A Review of the teachings set forth in

*Biblical Foundations of Freedom: Destroying Satan’s Lies with God’s Truth*

by Art Mathias

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Purpose of the Research

At the request of Bill Satterly, owner of Cause and Effect Holistic Supplements in Sevierville, TN, I have reviewed Biblical Foundations of Freedom: Destroying Satan’s Lies with God’s Truth. The book is self-published by the author, Art Mathias. Mathias is identified online as the owner of Wellspring Ministries of Alaska. Initially conducted in 2012, this assessment is complete in 2014.

Satterly expressed his positive impression of Mathias’ work after being introduced to it by the noted holistic practitioner, Sherry Rogers, M.D. Recognizing the research conducted by my foundation, he asked me to read Mathias’ book and assess it in light of my knowledge and views of the Bible.

In full disclosure, I preface this assessment by stating that subsequent to completing the research, the book was placed in the “Non-biblical” section of Corrie’s Theological Library located in Knoxville, TN. A resource must meet objective criteria in order for it be included in the systematic theology collection. Other Library resources also cover healing, forgiveness, the life of the church, identity in Christ Jesus, man’s created purpose, and additional topics covered by Mathias. Identifying his book as “non-biblical” is not about the information covered —since other Library resources cover the same topics. This researcher assesses the main reason for classifying Mathias’ book as “non-biblical” is his misuse of Scripture in order to posit his theories and attempt to prove his conclusions. Mathias’ book is not representative of orthodox theology and doctrine. The balance of this assessment will deal with identifying the indicators that support my conclusion.

This assessment is not a critique of the person of Art Mathias. It is not a review of his ministry at large. It is, however, a strong statement that suggests caution is needed when studying and applying the material offered in this one resource, Biblical Foundations of Freedom (BFF).

The copyright on the book is 2000. Fourteen years later, I wonder if Mathias may have modified or even retired some of his earliest beliefs that made it into print. Researchers of any topic ought to be in a constant state of review and revision of their work. Anything less betrays our credibility.
The Fundamental Problem: A Confused Concept of Salvation

On page 103 of *Biblical Foundations of Freedom (BFF)* Mathias’ offers this checklist:

[markers a – f] have been added.

1. Do you know in your heart that you are saved?
2. If you are sure of your salvation, [a] have you ever sinned since coming to Christ?
3. [b] If you have ever sinned since you were saved, do you believe that if you ask God to forgive you, He will?
4. Do you believe that He can and will forgive any sin?
5. [c] Do you know that God has set conditions on forgiveness? [d] Do you know that under certain circumstances, God will not forgive because His holiness prevents Him from doing so? [e] Our past, present, and future sin (*sic*) are not automatically forgiven. [f] There are two conditions that Christians must meet to receive forgiveness. First, we must forgive others. Second, we must ask God to forgive us.

First, see Appendix A for the correction of Mathias’ misunderstanding of Matthew 6:14-15.

Second, it is easy to recognize Mathias’ false interpretation of the biblical doctrine of salvation. In effect, he proposes that God’s sovereign plan of salvation follows human action—or lack of. Why does Mathias offer this backward arrangement? It is because the biblical fact of divine grace is nearly missing in Mathias’ book—except for his claims that unmerited favor is misused by others.

Third, see “Which Faith System Encourages Forgiveness?” Mathias either doesn’t understand the stark difference between grace faith and works salvation—or else he actually thinks he keeps the Law—that he is sinless. If the latter, that identifies him as holding to an unorthodox faith.

Fourth, his bracketed statements above call for correction. [a] and [b] indicate Mathias believes in a false doctrine called “Christian Perfection.” See Appendix B for discussion of this error. It is nonsensical to ask if anyone sins. All humans sin—whether they claim faith in Christ Jesus or not. But Mathias believes it is possible to not sin. That is self-delusion. Regarding [c] “condition” is applicable only in the sense that all salvation is in Christ Jesus alone. The only condition for the
application of that salvation is the one needing salvation must acknowledge they are a sinner in need of Christ's sacrifice and believes that His work on the cross entirely satisfies God's demands. No doctrine of biblical salvation teaches additional conditions must be met in order to be saved. Question [d] is preposterous. This would make God a liar. God's Word declares in John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Mathias is confused. This text teaches we confess our sins to God. That is not the same as forgiving someone else. Note: our imperfect human forgiveness of others is not equitable with God's perfect forgiveness of us. Statement [e] is blasphemous —having been falsely offered throughout history to argue the gospel is imperfect; is insufficient; and does not save to the utmost. But at the cross—all sin—committed—and not yet committed—was paid for and pardoned. All history subsequent to the Cross is a marvelous matter of the application of Christ's final sacrifice. (See Kellogg's The Book of Leviticus.) And [f] has already been refuted as false.

The astute reader will ask, “Wait a minute. Isn’t this book about physical, emotional, and mental health? Isn’t Mathias trying to show us how to be well?” Yes. But he does not meet that goal because he does not have understanding of the nature of spiritual wellness. Instead, he offers an unscriptural theory. What he and others like him do not state is what the Bible says about some healing and miracles. The Adversary has been given temporary power and authority on earth. (He has no power or authority in the third heaven. This explains why accusations against believers are dismissed. Christ sits at the right hand of the Father intercepting the arrows Lucifer slings.) But on earth, demons daily perform ‘miracles’ that appear to be the work of the Most High when in fact they are not. Mathias and others don’t admit that some healings are the work of the Devil. There are those who follow false systems of salvation who may appear to benefit by some supernatural intervention. (Remember, the Devil is also supernatural.) But unless that one believes the gospel of grace—faith alone in Christ alone—they will arrive in eternity to find they believed the Devil’s lies. For example, there are reformed alcoholics who are thankful for their sobriety—giving credit to the Twelve Step “god of their own understanding.” But unless they forsake that false god and receive the Bible’s Savior they will arrive in eternity a reformed alcoholic—but a damned soul.
Other Biblical and Theological Errors in *Biblical Foundations of Freedom*

