

# What Does the Bible Say About “Better Safe Than Sorry”?

If you read the comments on this Web site then you'll see something like this written a lot:

*I don't know if it's really wrong to cut my hair or wear make-up or jewelry, but isn't it better to be safe than sorry? I would rather get to Heaven and find out that I didn't have to do those things then get there and find out that I did, and then spend eternity in hell. Can you imagine “missing it” just because I wanted to cut my hair or wear a pair of pants?*

When I was growing up I heard that argument more times than I can count. After I left I've read it repeatedly in the comments on this Web site. It's the fall back position of many apostolics when every other argument fails. If you can't back up your doctrine with Scripture then pull out the “better safe than sorry” argument! And I have to admit, it sounds pretty good.

Another variant goes like this (I've heard it used a lot by pastors):

*I know that some of the rules might not be necessary, but sin is like a cliff. You don't build the fence right up against the cliff, you build it a little ways back. That way if people step over it then they still won't fall over the cliff. ((If you think about it, this doesn't make a lot of sense. Sin is a matter of intent as much as it is an action. The idea is that a person can decide to sin and still not sin because they're accidentally not breaking enough rules. It just doesn't add up. That's like saying you can force a person to be saved by baptizing them. It's not biblical. If a person is making a choice to do something that they perceive*

*as sin then it is sin, even if the action itself is not wrong. By the same token, an action like baptism or giving to the poor is spiritually meaningless unless done freely for the right reasons.))*

Yet another variant goes like this:

*After everything Christ has done for you, you can't even give up pants, make-up, or jewelry? He gave His life for you and you won't even give up pants, make-up, or jewelry for Him.*

Once again, this one sounds good too.

But there are two fundamental problems with all of these arguments. First, the underlying factor with all of them is that our works can get us into Heaven. I believe with all my heart that there's nothing wrong with having facial hair, but if I get to Heaven and find out that I'm wrong then I know God's grace covers me. The same goes for my wife cutting her hair or wearing jewelry and make-up. I don't believe there's a thing in the world wrong with it, but if I'm wrong then she's covered by grace. That doesn't give me an excuse to sin, it just means that after much study I firmly believe that I'm not sinning in the first place. ((This point cannot be stressed enough. A common apostolic counter-argument is that "easy believism" leads to sin. I deal with this briefly farther down in this article and in much more detail in the ["What Does the Bible Say About Salvation?"](#) article, Still, it's worth mentioning briefly here. Paul was accused of teaching the same thing—that grace leads to free sin. He strongly condemned that doctrine in Romans 6. The doctrine has been refuted repeatedly throughout the New Testament and church history. The word that is used to describe it is "antinomianism", which means "lawlessness." The Bible stresses that grace does not lead to lawlessness. Instead, grace leads to a changed nature through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. The idea here is that we do need to study and make every effort to align ourselves with

the commands of God, but when we “miss it” we can still be assured that God’s grace covers us. For more on antinomianism I recommend [this excellent article](#).) I’m doing my best to obey the commands of Christ, but I’m doing that *because* I’m saved, not *in order to get* saved. If I “miss it” then God’s grace covers me.

That’s one problem with the arguments. The idea that we can work our way into Heaven is just plain wrong. It stands in opposition to dozens of Scriptures. My article “[What does the Bible say about salvation?](#)” explains this in detail.

But there’s another problem with the “better safe than sorry” arguments, and it’s one that’s very counter intuitive. As a matter of fact, it’s like a bomb shell to a lot of people. It rocks their world. I know that it rocked mine. And that goes for non-apostolics too, by the way. Lots of people don’t know about this, but it’s central to the Biblical understanding of grace. Are you ready for it? Here goes:

*Works, for the sake of works, don't draw us closer to God; they **separate us from Him.***

Don’t believe me? Sound too radical? Well, before you shut me down, read this quote from a famous non-denominational theologian.

*I suspect you would never intend this, but this is what happens. When you attempt to live by your own religious plans and projects, you are cut off from Christ, you fall out of grace. Meanwhile we expectantly wait for a satisfying relationship with the Spirit. For in Christ, neither our most conscientious religion nor disregard of religion amounts to anything. What matters is something far more interior: faith expressed in love.*

I have to admit, that sounds pretty lovey dovey. As a matter of fact, when I was in the UPC I would have rolled my eyes at

that and said something like, "So you're just saying we should throw doctrine out the window and love everybody?"

If I said that then I would be wrong, though. Why? Because the famous theologian who wrote those words was the Apostle Paul. ((The quote above is Gal. 5:4-6 MSG)).

Here is how the NASB puts it:

*It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Behold I, Paul, say to you that **if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.** And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. **You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.** For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. **You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you.** A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. **But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.** I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves. For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."  
(Gal 5:1-14 NASB, emphasis mine)*

One word: Wow.

As a man I can't think of anything that would require more

dedication than adult circumcision. Surely God must be pleased with it, right? I can imagine the Galatians saying, "After everything that Christ did for you, you can't even be circumcised? He's done so much for you and yet you won't do that little thing for Him?" Or perhaps, "Circumcision might not be necessary, but isn't it better to be safe than sorry? Do you want to get to heaven and find out that the one thing God wanted you to do was circumcision and you missed Heaven because of it?"

It sounds good, doesn't it? God did a lot for us so we must do a lot for Him. The problem is that when we think like that we're thinking like humans and not like God. You see, circumcision was part of the Old Covenant. It was the Acts 2:38 of the Mosaic law. If you weren't circumcised then it didn't matter what else you did, you weren't under the Covenant. Some of the Jews in Galatia began to focus on the doctrine of circumcision because it had been so important under the Old Covenant. Somewhere along the way they began to believe that Christians under the New Covenant needed to be circumcised. They began to think that circumcision would draw them closer to God. They began to persuade themselves that they could work their way to Him. It's a very human way of thinking and it seems awfully right. "God did stuff for me so now I need to do stuff for Him," is what we think. The problem is, God doesn't see it that way. He doesn't see it as us doing stuff for Him, He sees it as us trying to work our way to Him and in the process making His grace meaningless.

Paul said something similar when people put the focus on baptism instead of the gospel—something that the apostolic churches are also guilty of. When that happened, Paul wrote:

*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void. For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1Cor. 1:17-18 NASB)*

In this case baptism isn't wrong. As a matter of fact, Christ commanded it! By the same token, circumcision isn't wrong. Neither is wearing skirts or not cutting your hair. There's nothing inherently wrong about those things. Unless, that is, we persuade ourselves that doing or not doing those things somehow draws us closer to God. ((Baptism is indeed commanded by God so do not take this statement to mean that we should not get baptized. The key point here is that *anything* can become wrong, even baptism, if we do it in an attempt to work our way to salvation.)) When we allow ourselves to think that our works save us then we have made the cross ineffective—we've rendered it void. Why? Because we've told Christ that His work wasn't good enough. We've told Him that grace isn't enough, that we need to supplement it with a dress code. We've told Him that His death is meaningless.

You know what's ironic? That the apostolic churches put so much emphasis on not *falling* away from Christ that they actually *sever* themselves from Christ. They take a God who would never reject them and they use the knife of legalism to reject Him from themselves

Heavy stuff? Controversial? Counter intuitive? Don't blame me. I didn't write it. Blame Paul.

Another thing that's ironic is that the apostolic churches claim to have "the Truth." They like to go to Galatians 1:8-9 and say that they are teaching the *true* gospel and that everyone who disagrees is deceived and cursed. The sad thing is that the "other gospel" Paul was talking about was the doctrine that says we can work our way to God. That was the "other gospel," and the UPC teaches it.

And Paul said that anyone who taught it was cursed.

I realized these things when I was still in the UPC and it rocked my world. I realized that I was the one who believed the "other gospel," that I was the one with "little faith"

(Romans 14), that my works didn't indicate closeness to God, that instead they indicated I had little faith and wasn't close to Him at all.

So do I believe in the "better safe than sorry" philosophy? Nope. I don't. Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 5:17 that "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (NASB). Jesus said in John 15:1-17 that when we are in Him we grow spiritual fruit, and in Mat. 7:15-20 He said that the spiritual fruit is the evidence that we're saved. (Paul defined what that fruit is in Gal. 5:19-23, and it has nothing to do with the holiness standards; Jesus also gave examples of the good works we're called to do in Mat. 25:31-46).

In other words, when we are saved we are transformed—regenerated, as the Bible calls it. We become a new person. The Spirit of God begins to work in us to shape and mold us into His image. We begin to bear spiritual fruit. We don't grow closer to God by working for Him, we draw closer to Him by letting Him work in us. ((One thing worth mentioning is that there is a place in the Bible for good works. As a matter of fact, that concept is very important Scripturally. What we need to understand, though, is that we're saved **for** good works, not **because of** good works. Paul makes that abundantly clear in Eph. 2:1-10. Good works are, well, good! That is, until we begin to believe that they save us. It's also worth noting that a dress code isn't the kind of good works that Paul was talking about. We shouldn't use good works as an excuse for legalism. The good works that Paul was writing about are the same ones emphasized by Christ in Mat. 25:31-46. You'll see a lot of good works in that passage and none of them have anything to do with whether or not we wear make-up or cut our hair.))

You see, it's not my job to setup a system of rules to try to get into Heaven, it's the Holy Spirit's job to work in me and guide me down the proper paths. It's not my job to build a

fence of works and hope others don't cross it, it's God's job to work in those individuals and show them where the fence is. That doesn't negate the need for elders and ministers to teach the Word of God, it just means that it's not the job of those elders and ministers to create extra rules that aren't in Scripture in order to try to make our souls safe. When they do those things they place themselves under a curse from God, and when we follow them we pull out the knife of works and begin to slowly sever ourselves from Christ.

