

Does Conversion Make Obedience Possible?

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THIS BOOKLET IS NOT TO BE SOLD. The information provided is for the benefit of former members of the congregations of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), and of current and prospective members of God's Church.

Many Christians believe that having the in-dwelling presence of the holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman in their minds, makes it possible for them to obey God. Ancient Israel was incapable of obeying God as it did not have this holy spirit dwelling in them? Can New Testament Christians obey God? An interesting question whose answer we must seek in our Bible.

Preamble

Please Note: All comments in brackets [] or in parentheses () as well as highlighted text (bolded and/or in blue) are from the author of this study. Bible quotations are in maroon.

I think it is essential to clarify the question of the “Holy Spirit” before we begin this study. If we say that who or what is the “Holy Spirit” is the question that needs to be answered, we are starting from the assumption that there exists such a being as the Holy Spirit and that it is a separate and distinct being from God and the Word. The question which should be asked is who are the beings the Bible tell us are holy, whose composition is spirit and who have existed eternally? Either the Bible plainly tells us who are the separate and distinct beings that existed from all eternity who created all things (spirit beings and the material universe) or we have no way of getting an answer to our question.

The Holy Spirits of the God Family

The Bible tells us in Gen 1:1 that:

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

The Hebrew word translated “God” is “Eloheem” which is the plural form of “Eloah which means “God”. The word “Eloheem” refers to “gods.” It is a uniplural noun like family, group, team, etc. In the beginning, there was therefore more than one God being in existence but how many were there?

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

In the beginning when God created the heaven and the earth there was God and there was another being with God who was also God, the Word. How can these two beings both be God; isn't that impossible?

The word God indicates the kind of existence of these 2 beings: their nature is to be God in the same way that all human beings have the same human nature. However, having the same nature does not mean that all human beings constitute a single being; indeed, they are all separate and distinct beings with their own personalities. God and the Word have in common the same nature or, level and type of existence, but they are separate and distinct beings just like all human beings who have the same human nature are separate and distinct beings.

God the Father

We read in the Bible that God became a father when the Word became flesh (Phi 2:5-8) by being born of woman after having been conceived in the virgin Mary by the holy spirit being called God (Luke 1:35). God from that point on became God the Father and the Word, who was born as the flesh-and-blood Jesus of Nazareth became God's Son or the Son of God. He was both fully God (his father was God and fully human (his mother was the virgin Mary).

Jesus was God the Father's only begotten son at the time when He was conceived in Mary's womb but He was not to be the only one begotten of the Father. God the Father is the holy spirit being in the Godhead that calls men to salvation.

Joh 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Joh 6:65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

Joh 18:9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou [God the Father] gavest me have I lost none.

1Pe 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

God the Word and Spokesman

The Bible term for being called is to be spiritually begotten by God the Father (1Pe 1:3). When we are begotten, we become a spiritual embryo that can be born again as a glorified spirit being with eternal life. Those begotten of the holy spirit God the Father who follow their calling are then able to come to the holy spirit being called the Word and Spokesman (John 6:44; 65; 18:9) who then teaches them. The glorified Jesus-Christ as God the Father's Word and Spokesman is the holy spirit being that works in the minds of God the Father's called and chosen ones.

Joh 7:39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Jesus had to first be glorified for it to be possible for Christians to have access to the holy spirit called the Word and Spokesman because the glorified Christ is the holy spirit being who works in the minds of God's saints (John 14:17) in the same way that Satan is the evil spirit that works in the minds of the children of disobedience (Eph2:2).

Joh 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he [Christ] dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. [On the day of Pentecost, it would be in them and in all true Christians.]

Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, [Satan] the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

The holy spirit God the Father calls men and those who follow their calling are then taught by the holy spirit called the Word and God the Father's Spokesman.

Joh 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

The Holy Ghost

The expression “Holy Ghost” used in the Bible is in error as there are no ghosts in the Godhead but rather 2 beings that are holy (John 17:11; Isa 6:3) and spirit (John 4:24).

Joh 17:11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Isa 6:3 And one cried unto another, and said, **Holy, holy, holy**, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

Joh 4:24 **God is a Spirit:** and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

These 2 God beings who are holy and spirit are the holy spirit beings of the God family who existed in the beginning at the creation of all things.

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

And, the Word who was with God is before all things i.e., *nothing* existed before He created them whether made of spirit or matter.

Col 1:15 [Christ] Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature:

Col 1:16 For by him [the Word who became Jesus-Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

In the beginning before anything either physical or spiritual was created, there was God and the Word who existed before all things and no other being is mentioned as having existed with them. There is no bib-

lical evidence that there ever existed a third, separate and distinct personage in the Godhead called the “Holy Spirit” who dwelt in eternity with God and the Word.

God is a Family

Throughout the Bible we can find many verses which clearly indicates the existence of family relations between God and the Word and God’s called, chosen and faithful.