Throughout the book there is extensive teaching that amounts to Mathias *adding* to Scripture:

1. Charismatic\(^1\) doctrine
2. Psychological\(^2\) theory
3. Mind Science\(^3\) philosophy
4. Word-Faith\(^4\) heresy.
5. Extensive extrapolation of *error* rather than effective elucidation of *truth* (1 John 4:6)\(^5\)
6. Emotional, mental, physical “freedom” in place of spiritual *freedom from penalty of sin*\(^6\)
7. *Eisegesis* rather than *exegesis* of Scripture\(^7\)
8. Exhortation to *do* for Christ (evidence of works) rather than *be in Christ* (evidence of grace)\(^8\)
9. Christologic truth deduced from Mathias’ theory rather than Christ’s teaching *a priori* to it.\(^9\)
10. *Pretextual* use of Scripture rather than *contextual* understanding of God’s Word.\(^10\)
11. Novel prophecies of *private* interpretation offered in place of Jude 3 *received tradition.*\(^11\)

This assessment *marks* false teaching, according to Romans 16:17. “Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.” But turning away does not require hounding those who are incorrect—as some ministries claim is their duty. I wish only to *separate* from Mathias’ errors.

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1. Charismatic doctrine *misinterprets* Scripture and thus *misapplies* the person and *work* of the Holy Spirit.
2. Psychological theory amounts to a doctrine of demons. Use of its principles is anathema to saving faith.
3. Mind science attempts to integrate spiritual truth with science and physics. This is “New Thought” error.
4. Word Faith uses mystical laws independent of God, speaking into being one’s faith *in* faith, not *in* Jesus.
5. We are called to think, speak and know biblical truth; not focus on the many failings Mathias discusses.
6. Common to many false systems is confusing political or social “freedoms” with biblical freedom *from* sin.
7. *Exegesis* pulls out of Scripture what the *writer* means; *eisegesis* reinforces *readers’* preferred meaning.
8. See “Which Faith System Encourages Forgiveness?”
9. Missing in human-centered systems, ministry *begins and remains focused* on doxologic honor and glory.
10. A text *out* of its proper *context* becomes user *pretext* to make it a *proof text* for private interpretation.
11. There are not multiple correct interpretations of the Bible; Mathias does not teach Jude 3 *received truth.*
A Health and Well Being Branch of the Prosperity Gospel (pp. ix – xi)

After reading Mathias’ Preface I drew a “Prosperity Tree” on page xi. (See also Hanegraaff’s The OSTEENification of America on Prosperity idolatry.) This “Tree” graphically depicts what is engendered by false “Prosperity Theology” that is based on the false “Prosperity Gospel.” In effect it is another gospel, a false gospel (2 Cor 10:16, 11:4; Gal 1:6-8). Branches that are well established on this Tree include: Name-it-and-claim-it; Gospel of success; Word of Faith; 30-60-100 Fold; Shamanistic Christianity; Positive Confession; Prayer of Jabez theology; Dominion theology, etc. Mathias makes a significant contribution to the Tree’s development by his efforts to identify attainment of health and wellbeing as the core of faith in action. He states on page ix that all disease (lack of health and well being) is directly attributed to sin —that of Adam or else personal failure by a believer “...to live the way God commands.” While identifying Adam and Eve as causally implicated in human suffering is accurate, Mathias’ second categorical statement is presumptive and inaccurate. It reflects the most basic primitive fears and biases that would have us believe every human malady is the direct result of divine punishment —and justly deserved.

Lord help us to recognize false accusations by the Adversary that come through Mathias’ theory!

We know that due to the fall of Adam and Eve from their perfect union with their Creator the consequence God applied to all future generations is inability to rise above that state of sin, suffering, and death. These are unavoidable human maladies. It is the position of this researcher that while we are not responsible for Adam and Eve’s transgression we are still unable to rise above the divine consequences meted out as a result of their transgression. But this is why Christ came! Yet, it cannot be categorically stated that all illness, disease, and lack of health and well being are the result of sins committed by the one suffering those maladies. This twisted thinking flies in the face of God’s clear teaching that this life is a matter of 2 Cor 4:17 momentary light affliction with many attendant problems and sufferings —experienced by even the most God-fearing and obedient souls. But those with a proclivity for the Prosperity Gospel look for perfection in this life even though believers’ actual glory is yet future —at our resurrection and subsequent ruling and reigning with Christ Jesus in His Kingdom. Prosperity in this age is a delusional idol!
Man is Not Sovereign and the Devil does not Bless Us  (pp. 1-3)

Mathias states that “…we receive Satan’s blessings” when we disobey God; Further; “We are sovereign in our choices” (3). But sovereignty is an incommunicable attribute of God alone. No one, except God, is sovereign. That notion applied to nations or men is merely a relative term not meant to convey the exclusive province of God’s power and authority. As for receiving Satan’s “blessings”…what could these “blessings” possibly be?! We must not confuse Satan’s influence leading us to satisfy the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life —as evidence of blessing. That is a nonsensical picture since disobedience is a result of rebellion, not blessing.