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## [What Does The Bible Say About Salvation?](#)

Several weeks ago I got a request through email from a lady. This is what she said:

*I was wondering if you could do a blog about what the Bible says about salvation? My husband and I are in a UPC church right now...and we are looking to get out. We studied and found that salvation is NOT speaking in tongues...but we want an exhaustive reference guide, from the point of a fellow ex-UPC'er. We can refute Acts 2:38 up and down...but it's man's refutations. Can you point out exactly why speaking in tongues isn't associated with salvation as well?*

I discussed their request with my fiance Kali—also a former UPC'er—and we thought that she raised a really good point. When we leave the UPC we often know what salvation *isn't* but we're not quite sure what salvation *is*. What does it even mean to be saved? Does it just mean that we're heading for the great Gloryland in the sky when we die? Or is there more to it? And how do we get saved? Is it by faith? Baptism? Is baptism



essential for salvation? There are so many different interpretations, so many different beliefs, that it becomes overwhelming to try to sort it all out.

My prayer is that this article will answer the question that the lady and her husband asked while also helping others who are asking the same questions. ((Dealing with the entire subject of salvation throughout the Old and New Testaments would take hundreds of pages. If a person wants a good scholarly analysis of the topic then I highly recommend the International Bible Standard Encyclopedia article on it, which can be found [here](#). In this article I'm going to deal with the more common use of the word.))

## What Is Salvation?

In the UPC salvation gets a lot of attention. We toss around phrases like, "They love the Lord so much, it's a shame that they don't have the truth," or, "That song [by a Trinitarian singer] is so anointed, they've almost got it!" When we say all of these things what we are really saying is, "That person loves the Lord but isn't saved," or, "That person has the Spirit of God resting upon them and blessing their music, but it's too bad they aren't saved." (When we stop and think about it in those terms it becomes apparent that it would be very strange that a person could love God and follow Him and yet not be saved, kind of like a cosmic game of hide and seek with people looking for Christ and never finding Him—the exact opposite of what Scripture says in Luke 11:9-13.) The point is, in the UPC we're obsessed with seeing people saved, and that's how it should be! Christians of all denominations should feel the same way. But in the UPC we've associated salvation with a theological understanding (Oneness) or an experience (tongues) or an action (dressing right). But is that what salvation really is? Is that how a person is saved? What does it really mean to be saved?

The word that most applies to our discussion is found in Acts 16:30-31, when a jailer of Paul was about to commit suicide because he thought that Paul had escaped:

*When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." (NASB) ((All Scripture references are from the NASB unless otherwise noted.))*

The word that is translated as "saved" in the above verse is the Greek word *sozo*. It means "To save, deliver, make whole, preserve safe from danger, loss, destruction." ((The Complete WordStudy Dictionary, G4982, 1992, AMG International Inc)) Of the fifty-four times the word is used in the New Testament, "fourteen relate to deliverance from disease or demon possession...in twenty instances, the inference is to the rescue of physical life from some impending peril or instant death...[in] the remaining twenty times, the reference is to spiritual salvation." ((Ibid.)) The references to spiritual salvation are the ones we're interested in. Consider the following verses:

*"She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)*

*And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" (Acts 2:40)*

*Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. (Romans 5:9)*

*For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)*

*Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. (1 Timothy 4:16)*

*Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:25)*

*Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:21)*

At this point one might wonder why I stop to define the word "saved," since it's certain that any reader with a background in Christianity will know exactly what I'm talking about. The reason is because I've seen quite a few debates about salvation online, and you'd be amazed at the number of people who throw Scriptures around about "salvation" when the type of salvation that the Scripture is talking about may not even be spiritual! Additionally, it's important to remember that the method of salvation could be quite different depending on the era that a particular passage was written in. Some passages deal with salvation as a nation (Israel), others with salvation as a family unit, and others with salvation as an individual. Because of all this, I want to stress that this article is dealing with the spiritual salvation that we find in the New Testament—salvation that saves and delivers us from the wrath of God and ushers us into heaven.

# How Is A Person Saved?

It's impossible to discuss what it means to be saved without first talking about how to be saved. I know that seems backwards, but it will make sense in a moment.

The person who emailed me requesting this article made a really good point. She said, "We can refute Acts 2:38 up and down...but it's man's refutations." I think that a lot of people are in that same situation. They know what salvation isn't. They've come to realize that it's more deep than an emotional experience but more simple than what they've been taught. They've come to realize that a person doesn't have to spend night after night at an altar sweating and pleading and crying and begging for God's Spirit. They know what salvation is *not* but they don't quite know what it *is*. Fortunately for us, the Bible makes it abundantly clear. That's right. Very clear. The reason we missed it in the UPC is not because we weren't intelligent enough. It's so simple children all over the world understand it. The reason we missed it is because we put emphasis on the wrong things, twisted the verses out of context, then ran roughshod over the very clear teaching of Scripture—the very thing we accused all those Trinitarians of doing!

Consider the following passage of Scripture. Look at how plain the teaching is:

*"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved [sozo] through Him. (John 3:14-17)*

Now, we've been taught all our life that it was more

complicated than this. After all, doesn't "just believe" lead to "easy believism"? (No it doesn't, but we'll deal with that in a moment.) Isn't this Scripture just one Scripture out of many that teaches us how to be saved? (If it is, then it's really surprising that Jesus wouldn't share the "whole plan of salvation" every time He spoke, since He must have realized that it would be hundreds of years before the New Testament canon was readily available to every Christian. As a matter of fact, neither Jesus or Paul or any other writer ever mentioned the UPC plan of salvation in any way, shape, or form.) But let's not get sidetracked, because the point that I want to make is very simple: Salvation (*sozo*) stands in contrast to judgment. Let's read verse 17 again, and tack on verses 18-21 as well:

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, **that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.** For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. **He who believes in Him is not judged;** he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."* (John 3:16-21, emphasis mine)

Think about that for a moment.

To be spiritually saved is to *not* be judged. To be lost is to be judged.

How does a person stand before a judge and not be condemned? The only way is to be declared innocent.

And that leads us to the obvious question: How do I, a sinner, stand innocent before God? Or, to put it another way, how does a person get made righteous before God?

Scripture calls it "being justified," and there's only one way, throughout all of the New Testament, that it happens, and that way is "faith."

## Justification

The Greek word for "justify" is *dikaioo* and it means "to render righteous" or to "declare...one to be just...such as he ought to be" ((Thayer's Greek Definitions, G1344)). In other words, when we are justified we are rendered righteous and declared to be just. We're made right before God. We who were once dirty and sinful are now clean. We stand innocent.

Paul liked the word "justified." He used it a lot. Consider this passage in Romans:

*But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, **even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace** through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because **in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.** Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but **by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.** Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed **God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the***

*uncircumcised through faith is one." (Romans 3:21-30, emphasis mine)*

That's a long passage, so let me sum it up: We're not righteous, but God is, and God passed over our sins and declared us righteous based upon HIS righteousness, not ours!

Now, call me crazy, but it sounds like Paul is saying that people are justified (made right with God) through faith. It's almost like what Jesus said back in John 3:14-17 when He said that people will be saved through belief.

But isn't this just part of the plan of salvation? Where's the speaking in tongues? If we're made righteous through faith then what about Jesus' Name baptism?

If belief is just part of a grander plan of salvation then both Jesus and Paul continually forget to mention it. Paul goes on to write this just a few chapters later:

*But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." (Romans 10:8-11, emphasis mine)*

As a matter of fact, Paul told the church in Corinth that he was not sent to baptize, and that he was thankful that he had hardly baptized any of them (1 Cor. 1:13-18)! Can you imagine a UPC preacher ever saying that? I've heard plenty of explanations in the UPC for that verse, but none of them did away with the simple fact that Paul esteemed preaching higher than baptizing, and he was comfortable thanking God that He

hadn't baptized a lot of people. If baptism was an essential part of the "plan of salvation" then I can't imagine Paul ever penning those words.

And what about tongues? Paul's comment on the matter was that not everyone speaks in tongues (1 Cor. 12:30). No mention of there being two types of tongues, never a mention in Paul's writings (or anyone else's) about tongues being the evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit. Instead, we find a tremendous emphasis in Scripture on belief along with an accompanying promise that it is sufficient for salvation. When we really stop and read Scripture for what it says, without trying to tie it in knots and make it say what we *think* it should say, then we find that there is little emphasis on baptism, no emphasis on tongues, but tremendous emphasis on belief.

We'll talk about belief in just a moment, but first let's look at a few more Scriptures that emphatically affirm that we are saved by the grace of God through faith in Christ:

*In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise," (Ephesians 1:13, emphasis mine) (By the way, if you're wondering when people get baptized with the Holy Spirit, then the above verse tells you. It happens upon belief.)*

*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Romans 10:4)*

*for "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:13)*

*'And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'* (Acts 2:21)

*and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of*



Moses. (Acts 13:39)

They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:31)

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1)

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25- 26) (Sadly enough, the UPC would have to answer "no" to Jesus' question, for the UPC does not believe that believing in Christ is enough to ensure eternal life.)

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." (John 5:24)

Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life." (1 Timothy 1:16)

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him." (1 John 5:1)

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God." (1 John 4:15)

and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15)

The promise of salvation by faith through grace is written all throughout the New Testament. It oozes out from between the

covers of the Bible. But we in the UPC were convinced that there just had to be more to it. So we twisted Scripture (the thing that we had accused others of doing) and prodded and poked and cajoled and tied unrelated Scriptures together until we came up with a theology of salvation that is completely and totally unrelated to anything Christ or Paul or any other apostle ever said!

