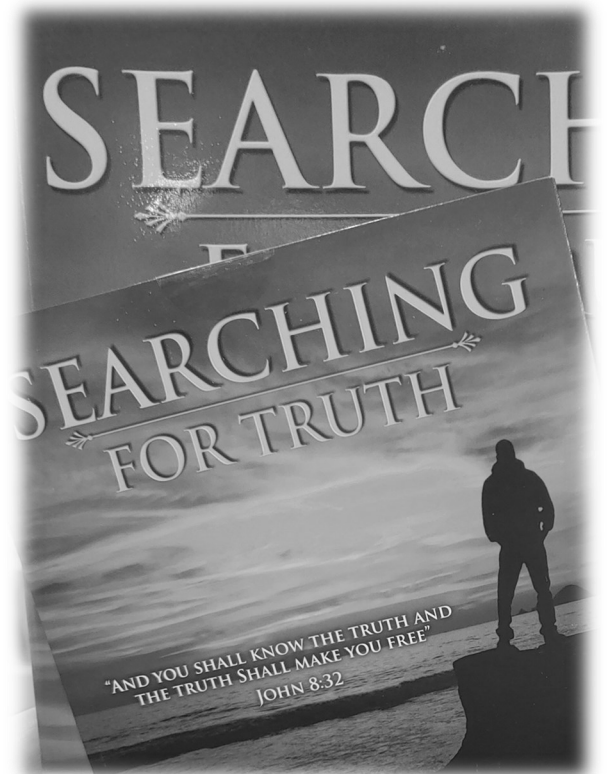
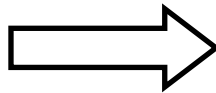
Teacher's Guide

Becoming a
CHRISTIAN
Leading accountable young people to salvation



We have workbooks for young people who would like to learn more about becoming a Christian.

A DVD and workbook combo to aid you in the pursuit of truth...



*All of the material that we offer is absolutely free!
If you're interested, let us know by using the contact info on the back.*

LOCAL POSTAL CUSTOMER

Unique features of the Church of Christ

- We use the Bible only (2 Pet. 1:3). We have no creed book, convention, or central headquarters.
- Our name is after the One who died to establish His church (Rom. 16:16).
- The church of Christ began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4).
- Jesus promised to establish His church (Matt. 16:18).
- That church was purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28).
- The church is married to Christ (Rom. 7:4).
- It was established in the first century (Acts 2:41, 47).
- Jesus is the one and only Head of the One Body (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23).
- You can only be added to the church by God Himself (Acts 2:41, 47).

What about being saved?

- All people are saved by grace, though faith (Eph. 2:8-9).
- No one is saved by faith alone (Jas. 2:14-26).
- No one is saved by grace alone (Matt. 7:21).
- Jesus said that belief plus baptism will produce salvation (Mk. 16:16). That is a promise, not a command.
- The Bible teaches that repentance plus baptism produces remission of sins (Acts 2:37-38).
- Belief, confession, and baptism is seen in the account of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:37-38).
- The Corinthians heard, believed, and were baptized (Acts 18:8).
- Christ is "put on" in baptism (Gal. 3:26-27).
- The apostle Peter said that "baptism does save us" (1 Pet. 3:21).

Find us on the internet...

www.mammothspringchurchofchrist.com

Facebook - Church of Christ at Mammoth Spring

YouTube Channel - Mammoth Spring church of Christ

Instagram - mammothspringchurchofchrist

Send us an email with your Bible questions - mscoc251@gmail.com

Fulton County Gospel News Podcast is now on Podbean, Spotify, and Google Podcasts

Mammoth Spring church of Christ
110 S 3rd St/PO Box 251
Mammoth Spring, AR 72554
(870) 625-3217

Sunday Classes for all ages - 10 AM
Sunday Worship - 10:45 & 6:00
Wednesday Classes for all ages - 7:00 PM
Facebook Live Stream Study - Mon-Thu - 11:00 AM