Lacking Grace —Christian Position is confused with Condition  (pp. 5-26)

“I reject a doctrine of eternal security that implies that if we are born again we can “live like the devil” and still go to heaven” (20). Let us agree with Mathias! But early and continuing in his book Mathias makes bold statements that represent modern day Pharisaic contempt for the reach of God’s grace. There is no doctrine of assurance of salvation that equates with “living like the devil.” This is the false characterization by those who claim applied grace is “cheap” unless remorseful regret accompanies salvation applied to a life. (Persons who struggle with the fact of unmerited grace are nearly always unable to divorce themselves from insistence that divine justice must be administered in this age when in fact position in Christ is secure though lack of maturity does erode one’s spiritual condition. Paul certainly preaches against carnality. But impatient Pharisees simply cannot wait for God to withhold reward in eternity for lack of obedience now. Some want to function as judge, jury and executioner in this life rather than wait for the long arm of God to make sure all is done —in order —in due time.) Also, a factual error Mathias makes in this chapter is labeling earth as the First Heaven (19). This earth is certainly not any level of heaven! The first level is the visible sky, followed by Satan’s second level and God’s habitation in the third.

Incorrect Understanding of Spiritual Warfare  (pp. 27-42)

In this chapter Mathias presents the erring example of man initiating spiritual warfare. Direct battle with the enemy is never our calling. We are to stand on the truth of God’s Word; plead our cause
with the One assigned to fight for us; and rest in the knowledge that “He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world.” Mathias correctly states, “In 2 Cor 10:14 we are taught that our weapons of war are not carnal or human in nature, but are of God. We don’t have to rely on our power to fight this war, but we rely on God’s power and, properly appropriated in our lives, nothing is more powerful” (36). But much else that he writes in this chapter erodes his claim that we are to give the battle to God. Carnal “fighting” with spirits is what Manifest Sons of God and New Apostolic Revival teachers simply will not relinquish. Warfare initiated by man is a major error of all elements of Prosperity Ideology. Mathias’ teachings are evidence of belief in these movements.

**Accusing Spirits Akin to Francis Frangipane’s False Theology** (pp. 43-58)

Volumes have been written to expose and refute the unbiblical nature of the psycho-heretical movement that removes God from the throne and places man on the throne of his life. Combining wearisome self-analysis and its endless lists of “do’s and don’ts” turns the beleaguered soul away from peace with Christ and toward never ending need to look inward to understand self. But this is Platonic philosophy—not biblical wisdom. The only duty we are called to in regard to self is to submit to and cooperate with the Holy Spirit’s work to diminish and eventually divest us of self. “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). Dying to self is not easy; yet self’s death is never a function of suicide. It is a function of the work of the Spirit in us. We are changed because He changes us, not because we identity, confess, and fight all manner of false spirits.

**The Major Strongholds is Pre-occupation with the Wrong Person** (p. 59)

On page five of *BFF* I wrote, “pre-occupation with the Devil and his works!” And by chapter four it becomes painfully obvious that Mathias spends a lot of time thinking about his enemy and how his enemy operates in him! Naive believers must not fall into the trap of failing to recognize we live in a world (temporarily) controlled by the father of lies. However, any teaching worth sharing limits this focus based on its value. We do need to have a basic understanding of Ponerology (the study of evil) and Hamartiology (the study of evil’s consequence: sin). However, we do not progress in who we are—in Christ—by majoring on who we aren’t—in the Devil! This one page chapter ends
with a plea that we pay attention to sanctification. This is correct theology. But it is not necessary to enjoy Holy Spirit controlled sanctification by study of the strongholds and principalities of Satan.

**Perfectionism is Second Fundamental Problem with this Theory (pp 61-74)**

Mathias writes, “It’s amazing that we accept and expect God to be perfect and yet we don’t think He asks the same of us” (68). Coming from the false teachings of the Holiness, Apostolic, and Pentecostal sects and movements is this classic misunderstanding of what is perfection and *how we are to be perfect*. The Bible teaches that Christ’s holiness is our holiness; if we are in Him we have met the standard of perfection required by our perfect and just God. Lack of understanding that we cannot please God — no matter how hard we try — in our own “goodness” — leads many to live lives at one extreme or the other: either believing they do not sin or else believing they are doomed to always, and in all cases, sin. (See again, Appendix B for correction of this error.)

**Position in Christ — A Commendable Point of this Theory (pp. 75 – 101)**

While the bulk of *BFF* is a treatise citing isolated Scriptures — applied out of context — Mathias does present a valid teaching point by *beginning* to explain *our position in Christ*. He states that God chose us; saved us; seals us; positionally seats us with Christ; secures our inheritance; and declares we operate from a position of strength (98-99). This is the type of teaching that reflects meaning and merit. Unfortunately, the ideas are lost in a chapter that continues to veer off trail. I suggest the best way to complete Mathias’ unfinished lesson is to read *Things Which Become Sound Doctrine* by J. Dwight Pentecost. The short book with short chapters covers (1) depravity — the *reason we need salvation*; (2) grace — the *why God is able to provide salvation*; (3) regeneration, redemption, reconciliation, justification, and predestination — the *mechanisms of our salvation*; (4) imputation, substitution, and propitiation — how the *Godhead operates to affect our salvation*; (5) security — the *assurance of our salvation*; (6) sanctification — the *outworking of our salvation*; and (7) resurrection — the *glorious outcome of our salvation*. Mathias’ psychological orientation has us focus on self while the best Bible teaching has us focus on the finished work of Christ on our behalf.
Forgiveness —Achilles Heel of this Theory of Wellness  (pp.103-112)

Refuted on pages 4-5 above, Mathias’ theory of “forgive to be forgiven” constitutes false teaching. We know that Mathias is not a false teacher because he does not fit the description of 1 John as a Christ denier. But Mathias is mistaken in his understanding that our being forgiven by God is dependent on our ability and obedience to forgive others. Sadly, Mathias and all others who make this error do not see the flaw in the logic of their delusion. Mathias’ five point affirmation on page 103 (see p. 4 above) can only mean that he believes we are more powerful and more responsible than God to affect our regeneration! Surely, Mathias knows this is an impossibility.