Mat 11:27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

Mat 12:50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Joh 20:17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

God is clearly a family in which many can be ultimately born again by a resurrection from the dead to eternal, glorified spirit life in God’s Kingdom.

Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he [God’s Son] might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Col 1:18 And he [the glorified Christ] is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Christ was the first to be born again by a resurrection from the dead to be followed by many brethren.

Bible Writing Convention

The practice in the Bible has been to simply use the expression “the Holy Spirit” without indicating which God personage in the Godhead the expression represents. Over time, because of this practice, just about everybody has come to believe that the Holy Spirit is a separate and distinct God being in the Godhead but, there is no single verse or group of verses in the Bible that prove the existence of such a third being in the Godhead. The words “holy” and “spirit” are adjectives that describe the nature of

God the Father and of God the Word i.e., they are holy beings made of spirit.

Whenever we encounter the expressions the “Holy Spirit” or simply the “Holy Spirit” in the Bible we must look at the context to determine of which holy spirit being of the Godhead the Bible is talking about: the holy spirit, God the Father or the holy spirit, the Word and Spokesman.

The Word is the holy spirit being in the Godhead who carries out the instructions and wishes of the holy spirit, God. He is the faithful son who seeks to do his father’s will in all things. He is the member of the God family that did the work of creating the heaven and the earth, who ruled over ancient Israel through Moses and his human successors, He is the one who became a man who suffered and died to be God the Father’s perfect sacrifice for sin and make the salvation of mankind possible, etc. and He came to reveal the Father to those who follow the Father’s calling.

Making Things Clearer

In this study, when referring to God’s spirit who, depending on the circumstances can be the holy spirit personage called God the Father or the holy spirit personage called God the Word and Spokesman, I will not capitalize either of the adjectives “holy” and “spirit”. This is in order to not perpetuate the false impression in the minds of readers that there is a 3rd being in the Godhead called the “Holy Spirit.” Instead, I will refer to either of the holy spirits in the God family as being God’s spirit without capitalizing the word “spirit” to make it plain that we are not referring to a third God being in the God family called the “Holy Spirit” but to one of the 2 God beings in the Godhead.

God’s family is presently made up of 2 holy spirit beings to which are to be added thousands and possibly millions of other holy spirit beings when God’s plan of salvation for mankind has reached its end. The saints that endure in the faith until the end of their natural human life, will be resurrected as individual holy spirit beings in God’s Kingdom when it is established.

There are two studies which you can read regarding what is the “Holy Spirit” and decide for yourself in light of the Bible-based evidence offered if such a being exists in the Godhead. These studies are: [What is the Holy Spirit? Cliff Notes Version](#) and [Who or What is the Holy Spirit?](#)

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It has often been preached by the ministry of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) and written in the many publications of the Church that unless being called and chosen by the holy spirit God the Father, it is impossible to obey God and that once an individual has been called and chosen, it becomes possible for him to do so.

Many will recall that the Church taught that the reason ancient Israel was never able to obey God is because the Old Covenant did not include the possibility of being called and chosen because the holy spirit being responsible for teaching God the Father's called and chosen ones had not yet become the Father's perfect sacrifice for sin. The holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman became a man for, among many other things, the purpose of living a perfect, sinless life, suffering, and dying on the stake as the Father's perfect sacrifice for sin and being resurrected to His former glory by the Father.

Joh 7:39 (But this spake he [Christ] of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for **the Holy Ghost was not yet given**; because that **Jesus was not yet glorified**.)

In other words, it was not possible for God the Father to call men to salvation until there was a perfect sacrifice for the sins of mankind. It was also necessary for Christ to first be resurrected to His former glory for Him to be able to assume His role in the salvation process of being the holy spirit that works in the minds of God the Father's called and chosen ones to teach them all things.

Christ is talking to His disciples and He tells them the following:

Joh 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Consequently, ancient Israel remained a carnal-minded nation unable to obey God.

With the First Coming of Christ and the foundation of God's New Testament Church on the day of Pentecost, for the first time since the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, God's plan of salvation would begin with those who had been predestinated to be called from the foundation of the world.

Eph 1:4 According as he [God the Father] hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

Eph 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Those chosen by God the Father are predestinated not to be adopted by God but to become sons of God.

These individuals were chosen for the purpose of demonstrating in this life the sincerity of their commitment to obey God in all things as best they can. In Old Testament time, the holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman was made available exceptionally to those who would be commissioned to play a special role in carrying out God's master plan of salvation such as being prophets to ancient Israel and writing the books of the Old Testament.

The apostles wrote the books of the New Testament and with the Old Testament, these writings constitute God's Holy Bible.

Eph 2:19 Now therefore ye [converted Gentiles] are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Eph 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

On the day of Pentecost and, on up to the time of Christ's 2nd Coming, the holy spirit God the Father would call a greater number of individuals than during the days of the Old Testament but the time when all would be called is during the Millennium and the Last Great Day.