Now let's talk about belief.

## **Belief**

We see now that we are made right with God (a.k.a. "saved") by belief in Christ. But what does that mean?

The typical UPC view of belief is one called "easy believism." The view says that if belief alone is sufficient for salvation then a person can live a life of sin and still be saved. Now there are so-called Christians who believe that, but the UPC might be surprised to find out that those people are not in the majority. Every Trinitarian church that I have attended since leaving has taught strongly against sin. But is the UPC belief correct? Could a person just live however they want and still be saved? Does God just blink His eyes at sin and look the other way? Interestingly enough, Paul was accused of teaching that very thing, and this was his reply:

*"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be!" (Rom. 6:1-2a)*

The Greek word that we often translate "believe" or "faith" is the Greek word *pisteuo*, and it is difficult to translate properly into English. You see, in the English language when we say "believe" we often mean "intellectual acknowledgment." For example, I believe (intellectually acknowledge) that Africa exists, but I don't put my faith in Africa for anything. If I one day found out that Africa was a myth, the result of a global conspiracy theory, then my life would go on

as before. Nothing would change (except for my belief in conspiracy theories). That's intellectual acknowledgment, but it's not biblical belief. It's not *pisteuo*.

*Pisteuo* means both intellectual acknowledgment (to be persuaded of a fact) and faith (to put confidence in that fact, or to entrust oneself to it). ((Thayer's, G4102)) Now, it's entirely correct to say that intellectual acknowledgment of Christ would by itself lead to "easy believism." Sadly, there are so-called Christians who behave that way. They say, "Oh, I believe in Christ," and they go on about their lives without being changed. They've intellectually acknowledged Christ, but they haven't put their faith in Him. Those people are often called functional atheists, and they're no more saved than the squirrel outside my window.

To believe in the New Testament sense, though, requires a person to both intellectually acknowledge Christ as Lord *and* to completely entrust themselves to Him. It is a faith that demands action. If I had New Testament faith in Africa then I would intellectually acknowledge its existence and then move there and live completely off of African products. My life would depend on Africa. If Africa didn't exist then neither would I. I would have completely entrusted myself to it for life, and if I was wrong then I would be dead. That's *pisteuo*, and it's the type of belief that we're told to have in Christ.

When we believe in the New Testament sense we throw ourselves upon Christ for our salvation. We recognize that without Him we have no hope of eternal life. We declare Him Lord and pledge our allegiance to Him. It is a faith that demands action. Without action it's not *pisteuo*.

That's why God chose faith as the method through which grace works. You see, people often say that we're saved by faith, but that's not entirely correct. We're saved by grace. Faith is just the catalyst that triggers it (Eph. 2:8). That's why

the proper phrase is "we're saved by grace through faith," not "we're saved by faith." (It's true that the Bible often says we are justified through belief, but when read in context the underlying factor is always God's grace. Apart from grace faith would be nothing.) Faith is our part, grace is God's. We throw ourselves on Him for our salvation and He responds. If we try to work our way to salvation then that just won't work. None of us can make ourselves righteous before God (Rom. 3:10). If we could work our way to salvation then we could boast (Rom. 4:2), but we can't so we don't. We throw ourselves upon God and He justifies us, He makes us right before Him. Then we have nothing to boast in except Christ crucified.

With all that in mind, this passage should make a lot more sense:

*For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other.*

*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void. For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside." Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message*

*preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

*For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:11-31)*

In other words, Christ did things exactly backwards—at least according to us humans (which means we're the ones who are backwards). Instead of trusting in our strength we trust in God's. To become strong we become weak. To become first we become last. Instead of trusting in our wisdom we become fools. Why? Because it's not our wisdom and strength that saves us, it's God's.

How much more foolish could you get than being saved by not working? How crazy is it to win a battle by surrendering? But for those of us who are saved by faith it's the power of God at work. Can we boast? Yes, but not in ourselves. Can we be proud? Yes, just not in us. The only One we can boast in is God.

We can't brag about how long we spent at an altar or how we

prayed through or the experience we had or how loud we spoke in tongues. We can't even *not* brag about those things, because those things are irrelevant. We could spend 24 hours a day on our knees at an altar praying to speak in tongues, and if we ever did then it wouldn't even matter. As a matter of fact we would probably be worse off because our faith would probably be in the fact that we spoke in tongues, not in Christ. We can't boast in our wisdom or works or power or might or even our faith. The only thing we can boast in is the power of the God who saved us through His grace.

## The Relationship Between Works and Faith

So we're saved by grace through faith, but now what? What about all the Scriptures about works? After all, look at what James said:

*What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."*

*You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. You see*

*that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. (James 2:14-26)*

Doesn't this stand in direct contrast to Paul's teaching? Doesn't it show that all the Scriptures about justification through faith were just one part of a smaller plan of salvation? Don't faith and works go hand in hand?

Yes, faith and works do go hand in hand, but not in the way that the UPC interprets it. You see, Paul says that faith *leads* to works. We're not saved *by* works, we're saved *for* works (Eph. 2:8-10). Consider this passage:

*"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For **by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."* (Ephesians 2:4-10, emphasis mine)

There you see the relationship between faith and works. True faith leads to works. As a matter of fact, Christ has works prepared for us before we're even saved! Works is an integral part of Christianity, but works are a *result* of salvation, not a *cause* of salvation. Because of this, James could rightfully say that faith without works is dead. If James preached that sermon in front of Paul then Paul would have given him a

hearty amen! Paul and James presented two sides of the same coin: Paul said that faith leads to works, and James said that without works you don't have faith. There's no reason to think that there was a conflict between the two of them regarding the method of salvation, or that Paul was only preaching one part of the larger "plan of salvation."

## What About the Scriptures That Talk About Us "Being Saved"?

Paul used the phrase "being saved" a couple of times. In 1 Cor. 1:18 he wrote, "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are **being saved** it is the power of God," and in 2 Cor. 2:15 he wrote, "For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are **being saved** and among those who are perishing" (emphasis mine).

I have heard more times than I can count that these passages (and others like them) mean that salvation is a process. The people who teach this claim that we are never truly saved until we get to heaven. It may not be an official UPC doctrine, but I heard it in church after church. Are the people who teach this correct? Are we never truly saved until we die or are raptured?

In a sense the people who say that are right. In some ways salvation is a process. That's why I defined the word *sozo* at the beginning of this article. You see, the type of salvation we were discussing is most closely related to justification—the idea of being made right with God. It is accurate to say that certain aspects of salvation are a process, but it would not be accurate to say that justification is a process. You see, justification is being made right with God. You're either right or you're not, there's no middle ground. You can't be partly justified, or 3/4 justified. You're righteous or you're not righteous, and that's that.



When Paul talks about "being saved" in the above passages he is not talking about justification, he's talking about sanctification. Sanctification is the English translation of the Greek word *hagiazō*, and it means "to make holy." ("Strong's Greek Dictionary", G37) It would not be inaccurate to take every sermon that you ever heard about "holiness" and replace it with the word "sanctification." (The difference, of course, is that sanctification has nothing to do with appearance, aside from the commands to be modest and moral, and everything to do with the way that we live our lives.)

Paul wrote:

*Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For **sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.***

*What then? **Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!** Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.*

*For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so **now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.** For when you were slaves of sin, you were*

*free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now **having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*  
(Romans 6:11-23)

(Did you catch that? Paul was being accused of preaching "easy believism" too, and he responded with an emphatic command that grace leads to sanctification (holiness) not sin! As a matter of fact, if you read Romans you discover that Paul taught that people were *more* likely to sin when they were trying to be saved through works!)

When we speak of sanctification it is entirely proper to say that we are "being saved." None of us are entirely holy yet, and we never will be. While we walk this earth we strive for holiness while recognizing that we will never achieve it. While on this earth we must trust in God's grace to cover us. That's what faith is. Therefore it's entirely accurate to say that we're "being saved," but it's *not* accurate to claim that we are not already saved. When we talk about "being saved" we are talking about sanctification, not justification.

In theology sanctification is often broken up into three types. The types sometimes go by different names, but I like to call them "present, progressive, and perfected." "Present sanctification" is the holiness that is bestowed upon us at the moment of salvation when we are robed with Christ; "progressive sanctification" is the ongoing process of becoming more and more holy as we walk with Christ; "perfected sanctification" is the perfect holiness that will be ours when we are glorified. So we are justified (made right with God) and sanctified (made holy before God) at the moment of salvation, but we are also becoming more and more holy as we

walk with God day by day.

## **Tying It All Together**

### **A call to repentance**

"Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?"

(Rom. 2:4)

"you were dead in your trespasses and sins"

(Eph. 2:1)

The first thing that God does is call us to Him. You see, we can't even boast in our ability to seek for Him, because it doesn't exist! God calls us, we don't call Him. We're lost, He's the divine search-and-rescue party. He calls us to Him and we respond through faith.

It's worth noting here that I firmly believe that repentance is an integral part of belief. I don't think it's possible to acknowledge the holy God as Lord and Savior without being moved to fall at His feet and repent. I don't view repentance as a requirement so much as I think it's a necessary reaction to faith. It's true that we are commanded to repent, but I don't understand how a person could even have faith without being moved to repentance. The two go hand in hand. After all, a person wouldn't truly repent if they didn't think the one they were repenting to was capable of forgiving sins, so repentance in itself is a statement of faith. Conversely, I don't think a person can truly have faith without being moved to repentance. Therefore, I don't see a tension in Scripture between the commands to repent and the fact that we are saved by grace through faith. Faith naturally leads to repentance.