Misunderstanding of Repentance, Sanctification and Freedom  (pp.113-133)

Mathias writes, “Our ministry centers on teaching the truth about repentance and the restoration of a right relationship with God. We teach the process of sanctification as the antidote to spiritual and physical disease” (125).12 Regarding biblical freedom, many are confused on this. This psychology-saturated and idolatrously-preoccupied culture substitutes the world’s freedom for true spiritual freedom in Christ. The world’s thinking has us focus on getting others to respect our “boundaries” and seek our political “rights” as evidence of having gained adequate freedom. But these are not the biblical meaning of freedom. The freedom Christ came to secure for us by His death and resurrection is spiritual freedom from the eternal penalty of sin. “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). The types of bondage BFF means to relieve are actually secured by this incorrect understanding of the biblical meaning of freedom.

Rejection Mirrors Errors of Charles Solomon’s “Spirituotherpy” (pp.135-155)

No one has done more to promote the gospel as the remedy for rejection than Charles Solomon. His Grace Life Ministries is headquartered in Pigeon Forge, TN. Solomon’s The In’s and Out’s of Rejection appeals to minds seeking psychological counseling for unresolved emotional issues.

Mathias’ BFF is also psychologically oriented. He attributes much pain and suffering to our inability

12 First, see Appendix C for biblical meaning of repentance. Second, sanctification is not a learned process; it is the Spirit’s work to separate unto God the life of a saved soul according to 1Cor 1:30, 2Cor 6:14-18.
to handle rejection. (We must pause to ask the pertinent question: “Is the Gospel the remedy for the penalty of sin or does it affirm felt needs, including a sense of rejection? If we interpret the Bible by its authorial intent we must objectively state rejection is among the full range of human responses in a fallen world. It is not of any higher importance than any other human suffering.) Mathias goes on for seven pages trying to answer the central question, “Who Am I In Christ?” But Galatians 2:20 is the concise answer to that question! “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” He is our identity. We have died. We are risen with and seated in glory with the Lord! Forget rejection! We have all we need in Christ.

**Biblically Defined Fear is Not Worries of this Life** (pp. 157-173)

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever” (Psa 111:10). “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov 1:7). “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding” (Prov 9:10). These are the words that effectively teach about fear. This is healthy and appropriate fear of God. Mathias does not focus on healthy fear of God; he is preoccupied with addressing fear of man.

**Occultism Does Require Exposure and Refutation** (pp. 175-188)

There is good reason to list—but not overly scrutinize—beliefs and practices identified as occult and address why the underworld is forbidden. Mathias’ exposing of pharmakeia —the abuse of drugs—does complement the business interests of Cause and Effect Holistic Supplements. But there are other credible ministries that expose Last Days preoccupation with legal and illegal drugs (Sorcery, Rev 9:21 and 21:8) without combining that with false teaching of the Bible. Mathias

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13 “Interestingly, the New Testament Greek word translated “sorcery” is pharmakeia, which is the source of our English word, pharmacy. In Paul’s day, the word primarily meant “dealing in poison” or “drug use” and was applied to divination and spell casting because sorcerers often used drugs along with their incantations and amulets to conjure occult power” (http://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-sorcery.html#ixzz3Flexp9Ph, retrieved 5 Oct 2014).
does correctly state that *homeostasis* should be the goal of our pursuit of health and well being and that occult use of *pharmakeia* prevents that *homeostasis* (182).

**God’s Plan for the Ages is Insufficiently Presented** (pp. 189-204)

Mathias writes, “God has a wonderful plan for redemption. Every person who receives the Lord Jesus Christ receives the ability to tap into God’s wisdom and know His plan” (189). Mathias continues by defining dispensation and *oikonomia*. But these are *foundational* Bible terms and should have been placed at the beginning of the book! Mathias does not elaborate enough to adequately explain dispensation and steward. Therefore, I suggest *Appendix D* for teaching on dispensations and man’s responsibility as stewards in each dispensation.

**Armor of God is a Standard Teaching on Spiritual Warfare** (pp. 205 - 231)

Mathias could have eliminated 90% of his book and still would have been able to encourage readers in their quest for health and well being if he’d concentrated more on exhortation of the Word —and less on theory. Ephesians 6 is divine spiritual direction for dealing with the Adversary. It is commendable that Mathias includes this Scripture in his theory. However, he assumes there is a way to live a *prescriptive* and *psychologized*\(^\text{14}\) life to avoid sin. But there is not! There is however, *glory-to-glory maturing* in Christ that will not be complete until we are in His presence. This is biblical *sanctification* and is not a function of *warring in the spirit*.

**Power and Authority Is Misapplied** (pp. 234 - 240)

Mathias titles the last chapter, “*Our* Power and Authority in Christ.” This is another misstep in his theology. *We* have no power. *All* power is retained by Christ. When we are *in* Him —submitted to the leading and control of the Holy Spirit —we directly benefit by the application of *His power*. *We* do not wield this power —even when wearing our armor. *We are sheep*. Sheep are defenseless and dumb. But the Dominionist theme of Mathias’ book coincides with the New Apostolic Revival that envisions end time battles and victories. These victories will come in time.