Joe 2:28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; [\[the holy spirit God the Father will call all men\]](#) and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

It would seem upon reading Joel 2:28 in isolation from many other Scriptures bearing on the subject that simply being called and chosen is sufficient for men to obey God. But as we should all know fully well, if we have been members of God's Church for any amount of time, salvation has more requirements than simply being called as important and critical as this may be.

The main one is that the one who is being called MUST follow the lead of the holy spirit God the Father; just being called does not result in individuals becoming Christians who have committed themselves to obeying God.

There is still however this continuing belief held by many in God's Church that simply being called, and, all men will be called during the Millennium and the Last Great Day, is sufficient to bring about conversion. Indeed, it is commonly believed that just about everybody will become converted during the Millennium as the holy spirit God the Father calls all men. This is a major error in understanding which is covered in a study available on this site and which you may be interested in reading [Mass Conversion of the Nations during the Millennium?](#)

Mankind since its creation has been unable to obey God; will God calling men, suddenly and without any effort being required, make it possible for men to obey Him?

God's Law and the Nature of Man

In the book of Romans, we are given a rather precise and conclusive analysis of the nature of God's law and of man's ability to follow it. Paul who is an apostle and who was personally taught by Christ and whose very firm intent was to obey God had this to say about how well he was able to do so.

Rom 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual: [\[a God level law that can only be fulfilled by one who has God level abilities;](#)

God's law reflects the very nature and character of God] but I am carnal, [I am simply a flesh-and-blood man without any of the God level ability required to perfectly follow the law.] sold under sin. [as a man I have no ability not to sin]

Rom 7:15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. [I want to obey God but I find myself not doing it; instead, I find myself doing those things which I hate as I know it is sin.]

Rom 7:16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. [Even though I cannot but imperfectly follow the law, I know that the law is good.]

Rom 7:17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. [because of my inability to fulfill the requirements of God's spiritual law given that as a flesh-and-blood human beings I do not have the ability to meet the requirements of a God level spiritual law.]

Rom 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: [as a flesh-and-blood being, I cannot attain the level of good of God's law no matter how hard I try.] for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. [I really do want to obey but the limitations of my mind power and the weaknesses of my human nature (a material creature made from the dust of the ground) make it impossible for me to do so. The highest level of good attainable by men is as dirty rags to God (Is 64:6); men of and by themselves, in their own human power, cannot fulfill the requirements of God's spiritual law.]

Rom 7:19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

Rom 7:20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. [My limitation of mind power and the limitations of my human nature prevent me from fulfilling God's spiritual law; it takes a God level being to fulfill a God level law.]

Rom 7:21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

Rom 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: [with my mind I want to obey God]

Rom 7:23 But I see another law in my members, [the lust of which creatures with free will and mind power are capable of and which involves satisfying physical and emotional needs in ways not allowed by God's law (James 1:13-15)] warring against the law of my mind, [my very strong desire to obey God] and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. [Paul very clearly says here that the limitations of his flesh hold him captive i.e., make it impossible for him to obey God in a way that fulfill God's spiritual law and this applies to not only him but to all true Christians. (1John 1:8)]

1Jn 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

If left to his own human level abilities without God's help, Paul fully realizes that even by his mightiest efforts and strongest desire to obey God, he would not succeed and would lose his salvation without God stepping in and giving him by imputation what he can never achieve on his own i.e., becoming sinless by God the Father imputing to him Christ's perfect holy righteous character as a free, unmerited gift which fulfills the requirements of a God level law, God's spiritual law.

There is a study on this site ([Salvation by Imputation](#)) that fully explains what it means to have something by imputation. Knowing what it means to have something by imputation is a major understanding of critical importance giving us essential knowledge of how God makes salvation possible for mankind. I greatly encourage you to take the time to familiarize yourself with it if you have not already done so. Now going back to Romans 7.

Rom 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. [Paul resigns himself to the realization that he will never be able to fulfill the requirements of God's spiritual law as a flesh-and-blood human being though it is his very firm intention and desire to do so.]

Why is it that we still can't keep God's law after having been called AND chosen?

Because God's law is **spirit-ual** i.e., it reflects the perfect nature of God while Paul and we are flesh-and-blood human beings who do not and cannot ever become beings of perfect holy righteous character like God.

If we were able to provide for ourselves, in our present human level of existence, by our own efforts and strength, God's perfect holy righteous character, we would be able to become in character, God as God is God while still flesh-and-blood human beings. And it would also make Christ death on the stake unnecessary; we would not need a Savior; we could save ourselves by our own means in our own strength.