## **A response through faith, leading to justification**

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."

(John 3:16-17)

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

(Ephesians 2:4-7)

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

(Rom. 3:28)

We respond to the call by throwing ourselves upon the mercy of Christ, and trusting Him wholeheartedly for our salvation. We don't try to work our way to God because He's already worked His way to us.

## **When we are justified we are regenerated**

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

(2 Cor. 5:17)

We didn't talk about regeneration yet in this article. It just means "being made alive." Paul summed it up when he wrote:

*For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this,*

*that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. **Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.** (2 Corinthians 5:14-17, emphasis mine)*

## **Justification and regeneration leads to sanctification**

"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

(Gal. 3:27)

"But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life."

(Rom. 6:22)

When we are justified and regenerated we put on Christ. He takes our place and we take His. When God looks at us He sees Christ. We are no longer seen as unholy but as holy.

On a side note, there's some debate over whether or not the "baptized" in Gal. 3:27 refers to water baptism or Spirit baptism. I don't think it matters, because in the New Testament baptism was something that was done immediately upon a profession of faith. It was not until later that baptism was separated. The authors of the excellent book "Pagan Christianity" have this to say about baptism in the early church:

*"[I]t is typical in most contemporary churches for baptism to be*

*separated from conversion by great lengths of time. Many Christians were saved at one age and baptized at a much later age. In the first century, this was unheard of.*

*In the early church converts were baptized immediately upon believing.*

*One scholar says of baptism and conversion, 'They belong together.*

*Those who repented and believed the Word were baptized. That was the invariable pattern, so far as we know.' Another writes, 'At the birth of the church, converts were baptized with little or no delay.'*

*In the first century water baptism was the outward confession of a person's faith. But more than that, it was the way someone came to the Lord. For this reason, the confession of baptism is vitally linked to the exercise of saving faith. So much so that the New Testament writers often use 'baptism' in place of the word 'faith' and link it to being 'saved' (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21).*

*This is because baptism was the early Christian's initial confession of faith in Christ."*

Therefore, I do not think we need to try to decide if Gal. 3:27 is talking about water or Spirit baptism. I think it's safe to conclude that all believers in the New Testament were baptized.

# Sanctification leads to glorification

"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him."

(Romans 8:16-17)

"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."

(Romans 8:29-30)

When we are called home to heaven, either through death or the rapture, we will be glorified and will spend eternity with Christ. What a beautiful concept! I don't think anything more needs to be said about glorification, because Paul says it best:

*For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.*

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we*

know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels,



*nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:14-39)*

## **What About Baptism And Tongues?**

I think that these questions have been answered throughout the article. Still, it may be good to make a couple of comments about the relationship of baptism and tongues in salvation before we close.

As I already pointed out, baptism in the early church was just assumed. If you believed then you were baptized. There wasn't any debate about whether or not it was necessary. Christ commanded it so the disciples did it, and that was that. For what it's worth, I think that's the way it should be today. Baptism was commanded by Christ, so when it's possible it should most certainly be done. (I can't imagine a scenario when it would be impossible to baptize by sprinkling, even if immersion were not feasible.) However, baptism is not directly related to justification. Baptism is a public confession of faith. Perhaps it has deeper spiritual significance, perhaps not. I honestly don't know, because arguments both ways are persuasive. (I think there's a lot to be said for baptism being a symbol of the covenant in the New Testament just like circumcision was a symbol in the Old.) What I do know, though, is that it was commanded by Christ and so it should be done, and that baptism does not lead to justification. Only faith does that.

Tongues is even easier to answer. There is no relationship between tongues and salvation. I can say that with total confidence. Tongues was mentioned three times in Acts (Chapters 2, 10, and 19) and there is every reason to believe that all three of those instances were nothing more than the gift of tongues at work. There is no reason to believe that

tongues was in any way related to salvation. The Scriptural relationship simply isn't there. The Spirit was present and in those three instances the gift of tongues appeared. It's really that simple. Tongues was never taught as anything more than a gift by any of the apostles, and it was never even mentioned by Jesus.

Additionally, logic says that the Holy Spirit has to be given upon belief. After all, Romans 8:9 says that "if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." Yet we know that we are justified (made right with God) upon belief, regenerated (made alive in Christ) upon belief, and sanctified (made holy before God) upon belief. How could all of that happen and yet we still not belong to God? Yet if the UPC view of tongues is correct then that's precisely what happens. According to the UPC plan of salvation we can repent and be baptized and still not be saved. Are we half saved? Two-thirds saved? How does that even work? It just doesn't make sense.

If that's not enough, then consider what Paul says in Eph. 1:13-14:

*In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—**having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit** of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (emphasis mine)*

Did I read that correctly? Did Paul just say that we are "sealed" with the Holy Spirit at the moment of belief? Yes, he did.

So we see, then, that tongues is nothing more than a gift of the Spirit. It's not the evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit. If it were then everyone who believed would immediately speak with tongues with no delay. Common

experience says that just doesn't happen.

## Conclusion

What does it mean to be saved? It means that we stand righteous before God. We stand before Him pure and holy, not because of the things that we have done, but because of the grace of God. Christ has taken our sin and shame and made it His own, and He has robed us in Him. We are in Him, and when God looks at us He doesn't see our sins. He doesn't see our failures and mistakes. No, He sees a person who is perfectly righteous and holy, not because of what we have done, but because of what Christ has done. Our so-called righteousness can never bring us where we need to be. We can't pray hard enough, be baptized deep enough, or speak in tongues long enough to be saved. The only way to be made right and holy before God is through His grace, and that grace is granted through faith. That's what it means to be saved.

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## [What Does the Bible Say About Cutting Your Hair?](#)

This Web site has been running for just over four years, and I am frequently asked why I have not written an article on the cutting of hair. As a matter of fact, I get more questions through my Web site about hair than I do any other issue. So why haven't I written an article until now? Well, there are several reasons.

First, this Web site was originally designed to tell friends and family why I left the UPC, and hair was not one of the reasons. Before I left the UPC I studied just about every

doctrine in the movement, but hair was not important to me. I wasn't married, I didn't have immediate plans to get married, and I had no interest in growing my hair long, so I didn't get around to studying hair until later.

Second, I have always tried to not just duplicate what others have written. I may deal with the same topics, but I try to deal with them in different ways. Not better ways, just different. There are quite a few articles about hair on the Internet, so I didn't feel that writing an article was a pressing issue. (However, considering the amount of questions that I get about the subject, I must admit that my decision to not write an article was wrong).

Third, I like to deal with "first order issues" and stay away from second and third order issues whenever possible (I will define those terms in a moment).

However, two things prompted me to go ahead and write an article. The first reason, as I already mentioned, is that hair seems to be a very important issue for a lot of people. I receive more questions about hair than I do any other issue. The second reason is that the topic of hair has become even more pressing in the last several years, thanks to the increasing popularity of "Holy Magic Hair" theology. ((If you don't know what that is then be grateful. If you want to know what it is then check out <http://www.holymagichair.com> for more information (disclaimer: I have no association with that site).))

## **The Framework of Biblical Interpretation**

Before we delve into 1 Cor. 11 it may be helpful to discuss the interpretive framework that I will be using. We all have a framework that we use to interpret the Bible. The framework is like the pair of glasses that we put on when we read the

Bible, and all of the Scriptures that we read gets filtered through those lenses. For example, Roman Catholics might interpret all Scripture through the traditions of the Catholic Church, while evangelical Protestants might interpret all Scripture through the lens of *solo scriptura* ("by Scripture alone," not by church tradition).

My framework, as it relates to 1 Cor. 11:2-16, is the same as the UPC and evangelical Protestants: The Bible, in its original manuscripts, is the inerrant, inspired Word of God. *Inerrant* means that the original manuscripts were without error, and *inspired* means that they were "God-breathed." We do not have the original manuscripts of 1 Cor. 11, of course, but there is no ambiguity about what it says. The confusion is about what it *means*.

I do not think that 1 Cor. 11:2-16 should be ripped out or ignored (neither do any evangelical Protestants). I do not think that we should find ways of "getting around it" (neither do any evangelical Protestants). I believe that it was God-breathed and that it is just as important as the rest of Scripture (as do all evangelical Protestants). The idea that Trinitarians just want to rip it out and ignore it is a false UPC idea that has no basis in reality.

## **First, Second, and Third Order Issues. What Are They, And What Do They Have To Do With Hair?**

A moment ago I mentioned the term "first order issues." I think it would be helpful to define that before moving on. ((Much of the material in this section was taken from a series of lectures given by Dr. Gary Habermas in "Theology 250: Fundamental Theological Issues," at Liberty University. Dr. Habermas referenced "Christian Theology" by Millard Erickson at several points in this discussion. The lecture was given in

a discussion format, and my interpretations of the material are not meant to be representative of Dr. Habermas' or Mr. Erickson's views.))

A first order issue is an issue in the Bible that is clear-cut. It is a direct statement. There can be no ambiguity. It is what it is. A good example of this is baptism. We are directly commanded to baptize in Mat. 28:18-20, and the Bible states on many occasions that baptism is the proper response to faith (Acts 2:38, 8:36-38, 16:15, 16:31-34, 22:16, 1 Pet. 3:21).