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\(^{14}\) See the short booklet, *Psychologized Man: A Biblical Perspective* by Martha Peace
But we are not yet at that sequential point of future prophecy when these powers will be unleashed. Mathias ends his book on the wrong side of the future Millennium. The Kingdom is not yet here—not even partially—despite Preterist and Progressive Dispensational contentions.

**Summary and Conclusion**

According to accurate, literal, contextual interpretation of God’s Word Mathias aligns himself with false teaching. There is little correlation between the theories espoused in his book and the fact of miracles or lack of miracles in healing and wellness. On page 238 Mathias cites Bible version writer, Finis Dake. This explains much about Mathias’ beliefs. *The Dake Annotated Reference Bible* is largely discredited though it appeals to those expressing fringe beliefs. When I first began reading *BFF* I looked for the standard notation on the back of the title page for the Bible version cited in the book. There is no indication of which version Mathias uses. (Revealing the use of Dake’s Bible could erode the confidence of many who might decide not to read Mathias’ book if they knew of his use of Dake.) An apologetic ministry writes, “Dake’s [hyper] literal interpretation of passages such as Isaiah 53:5, John14:14, and 3 John 2 results in the view that Jesus bore our sickness as well as our sin in the atonement; therefore, physical healing can be appropriated now by faith the same as forgiveness.” Further, “The teachings of Finis Jennings Dake…have had a profound impact on conservative Pentecostalism and have been embraced by charismatic Word-Faith preachers such as Kenneth Copeland and Benny Hinn.”

This connection is most revealing. Mathias writes in the same genre of these men as well as other high profile preachers who’ve been repeatedly discredited for their lack of faithfulness to biblical orthodoxy. This researcher feels an even more significant indicator of why Mathias is off-kilter is his educational preparation. Online records indicate he’s had no medical or health education training and his advanced degrees are in psychological counseling. Most significantly, he has not been trained in or studied according to seminary or Bible college curricula. He does, after all, purport to speak for what he claims the Bible teaches. I must respectfully question Mathias’ qualification to do so based on verified facts.

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16 Ibid.
Question: "If I do not forgive others, does that mean my sins are not forgiven? What does Matt 6:14-15 mean?"

Answer: Matthew 6 does not teach that our eternal destiny is based on our forgiving other people; however, it does teach that our relationship with God will be damaged if we refuse to pardon those who have offended us. The Bible is clear that God pardons sin by His grace based on Christ’s work on the cross alone, not on man’s actions. Our right standing before Him is established on one thing only—the finished work of Christ (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10). The penalty for the sin that is rightly ours is paid by Christ, and we obtain it by grace through faith, not by any righteous deeds of our own (Ephesians 2:8-9). **No one will be able to stand before God demanding that his sins be forgotten simply because he has forgiven others.** Only when we are born again and given a new life through God’s Spirit by faith in Jesus Christ are our sins forgiven. Therefore, Jesus is not referring to God’s initial act of forgiveness (reconciliation) that we experienced when we first believed the Gospel.

What He is referring to is the day-to-day cleansing we obtain when we confess our sins in order to restore **fellowship** with our heavenly Father—the fellowship which is interrupted by the daily tarnishing of sin that affects us all. This is not the wholesale cleansing from sin that comes with salvation by grace through faith, but is more like the foot-washing Jesus describes in John 13:10. The “whole body is clean,” He told the disciples, but their feet were dirty from their walking in the world. Forgiveness in this sense is what God threatens to withhold from Christians who refuse to forgive others.

In Matthew 6 Jesus is teaching disciples how to pray and in doing so outlines how we are restored into intimacy with God whenever we have displeased Him. In fact, Jesus instructs us to build into our prayers a request for God to forgive us in the same way that we have forgiven others who have harmed us (Matthew 6:12). If there are those we have not forgiven when we ourselves pray for forgiveness, then practically speaking we are asking God not to restore a right relationship with
us after we sin. To emphasize the importance of restoring broken relationships with our brothers and sisters, Jesus states that asking for God’s forgiveness for one’s own sins, all the while withholding forgiveness from someone else, is not only bizarre but hypocritical. We cannot possibly walk with God in true fellowship if we refuse to forgive others.

To be sure, an unforgiving spirit is a serious sin and should be confessed to God. If we have unforgiveness in our hearts against someone else, then we are acting in a way that is not pleasing to God, making our prayers and a proper living relationship with Him difficult. God will not hear our prayers unless we also show ourselves ready to grant forgiveness. If we are harder than iron in this regard, Christ’s exhortation ought to soften us.

A second biblically plausible interpretation of Matthew 6:14-15 is that it is saying anyone who refuses to forgive others is demonstrating that he has not truly received Christ’s forgiveness himself. Any sin committed against us, no matter how terrible, is trivial in comparison to our sins against God. If God has forgiven us of so much, how could we refuse to forgive others of so "little"? Matthew 6:14-15, according to this view, proclaims that anyone who harbors unforgiveness against others has not truly experienced God’s forgiveness. Both interpretations strongly deny that salvation is dependent on our forgiving others. Whether Matthew 6:14-15 is speaking of "relational forgiveness," or whether it is a declaration that unforgiveness is the mark of an unbeliever, the core truth is the same. We should forgive others because God, through Christ, has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32). It is inconceivable that someone who has truly experienced God’s forgiveness could refuse to grant forgiveness to others.
# Which Faith System Encourages Forgiveness?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grace as Faith Basis</th>
<th>Law as Faith Basis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Relationship Model)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(Performance as Model)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follower is fully and always justified based on Christ’s perfection alone.</td>
<td>Follower is never justified because Law requires 100% perfection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eternal relationship with God defines the followers’ life.</td>
<td>Failed fellowship—not relationship with God—defines follower’s life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follower’s life is controlled by the Holy Spirit</td>
<td>Follower’s life is controlled by Law’s rules and regulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follower is eternally judged according to the imputation of Christ’s perfection applied to him or her.</td>
<td>Follower is eternally judged according to his or her own failing efforts at perfection—with the benefits of Christ’s perfection.</td>
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</tbody>
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Realizing we are under eternal penalty of the Law, we ought to seek God’s grace, asking Him to save us according to relationship with Him rather than according to our failed performance under the penalty of the Law.
Appendix B