Becoming God as God is God is something that occurs by being born again by a resurrection from the dead from a flesh-and-blood material existence to a God level spirit being existence. At Christ's 2nd Coming, the dead in Christ will be born again by a resurrection from the dead. God will then elevate man from the human level of existence to the God level of existence where the reborn man will fully possess the very nature of God or His perfect holy righteous character which perfectly fulfills God's spiritual law.

The apostle John makes this very clear in the following verses.

1Jn 3:9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Once someone is born of God i.e., when he is born again by a resurrection from the dead as was Christ (Rom 1:4), the first of the firstfruits of God's plan of salvation for mankind Col 1:15-18, especially verse 18), that individual can no longer sin.

Rom 1:4 And declared to be **the Son of God with power**, according to the spirit of holiness, **by the resurrection from the dead**: [Christ became an actual son of God being born very God by being resurrected from the dead by God the Father and He was the very first one to be born of God the Father that He might have the preeminence in all things i.e., that He may be the first in all things. (Col 1:18).]

Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the **firstborn of every creature**:

Col 1:16 For by him [Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, **the firstborn from the dead**; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Going back to 1 John 5 and the original point I wanted to make that God's spiritual law can only be fulfilled by one who has God's perfect holy righteous character we read:

1Jn 5:18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God [conceived as a child in the womb and yet to be born] keepeth himself, [tries to the best of his abilities not to sin as though begotten of God he remains capable of sinning] and that wicked one toucheth him not.

The time when we will have God's perfect holy righteous character is when we will be born again as glorified spirit beings. We will then have become God as God is God having the very same nature and character as God which are defined by His perfect spiritual law. We will no longer sin as God's law will be our very nature; it will be who and what we will then be; it will be our unchanging mode of existence. And, as God beings with perfect holy righteous character we will fulfill the requirements of God's spiritual law.

Please note that in 1 Jn 5:18 it is made clear that once one becomes a God being i.e., is actually born into God's family, nation and kingdom, that person no longer sins. As for those who are only begotten i.e., have not yet been born into God's family as glorified spirit beings and who are still flesh-and-blood mortals, they have to keep themselves. They have to be making a constant effort and be vigilant so as to keep sin to a minimum in their lives. Despite their best effort, they remain sinners (1 Jn 1:10). As a God being there is no such requirement as “....whosoever is born of God sinneth not....”

God through Paul tells us very clearly that this is not possible for us, while we are still flesh-and-blood human beings, to not be sinners.

God tells us that the highest level of good attainable by man in his own strength is as dirty rags to Him (Is 64:6) and that the only other human being who ever had a God level ability to obey God's law was Jesus who was both fully God and fully man. (Mat 19:17; Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19).

Isa 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

We do not have the strength to unfailingly resist the lust of our flesh and minds (James 1:13-15) nor do we have the ability to always do the good that God tells us we should do as for example doing good to those who abuse us and to love our enemies (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27; 6:35).

In the Bible, the inability of the truly converted to always and fully obey God is referred to as being "our infirmities."

Heb 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of **our infirmities**; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Christ as a human being fully felt the influence of our infirmities but Christ was also fully God and could perfectly resist the temptation to sin as well being able to do good to those who were opposing him and seeking his life. Human beings, even truly converted ones, do not have and cannot have in this life as human beings the God level character required to fulfill the requirements of God's law as Christ did. Christ fulfilled God's law because he was God in the flesh and had dwelling in him, perfect holy righteous character.

Truly Converted Christians Remain Sinners

In the book of 1st John God makes it clear that truly converted Christians will remain sinners until the time of their death.

1Jn 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1Jn 1:9 If we confess **[admit that we are sinners; do not deny that we are sinners]** our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Sin is against God's law and God the Father is the lawgiver; our sins are against Him and when we sin, we must admit (confess) it to God the Father who then forgives us our sins.

1Jn 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

However, if we reason our way around God's law to justify our breaking it as not being sin, then we are no longer confessing or admitting our sins. We make God a liar and the truth of God is not in us. Our sins are no longer forgiven, and we lose the salvation offered us by God. God's law defines what is sin, not us (Rom 7:7).

Rom 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid.

Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

The choice given us is to let God define for us what is sin and remain on the road to salvation or become the criterion in our lives for defining what is and is not sin (this was Adam's sin) and lose our salvation. God's law defines for us what is sin; not ourselves based on our personal beliefs.

We know that the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23), and in the case of true Christians, the second death (Rev 20:14; 21:18).

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rev 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Rev 21:8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

So how then can truly converted Christians who are sinners inherit salvation as it is not possible for them to not sin and any sin they commit after their conversion will result in their eternal death?

The Imputation Process

There is a humanly unbridgeable chasm or gap between human level existence and God level existence. Flesh and blood cannot see, hear, touch, etc. nor inherit the kingdom of God. (John 3).

Joh 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**

Man must be transformed from a flesh-and-blood existence to spirit life and no longer be a being made of matter but of spirit. So how can a human being be able to have God's righteousness which is the only kind of righteousness that will fulfill God's law while still a human being and which will make salvation possible.