A second order issue is an implication. It is not directly stated, but it is implied. An example of a second order issue is the method of baptism. Should it be done by immersion or sprinkling? It is now commonly accepted that the word *baptizo* referred to immersion. ((Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W. (1996). *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (2:50). Nashville: T. Nelson.)) However, we also know from early church history that baptism by sprinkling or pouring was considered acceptable in areas with a limited water supply ((["Didache"](#))). So does it matter? Is it a "heaven or hell issue?" This is a great example of a second order issue.

A third order issue is a doctrine that is determined by inductive conclusions or general revelation. An example of this might be the debate about what baptism accomplishes. Does it actually remit sins? Is it just a symbol? Is a person spiritually regenerated during baptism or does it happen before (or after)? We all have opinions about issues like this, but good, godly men and women will have opinions that differ from ours. Why? Because Scripture is simply not clear about these types of issues.

So an example of a first order issue might be acknowledgement of the fact that we are *commanded* to baptize, a second order issue might be the *method* of baptism, and a third order issue

might be what baptism actually *accomplishes*.

Of course, it goes without saying that different groups and individuals draw their own conclusions about the importance of certain issues. However, I think that all serious students of Scripture should agree that direct biblical statements—statements that are clear cut with no ambiguity about the translation or meaning—should receive priority over less clear portions of the text. This doesn't mean that we just throw out everything that isn't a direct statement, of course! Far from it! It just means that we recognize that *we should always use that which is clear to interpret that which is unclear, and we should keep the unclear in its place by never elevating these issues to salvation status and by recognizing that other Christians can form different opinions about issues like this and still be just as Christian as us!*

Now, some might say that *all* Scriptural issues are first order issues, but those people show through their actions that they do not believe that to be true. Those people do not baptize for the dead (1 Cor. 15:29), they do not greet their brothers in Christ by kissing them (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26), and they do not confess every sin that they commit to other Christians (James 5:26). Instead, they recognize that the three things I just mentioned (and there are many more examples that I could have used) have cultural and practical elements that do not make them binding across time or in every situation. But when they hear someone say that 1 Cor. 11:2-16 was just for the Corinthians, or that it is not an important issue today, or that it meant veils and not hair, or any other interpretation that disagrees with theirs, then they immediately accuse those people of trying to “get around Scripture” and “rip out parts of the Bible!” Doesn't that seem a bit hypocritical?

Finally, before moving on there is one very important thing that needs to be said about first, second, and third order issues. When we talk about these things we are *not* claiming

that we simply cannot know what is true! The problem with second and third order issues is that we do not have enough *data* to make a conclusive determination. For example, if I lived in the ancient world then I would not be able to know the distance to the Sun. The answer is knowable, but it could not be calculated until the fields of science and mathematics reached a certain level of progress. It is the same with second and third order issues. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 has one definite, true meaning, but God in His divine providence has allowed some of the historical data to be lost over time. Until He chooses to make that data known again—perhaps through future archaeological discoveries—we will not be able to know the answer with certainty. The majority of the Bible can be clearly understood, and we should stand united around what can be understood while we wrestle with the things that cannot.

## **That's All Well and Good, But How Does It Relate To Hair?**

1 Cor. 11:2-16 is a second, if not third, order issue. No one alive today can be 100% certain of what it means. Godly, conservative scholars throughout history—men and women who are seeking to follow God, not trying to get out of following Scripture—have studied the passage and come to completely different conclusions.

For example...

**The MacArthur Study Bible** concludes that the covering in 1 Cor. 11 is a veil and that the custom was local. He believes that the reference to hair in 1 Cor. 11:14-15 refers to the natural difference between men and women's hair, and that this natural difference is symbolic of the order of creation which the veil (or lack thereof) also symbolizes. I call this a "two covering solution" to the passage—the spiritual head covering is the veil and the natural one is hair. ((John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word



Pub., 1997, c1997), 1 Co 11:2 – 1 Co 11:16.))

**The Ryrie Study Bible** also proposes a two covering solution. Dr. Ryrie concludes that the covering in verses 2-13 is a veil and the covering in 14-15 is hair. He writes, “[A]s the hair represents the proper covering in the natural realm, so the veil is the proper covering in the religious.” However, Dr. Ryrie does NOT believe that the custom was meant to be local to Corinth. Dr. Ryrie’s view is almost identical to my own.

**The Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Commentary** concludes that the passage is referring to hair, but they take the unusual view that the covering refers to wearing the hair up on top of the head. They also conclude that the custom was not meant to be local to Corinth.

**The Believer’s Bible Commentary** proposes a two covering solution (much the same as the Ryrie Study Bible). They also conclude that the custom was not meant to be local to Corinth.

**The Nelson Study Bible – New King James Version** concludes that the covering in 1 Cor. 11:2-13 was a veil. It does not deal at all with 1 Cor. 11:14-15 or 16.

**The Woman’s Study Bible** determines that the covering in 1 Cor. 11:2-13 was “some kind of hair covering—perhaps even a shawl.” It hints that the custom was “especially important to the Corinthians because of the pagan and immoral influence around them,” but does not directly state that the custom was meant to be local. It also does not deal with 1 Cor. 11:14-15 or 16.

**The Complete WordStudy Dictionary** (1 Cor. 11:5) says that the covering was used until a woman’s hair grew long enough to cover her hair (meaning that women who had shaved their head before converting to Christianity would need to wear a head covering until their hair became long enough to cover their head).

It is important to remember that all 7 of these sources are

written and edited by well-trained scholars. Yet at least four of them reach very different conclusions from the others, while two are silent on some of the most important points. So it is obvious that even leading scholars cannot determine exactly what Paul meant. Why? Because it's simply not clear. God has allowed the exact meaning to be lost with time.

And this is where I think the holiness apostolic movement has gone wrong. They have taken an issue that simply cannot be understood with any level of certainty and they have turned it into a first order issue. They have claimed that their interpretation—an interpretation that is at best very convoluted and at worst does not work at all—is the only correct interpretation, and then they have condemned those who disagree.

## **My Views**

With all of that said, I do have my own views on the passage. I have studied it many times and drawn certain conclusions. The remainder of this article is going to be dedicated to an exegesis (interpretation) of the passage. Once I am done with that I will respond to a few common objections to my view. But I want to make one thing clear before I even start: I do not claim to have the final answer. I do not think that this issue will be settled with any level of certainty until we get to Heaven. Nevertheless, I will share my conclusions for those who are interested.

Before I do, though, there is one other thing that's worth remembering: God's not going to send you to hell because you misinterpreted a passage of Scripture that no one alive today understands completely. If you're not cutting your hair out of fear then you're doing it for the wrong reason. Don't be afraid. Study the issue, draw your conclusions, and then trust in God's grace to cover you. I promise you that if the issue was that important to God then He would have made it

unmistakably clear.

## **Exegesis ((All Scriptures are from the NASB unless otherwise noted.))**

**1 Cor. 11:2 – Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.**

The “traditions” referred to here are a synonym for God’s Word, not the manmade traditions that are condemned at other places in Scripture ((MacArthur, Ryrie)). Paul is praising the church at Corinth for remembering the Word of God that he had previously taught them.

**1 Cor. 11:3 – But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.**

“But.” The one word that as a child I hated to hear. “You can go out and play...but...did you clean your room?”

There was one tradition that the Corinthians had been taught but were now forgetting: The tradition of the head covering. Paul is about to remind them in writing of a teaching that he had previously given to them verbally.

The tradition that he was reminding them of is this: There is a principle of headship that is active in the church—a natural order of things. God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of the man, and man is the head of the woman.

Now, a full discussion of the principle of headship is outside

the scope of this article, but there are a couple of things that should be noted. First, the type of submission that is being discussed is not a willingness to be dominated. God does not dominate Christ. Christ is equal to God, yet He chose to willingly submit (Phil. 2:5-11). (This can be interpreted in either the Oneness or Trinitarian frameworks, it does not matter for our discussion). This ties into the second point, which is that men and women are equal in God's eyes. One is not superior to the other. Gal. 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." So this principle of headship is not saying man is superior to woman anymore than it is saying God is superior to Christ.

## **1 Cor. 11:4 – Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head.**

This is a key verse to the interpretation of the rest of the passage. Note that Paul's instructions about head coverings only apply to a person who is *praying or prophesying*. The word "prophecy" that is used here is the Greek *propheteuo*. This word has the primary meaning of "telling forth the divine counsels," with a secondary meaning of foretelling the future ((Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W. (1996). Vine's complete expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words (2:492-493). Nashville: T. Nelson.)). The fact that 1 Cor. 11:2-16 is giving instructions for behavior in the church leads me and most scholars to conclude that this is referring to a person leading the church in prayer and preaching or prophesying to them. In the end it does not matter whether the prayer and prophecy is public, though, because, the point is still the same: *The teaching of head coverings only applies to when a person prays or prophesies.*

We can conclude, then, that a man is to have his head uncovered when leading the church in prayer or when speaking

prophetically to them (preaching or foretelling the future). Again, if a person wants to extend this to private devotions then that is fine. Either way, the point remains the same.

**1 Cor. 11:5 – But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.**

The reverse of the doctrine for men is stated here: Women are to have their head covered when praying or prophesying. It should be noted that the word “uncovered” is the Greek word *akatakalyptos* which means, quite simply, “unveiled.” ((Vine’s))

If the woman refuses to wear this covering then she disgraces her head. This could mean either her husband or the woman’s own head. The Greek wording is ambiguous, and it is possible that Paul meant it that way. ((Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Commentary))

Just like in 11:4, the main thing to notice in the first part of the verse is that the instruction only applies to prayer and prophecy.

Paul adds an additional point in the second half of the verse, though. He states that the woman who does not cover her head while praying or prophesying is the same as a woman who’s head is shaved.