Is the Doctrine of Sinless Perfection Biblical?

by Pastor Don Grady

“Sinless Perfection” is a term that often brings confusion. According to R. C. Sproul, an ancient heresy of the distinction between carnal and spirit-filled Christians is called “Perfectionism.” This teaches there is a class of Christians who achieve moral perfection in this life. To be sure, credit is given to the Holy Spirit as the agent who brings total victory over sin, but there is a sort of elitism in perfectionism—claiming those who have achieved it are somehow better than other Christians—or that others without it are not really Christians at all.

The problem is stated, “Can justified Christians achieve perfection through a sudden working of the Holy Spirit in their lives—and subsequently live a sinless perfection? We know that humans, as image bearers of God, lost fellowship with Him through sin in the garden, but God provided for salvation by the incarnation, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Through spiritual rebirth, God imputed the righteousness of Christ to all true believers. But does this mean men can achieve complete perfection or sanctification during their lifetime?

In the eighteenth century John Wesley popularized the doctrine of Christian Perfection—though he never used the term “sinless perfection.” Wesley’s view was that perfection was not only attainable, but the believer was able to walk in perfection through the power of the Holy Spirit all the days of his life. A feature of Wesley’s doctrine was that Christian perfection was not always instantaneous upon conversion—though it could be. This doctrine has caused division among Christians especially in the last three hundred years.

[M.J.: “Pastor Grady, opponents of the this heresy correctly point out that it is merely mincing words to claim there’s a difference—at least in human application—between the concept of perfection and sinlessness. Therefore, Full Gospel and holiness fellowships claiming they adhere to perfection—mean sinlessness is the standard. Since sinlessness in this life is not possible —
the precise biblical understanding of *perfect* is necessary. Please share with us about perfection, especially from the New Testament perspective—the standard that applies to us.

According to *Strong's Concordance*, the word “perfect” in its various forms occurs 138 times in the Bible. The Hebrew word is “*tamiym*” and is defined as “without blemish, complete full, perfect, sincere, sound, without spot, undefiled, upright, and whole.” The Greek word is “*teleios*” which means “of full age, mature, perfect.” In Matthew 5:48 Jesus says, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Paul says in 2 Cor 7:1, “Since we have these dear promises, friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates the body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.” In Hebrews 13:20-21, the author says, “Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ…make you perfect in every good work to do His will…” *This* is the perfection we have in this life: *It is God working in us that produces any “perfection” we have.*

Great believers in the Old and New Testaments admit to being sinful—far from being perfect. The chief example is David, called “a man after God’s own heart.” Yet he sinned grievously. In Psalm 51:1-3, David confesses, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin,” In verse 12, he prays, “Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.” David did not think he’d lost his salvation, but he lost his joy because of his sin.

[M.J.: Pastor Grady, You’ve drawn attention to another aspect of the error of perfectionism as practiced by cults and denominations that strive for their own perfection rather than having Christ’s perfection as theirs. These believers claim they lose and regain their salvation—over and over again—as they repeatedly sin and repent—sin and repent. Certainly, we cannot make light of this inner tension experienced by all believers. But those seeking this impossible perfection do not correctly understand how Paul addresses this conundrum for sincere believers. His great
monologue in Rom 7 precisely addresses our problem as sinners, saved by grace. Please tell us what Paul says. ]

The apostle Paul was clear about his own sins and those to whom he wrote —especially the Corinthians. Though Romans 8:35-39 declares Paul is saved for eternity—as are all believers—in Chapter 7:14-20 he writes,

> For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not do, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is not more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Paul ends this passage by answering his own questions: “I thank God through Christ Jesus our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”

[ M.J.: Pastor Grady, I hear you every week lead us through the much needed exercise of examining ourselves. This is the antidote to the problem of sinning but knowing our sin is not pleasing to God. We do not have to strive to be perfect in ourselves because John tells us exactly where is the power to remain in fellowship with Christ—though we stumble and fall, daily. Please remind our listeners of how we are to deal with our sin nature. ]

The Apostle John says in 1 John 1:7-10 (7) “But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, purifies us from all sin. (8) If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (10) If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar, and His word has no place in our lives.”

Verse 8 and 10 seem to clinch the idea that we cannot be without sin in this life. John knew that people, including himself, sinned. They must confess their sins and be forgiven. The Lord
Jesus Christ, in the model prayer which He gave to the disciples, made the same provision when He told them and us to pray: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (Matthew 6:12).
Appendix C

What is the Purpose and Process of Repentance?  
Reformation or Transformation?

What preparation qualifies one to receive Christ Jesus as Savior?  This teaching explains what repentance is—and isn’t—in the life of a transformed soul.  Reformation of behavior is not the objective of salvation; the objective of passing from spiritual death to eternal life is the transformation of a lost soul.

Believers are added to Christ's Body through spiritual re-birth (John 3:3, 5, 7) that grants eternal life.  "Being in Christ" (Acts 17:28a) transforms a soul immediately and irreversibly.  All efforts of self-initiated justification are forsaken.  The power of the gospel overshadows any ability to offer one’s own sacrifice—in whatever form.