The Bible speaks of a process called imputation. Most of us have read over the verses where God talks about imputation and have never really spent any time analyzing what the word "imputation" actually means. We have imagined in our minds that it means this or that and we have continued reading and have failed to grasp the importance of this word to our understanding of how God makes salvation possible for mankind.

Let's examine some of the verses where we find God talking about imputation.

Psa 32:2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD [imputeth](#) not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

In this Psalm, we are told that God for certain individuals does not impute iniquity or sin to them i.e., when they sin, God does not take into consideration the sin; He does not hold the person responsible; it is as though no sin had been committed.

Rom 4:8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not [impute](#) sin.

In this verse of the book of Romans we read that there is a man to whom the Lord will NOT impute sin. This person despite being a sinner remains sinless in God's eyes. It is as though he never sinned.

Again, I would urge you to read the study on this site on the topic of **imputation**. [Salvation by Imputation](#)

Having something by imputation does not mean that one actually possesses it but rather that the person is reckoned or considered as possessing it by the person doing the imputation.

So, how can God not impute sin when sin has been committed?

Isn't sin, sin and once committed how can it be undone or not taken into consideration?

Again, see the above-mentioned study for how God does this.

Let now determine with the appropriate Scriptures who is this man to whom God imputes no sin and why? Psalm 103 gives us insight into how the process works.

Psa 103:8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

Psa 103:9 He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.

This is being said with respect to ancient Israel which God eventually rejected because of its persistent sinfulness but which He will choose again. They are words of encouragement to them. The verses that follow explain how ancient Israel and New Testament Christians' sins will be forgiven.

Psa 103:10 He hath not dealt with us after [according to] our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. [This verse is no longer talking solely about ancient Israel but about the process whereby God in His mercy will and can forgive sin and to whom sin will be forgiven.]

Psa 103:11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. [God's has great mercy but only towards those that fear Him. And what is the fear of the Lord? It is to recognize and accept God as the supreme authority in our lives and to submit ourselves to him.]

Psa 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. [They are so far from us that they don't exist.]

Psa 103:13 Like as a father pitith [has mercy upon and does not punish] his children, so the LORD pitith them that fear him.

An important Scripture here; God has pity for His elect i.e., He is merciful towards them; He does not take into account their sins; they are forgiven and are as though they never were. God's pity or mercy is to those that fear him i.e., towards those that are trying to the best of their abilities to obey Him in all things.

Psa 103:14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

God remembers that men do not have God level ability to perfectly keep His law as they are but creatures made of the dust of the ground and this is why that He is merciful toward all those who have chosen to try to obey Him as best as they can. He does not take into account the sins they commit after their conversion as long as their sinfulness is not due to a willful unwillingness to obey Him but to the impossibility for them to do so because of the weakness of their flesh.

Psa 103:15 As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

Psa 103:16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. [Man's existence is like that of the flowers and grass of the field; it quickly passes away and has no real power as compared to God.]

Psa 103:17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; [But God's mercy is forever and unchanging and can be relied on to always be available to cover the sins of His children i.e., those that fear him or want to obey Him.]

Psa 103:18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them. [This is the fear of God.]

Let's use a human level example of the application of God's mercy to those whose attitude is to try to obey Him in all things to the best of their abilities.

As parents we have children who have to obey us as it is the means for them to become socialized and learn to live in harmony and peace with others. As parents, when misbehavior occurs, we examine whether it was intentional and done out of rebellion against our authority. For example, if a child drops a spoon on the floor but we know that this child did not do it on purpose but that the spoon was dropped because the child is still learning to handle eating utensils and is trying to do it correctly but still hasn't perfectly mastered the process. We will act as though the spoon was not dropped on the floor. We will simply pick it up and give the child another clean spoon. We will not be angry with the child or discipline the child; his attitude is to try to obey to the best of his abilities; when mishaps happen, it is not out of rebellion against the parent's authority and they are treated as though they never happened. God acts toward us in the same way with respect to sin. IF we are sincerely trying to obey Him, He

then is our Father who has mercy toward us; no sin is ever held against us; it is as if no sin was ever committed.

Isa 1:18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

This is true for the man who has a Psa 103:17-18 attitude and who is of a poor and contrite spirit and trembles at God's word

Isa 66:2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

This man is poor not in a physical sense but in a spiritual one. He is poor in having an attitude of confrontation towards God; he does not seek to justify his sinfulness; he admits it and seeks to minimize to the extent possible his sinfulness by rearranging his life so as to avoid people, events and circumstances that he knows usually lead him to sin. This individual is of a contrite spirit, he is unhappy with the sin in his life and is trying to come out of it as much as he can; he is determined to try to reduce sin in his life. This constant struggle against sin in our lives can wear us down and get us to become discouraged but God says it is the one that keeps on trying, that endures, that perseveres in trying to come out of sin that will receive the crown of life.