There has been a lot of debate about this. The debates usually center around *why* it was considered shameful for the woman to have her head shaved. The most common explanation is that it was related to temple prostitution, but that is not certain. ((WordStudy, 11:5, says that the priestesses at the temple of Aphrodite cut their hair short, but I have not been able to

find independent confirmation from secular sources.)) In the end, though, does the reason really matter? What matters is that it was considered shameful in Corinth in that time period for a woman to have her head shaved. It was not *universally* shameful for all women in all cultures and it was not *spiritually* shameful. The disgrace referred to here is a natural disgrace that the women in Corinth would have been able to easily understand.

Paul wanted the Corinthians to know that it was just as shameful in the spiritual realm for a woman to pray or prophesy with her head unveiled as it was shameful in the natural world for her to shave her head. He is using an example from the natural world (shaving the head) to illustrate a religious principle (wearing a head covering while praying or prophesying).

To summarize, the three things that we should take from this verse are:

1. The Greek word that we translate as “uncovered” means “unveiled” (nothing to do with hair).
2. The instructions still refer only to prayer and prophecy.
3. If a woman prayed or prophesied while unveiled then it was considered just as disgraceful as if she cut her hair off. We are not sure why it was considered disgraceful in Corinth for a woman to cut her hair short, but we do know that it was disgraceful. Again, the disgrace that came from cutting off the hair was a cultural disgrace, not a spiritual one.

**1 Cor. 11:7-9 – For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is**

**the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.**

These verses again deal with the principles of submission and headship. See my note in verse 3 for some comments about this issue.

**1 Cor. 11:10 – Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels**

“Therefore” refers to the things just discussed, namely, the principle of headship.

There is something interesting to consider about this verse. If the “symbol of authority” (the covering) on the woman's head is “because of the angels,” then how could it possibly be hair? Hair might work well for a lady who has been a Christian for a long time, but what about the new convert? Do the angels not know she is a Christian until her hair grows out? That just does not make sense.

The typical UPC response is, “God considers her hair long the moment she decides not to cut it.” That's all well and good, but the head covering isn't for God, it's for the angels. So the idea that the covering is hair is not a coherent, logical interpretation of this passage.

On the other hand, the idea that the covering is a veil makes perfect sense. A veil can be put on when praying or prophesying and taken off the rest of the time. The angels can see when a veil is put on or taken off. A veil is the simplest explanation and the one that makes the most sense in light of

everything discussed so far.

There is another thing that I must say about this Scripture. I regret to have to even mention it, but I feel that I must. The “symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels” has in recent years lead to the explosion of the doctrine that many are calling “Holy Magic Hair.” If readers want more information on that doctrine then I encourage them to visit <http://www.holymagichair.com> (I am not affiliated with that site in any way). This is not the place for a full discussion of that doctrine, but I do think it will be beneficial to make a couple of brief comments.

When I interpret Scripture I follow several guidelines. One of those guidelines is to use the simplest interpretation possible, as long as that interpretation does not conflict with other Scripture. As the reader has already seen, I find the idea that the veil is the covering to be the simplest solution to this passage of Scripture and, since it does not conflict with other Scripture, it is the interpretation that I choose.

When we deal with the statement “because of the angels” there is a solution that is simple, Scriptural, and makes good sense. Eph. 3:8-10 says:

“To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.”

This Scripture passage is saying that the mystery of “the unfathomable riches of Christ” is being revealed to “the rulers and authorities in heavenly places” through the church. In other words, the angels are learning about the mystery of



Christ's redemptive work by watching the church.

In light of that, 1 Cor. 11:10 has a very simple explanation: The head coverings, as an illustration of the principle of headship (God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man, man is the head of woman) is one more way that the mystery is being revealed to the angels.

This solution is both simple and Scriptural. It does not require going to the occult for information, as some apostolic preachers have sadly done. It does not require telling story after story (all secondhand) of flying cars and thwarting of national revolutions all happening because a woman did not cut her hair. It does not require telling women that if they twirl their hair in the wind then their prayers get more power. No, it does not require any of that, because none of that is Scriptural. What *is* Scriptural is that the angels watch the church and desire to learn the mystery of the unfathomable riches of Christ. The principle of headship, as shown through head coverings, is one more way that the mystery is revealed to them.

**1 Cor. 11:11-12 – However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God**

.Another reference to the principle of headship (see my note on verse 3). Paul is careful to remind the men that they are not independent of women, and that they are both dependent on God. This is a balance that is present in all of Paul's writings.

**1 Cor. 11:13-15 – Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering.**

These three Scriptures have caused more confusion and debates than the rest of the passage combined.

The UPC and other holiness organizations use these Scriptures as the key to interpreting the rest of the passage. They insist that hair is the covering, and all the preceding Scriptures must be forced into line, no matter how convoluted that interpretation gets.

Is that what Paul was doing? Were the preceding 11 verses just meant to tell us that a woman's hair is her covering? If so, what does that mean? Does it mean that a woman should not cut her hair, or just that she should wear it long? If so, how long is long? And for that matter, how short is short?

Let's take a look.

First, the word "uncovered" in this section is the same word used in 1 Cor. 11:5. It is *akatakalyptos*, and it means "unveiled." So verse 13 could read, "Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God unveiled?" In other words, "In light of everything I have just told you—the principles of headship, the reason for the head covering—is it proper for a woman to pray to God unveiled?"

Notice that the focus is still on prayer (and by implication prophecy).

Next, Paul makes an appeal to nature. He says, “Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering.”

There are a couple of things that need to be said here. First, the word that we translate as “long” is the Greek word *komao*. The word simply means “to have long hair” ((WordStudy)) or “to let the hair grow long, to wear long hair” ((Vine’s)). Some holiness preachers have insisted that the word *has* to mean uncut, but that is not correct. The word does not mean uncut. It means the same in Greek as it does in English. It is a relative word—things that are long are only long when compared to things which are short. The passage never defines what “long” is. Three inches? Three feet? Thirty feet? Paul does not say.

Second, the word *covering in 11:15* is a different Greek word than the words used for *cover* earlier in the passage. The word used earlier was *katakalypto* which means “to cover oneself” (Vine’s) or “to be covered” (WordStudy) (in other words, within the context of this passage, to wear a veil). But the word used in verse 15 is *peribolaion*, which means “something thrown around” (Vine’s). It could mean a veil or other head covering or it could mean a mantle around the body, as it is used in Heb. 1:12 ((Vine’s)).

What are we to make of this? Why would Paul use one word throughout most of the passage and then switch at the very end? Why would he talk about a covering that seems to obviously be a veil and then suddenly turn around and say that the hair is the covering?

Well, the possibility that makes the most sense to me is that Paul chose a different word because he was talking about a different type of covering. The first covering is the one that the woman puts on and takes off as needed in the church—the spiritual covering—while the second covering is the one given

to her by nature—the natural covering. This is the position that Ryrie’s Study Bible takes, and it is the one that seems the most sensible to me. It explains why Paul would use two different words for “covering,” and it neatly interprets the passage without requiring people to jump through textual and logical hoops.

But why would Paul make an appeal to nature when trying to explain a spiritual concept? Well, Paul is actually known for doing that. In Athens Paul used the pagan altar “To an unknown god” to explain Jesus (Acts 17:23). Was Paul telling the Athenians that they needed to worship Jesus at that altar, or that the altar was Jesus? Of course not! It was just an illustration from nature that they could understand. Likewise, in the Epistle to the Romans Paul is famous for using the Roman idea of the natural law—a law that all people hold in common—to explain the relationship between the Gentiles and the Mosaic law (see Rom. 2:14-15 for one example).

1 Cor. 11:14-15 is another example of an appeal to nature. Paul had just spent twelve verses explaining the necessity of wearing veils while praying and prophesying, but before he left the subject he decided to throw in one last argument. He reminded the Corinthians that even in the natural world women had hair that was longer than a man’s and styled differently. This is something that has held true across all cultures in the world with very few (if any) exceptions. As a matter of fact, the differences in hair length and styling are so prevalent, even in cultures like ours where it is normal for women to cut their hair, that one would almost think it was something genetic. Perhaps even a part of nature. Exactly like Paul said!

**1 Cor. 11:16 – But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other**

## **practice, nor have the churches of God.**

It seems obvious that Paul is saying that his teaching on head coverings is not limited to Corinth. Instead, Paul says that there is no other practice in the churches of God. In other words, the practice of the head covering was taught in all of the churches. Contrary to UPC rhetoric, most modern scholars agree that the practice was not meant to be limited to Corinth. It is also clear that all of the early churches practiced head covering. Their biggest debate seemed to have been whether or not virgins were excluded from wearing head coverings. ((Tertullian, "[On the Veiling of Virgins](#)"))

On the other hand, it's important to remember that there are a couple of things in the passage that are cultural:

1. The shame that a woman with shaved hair felt. As I stated in my note on 11:5, the shame that a woman felt in Corinth when her head was shaved is not something that is transcultural. It seems clear that the shame mentioned in 11:5 is natural, not spiritual. The context of the passage does not demand that the shame be spiritual, and it is obvious that women in certain cultures do not feel shame when their heads are shaved. An American or European woman today is unlikely to feel shame if she chooses to shave her hair, but apparently that was not the case in Corinth.
2. The statement "does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her" is a statement from nature, not religion. We know that is true because Paul says that it is. He openly and frankly says that he is appealing to nature. The natural differences in hair between men and woman are common across all cultures, but it is not spiritually commanded. It is simply the natural order of things. That is why Paul could point to the natural order of

things to illustrate the spiritual order, like he did in Romans 1:18-21.