It is God’s goodness that leads to repentance (Rom 2:4).  Redemption is wholly and miraculously the result of the Holy Spirit’s transforming work.  Man’s one decision in the matter is his willful yielding to the Holy Spirit’s work, leading him to receive this free gift (Eph 2:8).

But isn’t some form of repentance—reformed behavior—needed to effect salvation?  No.  After salvation repentance does mark the life a born again, spirit-filled soul.  As the Holy Spirit convicts of unconfessed sin that one submits to repeated cleansing in order to remain in fruitful fellowship with God and with man.

But it is the law-bound Pharisee who inspects and judges—looking for tangible qualifiers he says must precede salvation.  He does not understand that the heart yielded to the Spirit repents according to 1 Thess 1:9-1017 and 2 Pet 3:9.18  Repentance that is transformative changes hearts—causing lost minds to agree that justice calls for punishment of one’s sins.  Repentance that is transformative agrees God has the right to damn unrighteous souls.  Repentance that is transformative agrees we are eternally lost—without Christ.

But the initial repentance that turns one away from idols to the Living God (1 John 1:9) is not the ongoing repentance that follows salvation.  We must not mix the moment of salvation—passing from spiritual death to eternal life—with the lifetime of sanctification—the necessary ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in a sealed life.

Why is the simplicity of this initial work of God’s grace so difficult for the law-tuned mind to embrace?  Because, operating in the flesh, the Pharisee—the legalist—prefers self-

17 1 Thess 1:9 "For they themselves showed us...how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;"

18 2 Peter 3:9  "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”
righteousness that refuses to agree salvation is by God’s grace alone, and not qualified somehow by man’s (reforming) repentance.

Questions must be answered by the one claiming repentance is necessary for salvation: Just **how much** must one reform? In **what way** must one repent? For **what purpose**, and for **how long**? What must one do to **fully repent**? **How much work** must one do? **How much sacrifice** must one offer?

This *charade* is of course what *Pharisaical repentance* becomes — man's **WORKS** — **not God's**. It is a *perversion of the gospel* when repentance is **unlawfully** used in an attempt to **qualify** salvation (1 Tim 1:8). “Repentance is *not a prerequisite* to salvation; for if repentance is **required**, salvation is based, at least in part, **upon works.**”19 Only One divine Work (the Cross)—offered by the Only Mediator (Christ) —qualifies redemption of lost souls (Hebrews 8:6).

Pharisees and legalists — cease your perverted preaching! A "Scarlet Letter" — the red Letter "R" is a millstone of feigned self-righteousness around your neck — claiming “repentance” assures your salvation rather than God’s GRACE. You believe it is your (reformative) behavior that saves you. Abandon this false notion. Believe God’s Word to biblically understand the purpose and process of repentance.

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Appendix D

The Seven Dispensations of God Taught in the Bible

A. Knowing which dispensation is indicated by a Bible passage contributes to our accurate understanding of the text. The Greek word oikonomia means “to manage.” Understanding dispensations means understanding God’s management of human activity over the different ages and man’s corresponding obedience or disobedience to obey God’s directives during an age. Dispensation occurs four times in Paul’s epistles:

“…a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.” (1 Cor 9:17b)

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.” (Eph 1:7-10)

“…you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery…” (Eph 3:2-5)

“…I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God…” (Col 1:25)

B. Other words than dispensation are easier to understand and mean the same thing:

- responsibility
- stewardship
- administration

Man has distinct and different responsibility toward God depending on the dispensation in which he lives; he has a distinct stewardship he must fulfill depending on the dispensation; God determines different administrations over the affairs of men, depending on when they live.

C. Different dispensations of time do not indicate different ways or means of salvation of man. In all ages man is saved by God’s gracious mercy, with all salvation in the Old Testament either looking forward to the cross and all salvation after Christ’s ascension looking backward to the cross. Man has new responsibilities with each progressively revealed dispensation of time.

D. Understanding dispensations means knowing that in each dispensation man has failed to meet his responsibility toward God; he fails the test. In each he is not a good steward of what God brings to him to manage; in each dispensation God sees fit to bring that
failing administration to close, ushering in a new dispensation. We are now living in the sixth dispensation of seven.

“Dispensations are separate periods of time in which God dispenses His will in a specific and unique way, based on a covenant upon which a particular dispensation is founded.”

E. Following are the seven dispensations in historical sequence:

(a) The Dispensation or the Age of Man’s Innocence is revealed in Genesis 1:28-3:8.
   (From Creation through the Fall)

This dispensation corresponds with the test of obedience to the Edenic Covenant. Adam and Eve were not created to sin; they existed in the garden in a state of innocence. The first humans faced a test. Failing the test, their freedom was taken from them. They were given complete latitude in their responsibility with only one restriction. Because they failed to obey God they were judged; their state of holiness was removed; they became sinful creatures. But the goodness of God did not allow Him to leave Adam and Eve in this sinful state. God presented the promise of the coming Redeemer as He clothed the couple in animal skins shed by blood.