Jas 1:12 Blessed is the man that [endureth](#) temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that [love him](#).

And what is the love of God?

1Jn 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

As long as our attitude is to try to obey God in all things and that we admit it when we sin rather than trying to cover it up or attempt to justify it by all sorts of crafty excuses and reasons, then God imputes no sin to us and instead He imputes Christ's holy righteous character to us which is what saves us.

We are saved by grace through faith but not by our own faith; saving faith is from Christ who fully as a human being lived a perfect sinless life and died for the remission of the sins of mankind. Christ was the only one who

could perfectly keep God's law as God's law is spiritual and it would take another spirit being to be able to perfectly follow it. Christ fulfilled the requirement of the law that required the death of the sinner. In this case the sins of mankind were imputed to Christ whose death forgave the sins of mankind. The grace that resulted from Christ's perfect sacrifice would always be more abundant than the sins of men and therefore all sins can be forgiven if not committed in willful rebellion against God.

What are the Conditions for the Forgiveness of Sin?

Upon being called, the individual must choose to obey God in all things for the rest of his life to the best of his abilities. This which means making a lifelong commitment to resist sin coupled with a human level faith that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, that He was God made flesh whose death on the stake was sufficient to forgive the sins of mankind.

Gal 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even **we** have believed in Jesus Christ, that **we** might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Paul here is saying that even "they" the apostles have believed in Jesus Christ i.e., that Jesus of Nazareth born of woman under the law and subject to the second death was God in the flesh whose suffering and death paid the price for the sins of mankind.

Paul and the apostles have believed in Christ as [the means to salvation](#) and so must they (those to whom Paul was preaching) and us today, if we are to have any hope of salvation for it is by believing in Christ (a human level faith) that makes it possible for God to apply to us the grace that resulted from Christ's sacrifice and to impute to us Christ's perfect holy righteous character. And, more specifically, with respect to the converts of those days, Paul was explaining that it was not through the works of the law i.e., the performance of Old Testament animal sacrifices and other repetitive, physical and symbolic ceremonial rituals that salvation could be made possible. It was through their believing Jesus was the promised Messiah or the Christ as well as believing what He taught.

It is impossible for the new convert to perfectly obey God but his sins are always forgiven as long as his abiding attitude is to resist all sin in his life to the best of his abilities. When that attitude of mind is maintained and is sincere then no sin is ever imputed to the truly converted Christian which is to say, God imputes to him the perfect righteous character of Christ.

The Bible word for “wanting to obey God in all things is: to “fear” God.” Someone who fears God is someone who wants to obey God, a desire which is not forced or coerced in any way by God; it is their own freely taken decision. Their attitude is to obey God because they have determined it is the right thing to do after having come to the knowledge of the truth and they are determined to do it.

They have set themselves to be overcomers i.e., to try to the best of their abilities to live their lives in accordance with the spiritual intent of the 10 commandments which requires resisting sin and putting forth effort to do the good they know they should do.

This is what God requires of His converted sons for sin not to be imputed to them when they sin and for Christ’s righteousness to be imputed to them. Please note that what is forgiven upon conversion is our past sins which reconciles us to God (this occurs at the time of our baptism) but sins that we commit after our baptism are not imputed to us by God i.e., it is as though they had not ever been committed. As members of God’s Church we are God’s temple in which God and the Word dwell and they cannot dwell for even an instant with sin.

Having the holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman dwelling in us, contrarily to what we have been taught, does not make it possible for truly converted Christian to obey God and this explains a lot of the events that have occurred in the First Century Church and all through the history of the true church including in our days, in the congregations of the Philadelphia Church of God era in the days of Mr. Armstrong, its Pastor General.

What being called and chosen makes possible is for men for the first time in their lives to be able to come to the knowledge of the truth and to be given the opportunity to choose to follow it or not while before this choice was impossible because of Rom 8:7 and Rev 12:9. Men before their calling simply did not know nor could know the real difference between right and wrong and, good and evil and, therefore it was impossible for them to make a choice.

Rom 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Rev 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which **deceiveth the whole world:** he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

But as Paul says, even after conversion, it is possible to be carnal i.e., to re-

vert to the ways of thinking that we had before coming to the knowledge of the truth. However, to revert to being carnal-minded after our conversion leads to death (Heb 6:4-6).

Heb 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

Heb 6:5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

Heb 6:6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

The holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman only leads, the truly converted must follow; this is the decision that must be taken every day. God leaves man free to disobey Him even after coming to the knowledge of the truth. God will not force any man to be saved; it must be by his own freely and knowingly taken decision.