## One final note on 1 Cor. 11:13-15

While I was researching this article I came across an interesting point. It was made by Dr. Robert Spinney in his article "[Should Christian Women Wear Head Coverings Today.](#)" Many of his conclusions were different than mine, but I still found much of what he wrote to be informative.

Dr. Spinney says that if the covering in verse 15 is the same as the covering in verses 5-6 then we should be able to use the words interchangeably. In other words, if hair is the covering that is being discussed throughout the entire passage, then we should be able to use the word "long hair" (for women) or "short hair" (for men) in place of every instance of the word "covering." That makes sense, right? If the hair is the covering then the two words can be exchanged and it will still make sense. But let's try that and see how it works out:

*(4) Every man who [has long hair] on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head.*

*(5) But every woman who [has short hair] while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.*

*(6) For if a woman [does not have long hair], let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her [have long hair].*

Now let me ask: Does that even make sense? A man is to not have long hair, but only while praying or prophesying? A woman cannot have short hair while praying or prophesying, but if she does then she should just cut all of her hair off? If a woman has short hair then it is the same as a shaved head? (One might ask how can she ever get her hair long if she keeps

having to shave it because it's short!)

And what about the angels in verse 10? Are they unable to tell saved women from unsaved? Do they get confused when a saved woman with short hair prays or prophesies? And since when does the Bible punish sin by ordering more sin? If cutting the hair is a sin then cutting all of it off certainly doesn't make it any better!

And we haven't even touched on the "how long is long" question. Do the angels know how long "long" is? And what about short? How short is short? If long is uncut then short can be as long as we like as long as we trim the ends, right?

Does any of that even make sense? I think that the answer is obvious! Dr. Spinney's point is well made. The idea that hair is the spiritual covering simply does not make sense.

## **One last question: Should it be done today?**

Should women wear head coverings today when praying or prophesying? I think it goes without saying that the matter should be left up to personal conviction. However, I strongly oppose teaching a particular view of 1 Cor. 11 as normative for the churches, and here is why.

My interpretation is not necessarily the correct one. As I said in my discussion of first, second, and third order issues, we simply do not have enough data to know for sure what 1 Cor. 11:2-16 means. Great biblical scholars have come to very different conclusions. So if I take my interpretation (or anyone's interpretation) and try to enforce it on everyone else then I will be guilty of doing the exact same thing that the UPC has done. All it would do is cause more division within the church.

On the other hand, if future archaeological discoveries allow

us to know the precise meaning of the passage then we would need to revisit our current practices. But we don't know when, or even if, that will happen. We don't know what state the Christian churches might be in then. In short, we simply cannot speculate on what the proper course of action would be. That would be a decision for godly men and women living in that time to make.

## **Objections**

### **Aren't we commanded to pray at all times?**

*Q. 1 Thess 5:17 says that we should pray without ceasing. Doesn't this mean that we should always pray? And if so then doesn't that mean that women should always have a head covering on? And, since it is something that always should be done, then wouldn't the idea that hair is the covering start to make sense again?*

A. I have heard this argument given in at least one UPC church, but there are a couple of reasons why it fails.

First, it is impossible to pray 24/7. It is not even possible to pray every waking moment. Paul's command in 1 Thess. 5:17 could be referring to prayer in the church since it is part of a series of exhortations to the church in Thessalonica (it is followed in verses 19 and 20 with commands to not "quench not the Spirit" and to not "despise prophetic utterances") or it could mean to do everything with a prayerful attitude. Either way, I think most Christians would agree that the command is not to literally pray every second of the day, or even every waking second. We have to interpret the Scripture through the dual lenses of reason and common sense. God does not command us to do impossible things.

Second, the reference to praying in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 almost certainly refers to leading the church in prayer. There are



two reasons for this:

1. The context of the passage is about order within the church gathering. The passage about hair sits at the beginning of a long discourse on order in the church. It starts with head coverings, goes to the communion dinner, and finishes with a discussion of tongues and prophecy in the church.
2. Spoken prophecy is by its very nature public. Prayer might be private, but prophecy is not. The two are linked together in this passage, indicating that the discussion is about public prayer and prophecy in the church setting.
3. Even if a person decides that Paul was referring to private prayer as well as public, it does not change the fact that a veil can be easily put on and removed as a woman starts and finishes her devotions.

**Can't the Greek word *akatakalyptos* in 1 Cor. 11:5 still be referring to hair? Can't a woman's hair "hang down" in the same manner that a veil would?**

This is the interpretation proposed in the WordStudy dictionary, but it does not seem coherent to me. First, how long does a woman's hair have to be before it hangs down? Organizations like the UPC claim that it just means uncut, but there is no textual basis for that conclusion. Second, and more importantly, 1 Cor. 11:2-16 only deals with praying and prophesying. Is a woman supposed to grow her hair long to pray or prophesy and then cut it again? Organizations like the UPC claim that this is why a woman should simply never cut her hair, but again, there is no textual basis for that interpretation. Moreover, that is a very, very convoluted explanation. If Paul's goal was to tell women to not cut their hair then wouldn't it have been a lot simpler to just say,

“Women, don’t cut your hair”? In my mind, trying to make hair the covering for verses 2-13 is confusing, convoluted and ultimately incoherent.

## **Can’t angels read our minds, so can’t they see when a woman determines to not cut her hair?**

Most of the angelic appearances in the Old Testament were “the angel of the LORD.” This was something called a theophany—a bodily manifestation of God before the incarnation. The angel of the LORD, being God, could certainly read minds, but there is no Scriptural evidence that regular angels have that ability. If they could then it would defeat the entire purpose of wearing the head covering “because of the angels” (1 Cor. 11:10).

## **What about revelation?**

*Q. Isn’t it true that God reveals things to those who have His Spirit, things that a non-Spirit-filled scholar may not be able to understand? And, if that is the case, then shouldn’t Spirit-filled Christians be able to understand the true meaning of 1 Cor. 11:2-16 while non-Spirit-filled Christians would remain deceived?*

A. A person doesn’t need revelation to understand the Greek language and Corinthian history any more than I need revelation to understand the English language and United States history. These are very natural things that do not require revelation.

Also, if revelation gives all Spirit-filled Christians the answers to all “disputable matters” (Rom. 14:1, NIV), then Spirit-filled Christians should not longer disagree about anything! But unfortunately we all know that is not the case. Even if we conclude that Oneness Pentecostals who have spoken

in tongues are the only ones filled with the Spirit (something I do not agree with) then we can still see that interpretations vary. Oneness Pentecostals are fragmented on everything from the use of television to holiness standards, so I think that common experience leads us to conclude that the purpose of revelation is not to make us understand everything that there is to understand. Even Paul said that while on Earth we “see through a glass, darkly” (1 Cor. 13:12 KJV).

Finally, even people who are deceived can understand some truth. A deceived person is not automatically robbed of every truth that they have ever known or ever could know. There are many deceived people who recognize Jesus as Lord but are deceived on other points of theology. So the fact that a person is deceived does not mean that they are automatically unable to understand any truth in Scripture. A deceived person does not understand *some* truth, but they are not robbed of *all* truth.

**You say you like to deal with first order issues and stay away from second and third order ones, but don't many of your articles deal with the debatable issues?**

It's very true that many of my articles deal with second and third order issues, but I always deal with them in the negative sense. The Oneness Pentecostal movement has taken many second and third order issues and elevated them to first order status, then claimed that their interpretation is the only correct one; that it is some sort of return to a truth that was lost for almost 2,000 years (as if God would really let that happen!). So when I deal with those issues my primary goal is to point out to people that they are second and third order issues and that they should not cause us to separate ourselves from other Christian groups.

You will not find me taking second and third order issues and writing articles claiming that my interpretation is the only correct one. I try to keep the focus on things that can be clearly understood—things that all Christians can stand united on.

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## **What Does the Bible Say About the Sabbath?**

Recently I have had several people email me questions about the Sabbath. Should we keep the Sabbath? If so, how should we observe it today? Should we worship on the Sabbath? Is it alright to miss a day of worship? Should we refuse to work on the Sabbath? On what day should the Sabbath be kept?

These are just some of the questions that I have received. I decided to post my answers in this article. I am basically doing a copy / paste of the answers that I gave in my emails (with all personal information removed of course) so this article might be a little less formal than some of the others. I hope that the information is still beneficial!

The Sabbath was originally kept on Saturdays, but the very early Christians began to worship on Sundays (Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:2, Rev. 1:10). They probably did this because it is the day that Jesus rose from the dead (Mat. 28:1).

I am not aware of a Scripture that says that worship should only happen on the Sabbath, or even that the Sabbath was intended by God to be a day of worship. Jews and Christians did worship on the Sabbath, but the only commandment from God was that it would be a day of rest. The Sabbath was intended as a day of rest (Ex. 20:9).

Regardless of whether God commanded worship to happen on the Sabbath, there is no rule against worshiping on any other day. Why would God want His children to worship Him on just one day of the week? To say that a person \*can't\* worship on any other day but the Sabbath is just human tradition!

The Sabbath was intended as a day of rest. It was also included in the 10 Commandments, and the 10 Commandments are considered by most Christians (including myself) as being morally binding even today. So should we observe the Sabbath? Yes, I think we should. But *why* should we observe the Sabbath, and *how* should we do it? Should it be a burden? Absolutely not!

See, Jesus made it clear that the Sabbath was created for man. God knows that humans need rest, and He created the Sabbath for that reason. Humans messed it up when they created so many rules about the Sabbath that it caused the Sabbath to become the exact *opposite* of what God intended (Mat. 12:1-14)!