(b) The Dispensation or the Age of Conscience is revealed in Genesis 3:9-8:14, Rom 2:15
   (From post-Fall through the Flood)

This dispensation corresponds with the test of obedience to the Adamic Covenant. Based on the prior promise of the coming Redeemer (Gen 3:15), man was now given the freedom to operate according to the dictates of his conscience. Adam and Eve could obey God if they chose to do so. When man did evil he was to present acceptable blood sacrifices to God. The second generation, Cain, failed the test of the dispensation with his improper sacrifice and murder of his brother who presented a proper sacrifice. All mankind continued to live according to violence and corruption. The conscience of man became seared, no longer responding to divine correction. God’s judgment for failing this test of obedience was the death of all except eight during the Flood. Noah’s preservation and Enoch’s translation served as prophetic indicators of God’s grace that would bring the birth of the Messiah who would bring freedom from all sin.
(c) **The Dispensation or the Age of Civil Government is revealed in Genesis 8:15 – 11:32.**

(From post-Flood through the Tower of Babel)

This dispensation corresponds with the test of obedience to the **Noahic Covenant**. Man was now given freedom to directly govern the affairs of men, with the ultimate right to put to death those who murdered. Rule, order, and authority were to provide the foundation for just exercise of man’s freedom. God intended to dispense his authority through human authority. The Tower of Babel marks the most significant disobedience during this dispensation. Disobeying the command to spread over the earth, Babel worshippers determined to remain in Babylon. Nimrod further disobeyed with his efforts to build consolidated empires. God’s judgment for failing this test was confusing languages which accomplished the forced dispersion of man over the earth. What they voluntarily would not do God forced on them due to their disobedience. God’s grace was seen in his preservation of the Seed line begun with Noah, continuing with Shem, and going through Abraham, after the failure by man in this dispensation. “The promises He made concerning the *seed of the woman* continued to be preserved in spite of the Flood and in spite of the Tower of Babel.”

(d) **The Dispensation or Age of God’s Promise is revealed in Genesis 12:1-Exodus 18:27**

(From the call of Abraham to Israel’s bondage)

This dispensation corresponds with the test of obedience to the **Abrahamic Covenant**. God made promises to His called-out servant, Abram, becoming Abraham. The main test of this dispensation was clear instructions to remain in the Land into which God had brought them. Abraham failed this test as revealed in Gen 12. Against his will, Joseph, Abraham’s grandson was sold into slavery and was moved to Egypt. God’s judgment for failing this test of obedience was the divisive and community-destroying Egyptian bondage. Israel continued in be preserved and prevailed whether they were in or out of their Land. “God continued to preserve the seed of the woman, now also to be the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

(e) **The Dispensation of the Law is revealed in Exodus 19:-Acts 1:26**

(From Mt. Sinai to Christ’s death)

This dispensation corresponds to the test of obedience to the **Mosaic Covenant**. Having failed all prior tests, man was now held directly accountable to perfectly follow all 613 commands in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Of note is the fact that this dispensation extends through the time of Christ, after His death, to just prior to Acts 2, the Day of Pentecost when the church was born. Unable to keep the law perfectly, man began measures designed to

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21 Ibid, 12.
express self-righteousness. The prophets all spoke of the coming Messiah and the need to receive Him as their righteousness. Failure by the scribes and Pharisees to lead the people to obey the law and the prophets lead to God’s judgment of His chosen people. The Temple was destroyed in AD 70 and the Jews were entirely dispersed worldwide. During this dispensation when no man could satisfy the law, God’s grace was evident in the sacrificial system that provided restoration from sin but not dissolution of sin. Starting with Abraham, Jews were to be saved by faith. Failing to identify with that promised faith, the dispensation ended in complete failure. The Jews were repeatedly released from bondage to many foreign entities. The remnant survived to the coming of their Messiah, Jesus Christ.

(f) The Dispensation of the Mystery of the Church is revealed in Acts 2:1-Revelation 4:11
(From the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to Christ’s coming for His Bride)

This dispensation corresponds to the test of obedience to the New Covenant. Unable in human effort to obey the requirements of the Mosaic law, God offers the ultimate atoning sacrifice for man’s unrelenting sin (Eph 3:2). The basis of the New Covenant is the death, burial, and resurrection of Israel’s Messiah and the Head of the church. “The majority of humanity will not come to a saving knowledge of Yeshua the Messiah in our own day; any more than it was true before our time, and certainly will not be true even in the future.”22 Within the professing church many will turn away from received truth (Jude 3), embracing apostate teachings in place of biblical doctrine. The judgment on man for this failure will be the Great Tribulation. “…the unbelieving visible church will go into the Tribulation and suffer the wrath of God. But the believing, invisible Church…will be taken out of this earth before the Tribulation ever starts.”23 This translation of the Body of Christ will include those who have died in Christ and those alive at that time.

(g) The Dispensation of the Millennial Kingdom is revealed in Revelation 20:1-10
(From end of the Tribulation to the completion of Christ’s earthly 1,000 year reign)

As with the prior dispensation, this dispensation corresponds to the test of obedience to the New Covenant. After the seven year Tribulation and Christ’s return to earth with His heavenly Bride, He will conduct a 1,000 year physical reign on the throne of David. Swift and fair justice will be administered for all disobedience to Christ’s rule and authority. King Jesus will be enthroned in Jerusalem and will receive the honor and praise due Him as Supreme Regent. Because rebellion will continue in the hearts of many during the Millennium the release of Satan at the end of the thousand years will lead to a final revolt against God, with emphasis on

22 “The Dispensations of God”, 15.
23 Ibid.
attempts to invade and destroy the Holy City, Jerusalem. “The judgment in this dispensation will be the destruction of all these invading armies by fire out of Heaven.”\textsuperscript{24} Despite this violent end to the thousand year reign, during the Millennium all unfulfilled prophecies will be fulfilled; prosperity and peace will characterize life on earth; and immortality will be granted to all who come to faith in the Messiah.

The end of this final dispensation brings all those to their eternal abode, either heaven or hell.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, 17.