Rom 8:14 For as many as are **led** by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

This is the decision that must be taken and maintained until the end of our lives. We must accept to be led by the holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman and as long as we do, God considers us to be sons. God's sons do not have sin. Here again it is by imputation that we are sons. God considers us to be sons and in His eyes we truly are but in this life we are not actual sons of God nor can we be for we are flesh and God's actual sons will be spirit as God is spirit.

The interesting realization is that contrary to what we have often heard from the pulpit, conversion does not enable anyone to obey God and this continuing inability of truly converted Christians to obey God has very real consequences. A careful reading of the New Testament allows us to understand what was happening in the congregations of the First Century Church which is both history and prophecy of what would occur in the Church until the time of the third resurrection. It makes the inexplicable understandable and sheds new light on the events recorded for us in the Bible about the First Century Church and why they occurred. It also allows us to understand the spiritual condition of God's Philadelphia Era Church in the days of HWA and it makes it possible for us to understand how things are going to be during the Millennium and the Last Great Day.

**Practical Impact of Conversion
not Making it Possible for Men to Always and Fully Obey God**

If we read the New Testament keeping in mind that even truly converted individuals cannot perfectly obey God, we can better understand the spiritual condition of the early church. Much of the epistles were corrective in nature and showed how much resistance Paul was getting from the churches he raised up; their ongoing disobedience, and his frustration with them. In many respects they were not all that much different from OT Israel. They had been taught the correct manner of observing the Passover but Paul had to correct them; they were using the occasion to eat and drink to excess. They were ignoring Paul's command not to tolerate among them those who are openly sinning; others were trying to take over the leadership of local congregations and defying Paul's authority and questioning his commission as an apostle as before he had been a leader in persecuting the church.

We find Paul telling Timothy that converts will not endure being corrected and will seek teachers according to their own lusts and we see Paul being exasperated with long term members of the church for still not knowing the basics well enough that he could go on to teach them the meat of the Word. He had to teach them the basics all over again; they were sitting in the congregations of the church of God but their minds and hearts were into other things of greater interest to them.

Before going off to Rome to appear before Caesar Paul warned that from among the very elders appointed to protect the church from heresy and false teachers that some of these same elders would depart from the faith and seek to draw the brethren after them and away from the truth as a means of making a living for themselves. As Peter says so well, they would make merchandise out of them and preach for filthy lucre. Then we read that there were some that were trying to pass themselves off as apostles and to gain followers as a means of making a living for themselves.

It should be noted that all these things were happening not in the false churches of the world but in the congregations of God's Church.

The overall picture that emerges, if one has the correct perspective on reading the epistles, is one where converts, but for a few, are not taking to heart the truth given them. False teachers are coming into congregations; some are arising from within the congregations; and the membership but for a few are compromising with the ways of the world out of which they had been called out to be separate.

These occurrences are historical and prophetic of the spiritual condition

of those coming to conversion all through the existence of God's Church.

First century Church converts quickly lost their first love which was the love of the truth they had received. The Bible is written for all true Christians across the ages and its warnings apply to Christians of all times including today's Christians.

Knowing this we can more easily understand why Christ urges newcomers to the faith to enter in by the strait and narrow way for broad is the way that leads to destruction and many are they that enter in thereat.

Mat 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and **many there be which go in thereat:**

Mat 7:14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and **few there be that find it.**

The many seek to reconcile and make compatible their former false religious beliefs with the truth they are learning. They don't do so openly being "spiritual" while attending services but going back to living their lives as they see fit when back home and justifying to themselves that they are right in doing so. They are the eye and lip servants Christ spoke of. They refuse God's correction i.e., they do not want to let go of their past system of personal beliefs they had developed for themselves and which they consider too important to discard.

Mat 7:13-14 is a prophesy of what would be the general spiritual state of converts during the NT era of God's Church. Christ knew how mankind would react to the truth with many refusing their calling (Mat 22:14) and of those accepting it, few remaining faithful (Matt 7:13-14).

Mat 22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

As the pre-incarnate Word, Jesus had seen how men behave. In the first 4,000 years of man's existence He was surprised to see how they used the mind power and freedom of choice given them for evil rather than good. This led to God having it recorded in the Bible that:

Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

God did not create man this way; man was created neutral with no predisposition to disobedience; remember that everything God creates is very good.

Jeremiah 17:9 is God summarizing His experience following His observa-

tion of mankind over several thousand years. He was amazed at how men so much more readily chose evil and at their mighty and sustained efforts to make right the evil that they do in an attempt to justify it to themselves and to others.

Let's now extend to the time of the Millennium and of the Last Great Day this knowledge and understanding that conversion does not make it possible for man to always and fully obey God but rather only makes it possible for them to know God's spiritual truth and to have the opportunity to freely, self-willingly and without any physical or mental coercion, to choose it.

Implications for the Millennium and Last Great Day

Some of you who are reading this study, have personally witnessed what happened when the ministry of the Worldwide Church of God a few years after the death of Mr Armstrong announced to the brethren that they were not policeman and that they would not be enforcing rules on anyone; everybody could do what they wanted and they would not be reprimanded by them.

