

LOOKING FOR LOOPHOLES

Brett Petrillo

Just before the death of actor W.C. Fields, a friend visited Fields in his hospital room and was surprised to find him thumbing through a Bible. After being asked what he was doing with a Bible, Fields replied, "I'm looking for loopholes."

Fields wasn't the first to look for loopholes in the Bible, nor the last. In fact, there is no other book in existence that has received more attention, scrutiny, skepticism, and critique. People all over the world search like ravenous wolves, longing with starving eyes for a loophole into heaven. They salivate over what appears in their bias to be a loophole.

Deceivingly, so many have claimed to have found it. "There are many paths to heaven," they say. And yet Scripture clearly speaks of just one (Matthew 7:13-14, 21-23; John 14:6). "We've re-studied _____ and have changed our minds," they proclaim. And yet, ironically and predictably, the conclusions they draw nearly always line up with current cultural norms. "The God I know would never condemn a person doing _____," they say with confidence. And yet, God has clearly condemned it. "All you have to do to be saved is _____," they reassure others. And yet, God has made it abundantly clear that baptism is where salvation is found and sins are forgiven (1st Peter 3:21, Acts 22:16; Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; etc.).

Perhaps the greatest tragedy is seeing just how much effort people put towards avoiding God's commands instead of just obeying them. It takes selflessness and humility to read God's commands and obey them. And yet, doing so shows that we love God (John 14:15).

Do we love God? I mean truly love Him? Then let's prove it through obedience.

"We must wonder why atheists call themselves 'freethinkers' if they believe thoughts are merely the results of atomic motion in the brain obeying the fixed laws of chemistry."

– Jonathan Sarfati

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idolaters, homosexuals, thieves, drunkards, and such, he concluded: "*such were some of you!*" The difference was they "*were washed,*" they "*were sanctified,*" they "*were justified*" in Christ and His Spirit (1st Corinthians 6:9-11)! Thankfully, "*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new*" (2nd Corinthians 5:17).

Eliminating the old self and embracing the new is precisely what the gospel is about. So, all disciples get to join the apostle in declaring, "*We were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin*" (Romans 6:4-7). Submission to Christ in baptism is about burying the old man and rising to new life in Jesus!

Those who have thus obeyed the gospel are set free from the bondage of sin, provided they continue to behave accordingly. "*For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth*" (Colossians 3:3-5). There is need for constant renewal in Jesus. "*Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness*" (Ephesians 4:22-24).

When Paul told the Philippians he had to forget what was behind (Philippians 3:12-14), he also said he needed to "*press on,*" "*reach forward,*" and "*press toward the goal.*" Letting go the past is useless without "*the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus!*"

So, the answer to those who bring up the sinful past is this: "**Thank God I'm not like that anymore because Jesus changed me!**" Whether the other person recalls the former ways as pleasant or awful, the response of the Christian should be the same.

**"WHAT MUST I DO
TO BE SAVED?"**

ACTS 16:30

LEARN THE GOSPEL

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

BELIEVE IN CHRIST

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

CONFESS CHRIST

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 3:19; 17:30

BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"THE ASSEMBLING OF
OURSELVES TOGETHER"**

HEBREWS 10:24-25

SUNDAY

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

WEDNESDAY

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard

Belén, New Mexico

Seekers Welcome.

Members Expected.

**"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN
ANY TRESPASS...
RESTORE SUCH A ONE"**

GALATIANS 6:1

CONFESS TRESPASSES

James 5:16; 1st John 1:9

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 8:22

PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS

Acts 8:22

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"A WORD FITLY SPOKEN IS
LIKE APPLES OF GOLD IN
SETTINGS OF SILVER"**

PROVERBS 25:11

"If you are willing to abandon your principles for convenience or social acceptability, they are not your principles. They are your costume."

– Nitya Prakash

"WHOLE COUNSEL"

ACTS 20:27

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"FORGETTING THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND"

Bryan Matthew Dockens

It can be hard on a Christian to be confronted with the past. When either a friend, with fond recollection, or an enemy, with bitter resentment, from bygone years, calls to memory the sexual promiscuity or the drunkenness or the drug addiction or the dishonesty or the foul language or the hatred or the violence or whatever iniquity characterized the now-saved person when they were still lost, shame may resurface.

Paul addressed memories of a sinful past when he wrote, *"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 3:12-14).

The apostle had to forget the past and, in his case, there was much to forget. Elsewhere, he described his old ways thusly: *"I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man"* (1st Timothy 1:13). Within that same context he called himself the *"chief"* of *"sinners"* (15). Such was his **former** condition, though! It did not describe the apostle Paul, but the man he used to be.

When Paul warned the Corinthian brethren not to be fornicators,
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