The very next Sabbath made manifest who were the eye and lip servants (the very great majority) and who were those whose obedience was based on their fear of God and not of men. As time went on, those who feared God and whose praise was not from men but from God either quietly left on their own not wanting to continue being a part of a Church of men who no longer held on to the truth or were expelled for not wanting to go along with the "new" truth making its way into the congregations but which were really the beliefs of paganized Christianity taught by the mainstream religions of the world. Those who refused to go along with the "new" teachings which really were not new but rather were the old false religious beliefs of the world deceived by Satan were branded as rebels and said to have been put out for causing division in the body of Christ.

In fact, they were the ones holding on the truth and who had the courage to leave familiar congregations and their many friends there and be off on their own if that what it took to remain with the truth. In the Scriptures there is reference to such little groups across the ages which left congregations or were expelled for not wanting to agree with the new teachings of the church.

Mal 3:16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

Mal 3:17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

Mal 3:18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

Now, pursuing with the implications for the Millennium and the Last Great Day of conversion not making it possible for men to obey God. As an essential point of clarification, I should hasten to add that indeed, the holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman gives us the correct knowledge of right and wrong and of good and evil and, but for the weaknesses of our flesh, we would be able to obey God. What the holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman allows converts to do is to choose to obey God's law now that we are given to know and understand it but being flesh-and-blood human beings and not spirit, we cannot fulfill the requirements of God's spiritual law except that God imputes to us Christ's Holy righteous character which makes it possible for us to inherit salvation.

It should by now be evident to you who are reading this study that simply being called does not mean that the individual will become converted. During the Millennium all of mankind will be called BUT that does not mean that all will become converted as was the impression left by the ministry whenever they talked about Joel 2:28.

Christ says many are called but few are chosen; they are not chosen because they refuse to follow their calling. This means that during the Millennium and the Last Great Day that it will be the many that will not follow their calling. **After** the end of the Millennium, there is this uprising of Gog and Magog against Jerusalem and Israel. They are not the original nations constituting the physical Gog and Magog (Eze 38) which attacked Jerusalem and Israel shortly after the beginning of the Millennium. They were thoroughly destroyed by God.

This post-millennial Gog and Magog (Rev 20:7-9) are individuals from the four quarters of the earth i.e., from all nations of the world and their number is as the sand of the sea. The sand of the sea contains so many grains of sands as to be impossible to count them. This is a vast multitude of people from all over the earth that will be unconverted. During the Millennium God poured out of His Spirit upon all flesh; they were all called but they did not all follow their calling and of those who did follow their calling, many fell away from the truth. This is made evident by this group of individuals which is so large that its number is as the sand of the sea and who head off to Jerusalem and Israel to destroy it.

They were all called and yet the many chose not to follow their calling and to remain in the world (Matt 22:14). Of the few that chose to submit to God, many fell away from the truth (Matt 7: 13-14).

They were all called and yet most of them either refused to follow their calling or to remain in submission to God. This should make it very clear to all of us that becoming converted does not make it possible for men to obey God either at the level of perfection required to fulfill God's spiritual law or at the level of simply following the letter of the law.

As a point of clarification, I should point out that true Christians can follow God's law at the human, physical level but that overall they cannot do so perfectly nor consistently despite their best intentions and efforts nor can they fulfill the spiritual level of goodness required to satisfy God's law. Conversion gives us knowledge of God's law and God's requirement, given His knowledge of the infirmities of our flesh, is that we be perfect in our attitude of obedience to Him (in other words: fearing God) which is something we can do as human beings. If we maintain our attitude of obedience to Him in all things then no sin is ever held against us.

It should also clarify in our mind that the Millennium will not be a time where there will be a massive conversion of the nations nor will it be a time when a vast re-education program of the world's populations will be or could be launched as a first step in bringing about the conversion of mankind.

God will not force anyone to obey Him. Salvation must be an unforced and freely taken decision by the one in whom it is to occur. God will give men the possibility to know His spiritual truth which occurs through His Spirit opening up their minds to be able to understand spiritual truth but man must then choose it, freely and self-willingly. And, he must keep on choosing it every day of his life until the time of his death.

In Conclusion

The holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman only ever leads, He will not and does not force anyone to obey through physical or mental trials and suffering. Man cannot be forced to believe something against his will. Conversion gives men the ability to know God's spiritual truth and to make a choice; it does not give them the ability to always and fully obey God. Because God's law is a perfect spiritual law and men are flesh, it is impossible for them to fulfill its requirements. Men are saved by God imputing Christ's perfect holy righteous character to them as a free unmerited gift (grace). It is the only way men can fulfill the requirements of God's spiritual law at it far exceeds the capabilities of any man to do so.