At this point it might be beneficial to quote Matthew 12:1-14, then make a couple of observations:

*"At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath." But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? "Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? "But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. "But if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. "For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."*

*Departing from there, He went into their synagogue. And a man was there whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse Him. And He said to them, "What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out? "How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other. But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him. " (Matthew 12:1-14, NASB)*

Now, some observations about this passage:

1. Jesus' disciples picked grain on the Sabbath. They were hungry and needed to eat. Jesus approved that action.
2. Jesus pointed out that the priests in the Temple work on the Sabbath, but they are innocent. I think this point has a direct correlation with our church services today. The people who "work" in a church often find the "Sabbath" the most stressful day of the week! In that case, I think it's good that those people who "work" in the church be given a day in the week to rest.
3. Sometimes things have to be done on the Sabbath. If a sheep falls in a ditch, get it out. If your car breaks down and you have to fix it, get it fixed. If your boss demands that you work or be fired, then work. Sometimes exceptions have to be made. That's not my opinion, that's Jesus! (Mat. 12:11-13)

So what should we take from all of this? Well, my personal conclusion is that each person should try to have a day of rest in the week. I don't think it has to be a Saturday or a Sunday. I also think that "rest" can mean different things to different people. Hiking a difficult mountain might be relaxing for one person but hard

work for another. Cleaning the house might be relaxing for some people and work for others. For example, my girlfriend finds cleaning very relaxing. I find playing a computer game or going hiking very relaxing. The definition of "rest" is very dependent on a person's personality.

The core issue of the Sabbath is rest. Humans need a day of rest. And, as always, Jesus says it best:

*"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).*

With that said, there is still one question that needs to be answered: Is it alright to "miss church"?

The answer to this question is that the Bible does not say "thou shalt attend every church service." The first Christians met for worship every day (Acts 2:41-47; Acts 5:1-11). Sometime after that they began to meet on Sundays. But there is no Scripture that says a person has to go to church every single time the doors are open. However, the Bible does say that we should fellowship with fellow believers (Heb. 10:24), but that is only part of the command. The full passage says:

*"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:23-25, NASB)*

There are three things to note from the above passage:

1. Fellowship is important, and it should not be ignored, but there is no "thou shalt go every Sunday from 10-12" (or whatever) command.
2. The reason we are to assemble is to "stimulate one another to love and good deeds."

3. (This is my personal opinion): If the church that a person is attending is not loving and/or doing good deeds—if church has become a burden, not a place of rest and spiritual edification—then it might be time to pray about finding another church =). But that's just my opinion =)
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## Introduction To The “What does the Bible say about...” Category

When I first started to examine my beliefs in 2006 I came to realize something that really shocked me: I didn't know what Scriptures backed up many of the doctrines that I had been raised to believe and to not question! Oh, I understood the Scriptural backing for the major doctrines, such as Jesus' Name baptism and Oneness. But when it came to many of the other doctrines (especially ones relating to holiness standards) I honestly did not know which Scriptures supported the views that the UPC took.

I had a general, vague idea that there were a few Scriptures somewhere that said that women shouldn't wear jewelry, but I couldn't tell you where they were. I had a general understanding that wicked whores like Jezebel were the only women who wore make-up, but I wasn't exactly sure which Scriptures backed that idea up.

It also bothered me that I had never studied out many of these doctrines for myself. Even the doctrines that seemed to be clear (such as women wearing dresses) were doctrines that I had never studied for myself. I started to think that maybe,



just maybe, it was possible that the rest of the world was right and I was wrong. I started to think that there were a lot of really smart, intelligent Bible scholars out there, and if they were all saying that we (the UPC) were wrong then perhaps I should at least take the time to study these things out for myself instead of just assuming that they didn't know what they were talking about.

When I started to study these things I was amazed to find out that the majority of the UPC beliefs (especially relating to standards) have very little or no Scriptural backing. (Understand that when I say "very little Scriptural backing" I don't mean that they were only mentioned a few times in Scripture; I mean that the interpretations of the Scriptures that are used to support the doctrines are highly debatable.)

These articles are a collection of the research that I did. They are by no means exhaustive, but I am always adding to them. It is my prayer that people will read them with an open mind and will be willing to accept the Bible as the final authority – not man's teachings.

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## [What does the Bible say about holiness?](#)

Is Holiness necessary? The answer is a resounding "YES"!

The problem lies in the UPC view of holiness. For those who are unfamiliar with the UPC view, let me explain.

The UPC (again, I am using the word UPC as a general term for any holiness Oneness Pentecostal organization or church) believes that there are specific "holiness standards" that we

must adhere to. Some churches debate whether or not adhering to these standards is required for salvation, but—in my experience—people who do not adhere to the "standards" are considered rebellious. Many Oneness Pentecostals view these people as unsaved. Also, people who initially adhere to the standards and then begin to doubt their validity are viewed as being "backslidden."

So, once again, the problem lies in the UPC view of holiness.

The question we must ask is, "What does the Bible say about holiness?"

The flagship Scripture used by the UPC is Hebrews 12:14, which says:

*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord... (Heb 12:14 KJV)*

The word holiness that is used in this Scripture is "sanctification." Sanctification means "Separation unto God ((The Complete Word Study Dictionary, © 1992 By AMG International, Inc., Chattanooga, TN 37422, U.S.A., Revised edition, 1993))." That's it. Separation unto God. It has nothing to do with standards of dress. Every time that the word was used in Scripture it referred to separation from sin or general separation from the old, unregenerated lifestyle. To illustrate this point, here is a list in context of all the times this particular Greek word that we translate "sanctification" or "holiness" was used in the New Testament:

*(Rom 6:16-22 NASB)*

*Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having*

been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, **resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.**

(1Co 1:26-31 NASB)

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, **and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."**

(1Th 4:1-8 NASB)

Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because

*the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. **For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.** So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.*

*(1Th 4:1-8 NASB)*

*For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through **sanctification by the Spirit** and faith in the truth.*

*(Heb 12:12-14 NASB)*

*Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all men, **and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.***

*(1Ti 2:9-15 NASB)*

*Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in **faith and love and sanctity** with self-restraint.*

Now, I saved 1 Tim. 2:15 for last, because this is a Scripture

that is commonly misunderstood in UPC circles. The reason for the misunderstanding is two-fold:

1. First, the KJV translated (sanctification) as "holiness" in 1 Tim. 2:15.
2. Second, since the UPC already has the concept of "holiness" as being a standard of dress, and since the UPC uses the KJV almost exclusively, this Scripture passage is often used to teach that women should not wear jewelry (note the reference to "gold and pearls" in verse 9). I will cover this more when I deal with Jewelry, but even the casual reader will see that if Paul is saying that women cannot wear jewelry, then he is also saying that women cannot braid their hair or wear "costly clothing." Obviously, Paul is teaching a concept, not giving specific rules on how to dress.

So, once again, is holiness (sanctification) necessary? YES! Our goal should always be to be separated to God in everything we do, not just in specific "holiness standards." Women and men should both dress modestly. But does a church have the right to dictate certain rules such as "women can't wear jewelry," "women can't use make-up," "women can't wear pants," and other similar rules? I cannot find any Biblical basis for doing so.

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## [What does the Bible say about wearing jewelry?](#)

The UPC, along with many other holiness groups, teaches against wearing jewelry. I know that when I was in the movement I took the teaching for granted. I think that many others did as well. If new converts asked questions then the

general answer went something like this: "It's an inward change of the heart that is reflected by an outward change of appearance; as Christians we are called to be separate from the world." Alternatively, the new convert might be given a well-meaning lesson on respecting pastoral authority even if we do not "see it for ourselves." If the person questioning is not a new convert then they are often judged as being "cold on God" or "lukewarm." I am ashamed to admit that I was often guilty of judging people that way.

When I was part of the apostolic Pentecostal movement I happily went along with the doctrine of no jewelry without really questioning it. I had this vague idea that there was biblical support for it. There must be, right? Otherwise, why would we be teaching it? It was not until I began to question many of the doctrines of the UPC that I studied the no-jewelry doctrine for myself. When I did, I was surprised to find out that there is literally no biblical support for the doctrine. In fact, the Bible has more *good* to say about jewelry than it does bad!

In this article I will share some Scriptures and make some comments. I think that the Scriptures will speak for themselves, but hopefully you will find my comments beneficial. As always, I encourage you to study Scripture and formulate your own opinions.

## **What Do Holiness Organizations Say About Jewelry?**

First, let's look at what the UPC and a couple of other apostolic holiness organizations have to say about jewelry. The doctrinal section of the UPC's Web site says:

*[The Christian woman] has dedicated herself to the cause of Christianity. This manner of dedication avoids expensive, extravagant clothing and superfluous, ornamental jewelry, permitting only the functional use of a wristwatch and a*

wedding band to designate her wedlock (([United Pentecostal Church International – Modesty](#), Accessed 2006-12-22)).

Their conclusion comes from these two passages: 1 Tim. 2:8-10 and 1 Pet. 3:1-5. I will come back to those Scriptures in a moment.

The Articles of Faith of the ALJC—an organization that allows its member churches more autonomy on how much jewelry they allow—also cites 1 Pet. 3:1-5 as “instruction to wives about their behavior and appearance.” (([Assemblies of the Lord Jesus Christ](#), Accessed 2008-06-23)) They conclude that “Holiness is not only an inward presence of God but it is also reflected in the outward life of the Christian in his conduct in this world.” On the surface this is a very generic statement, and one that every Christian would agree with. In practice, though, the “outward life” is translated into a dress code.

The Articles of Faith of the WPF says:

*The glory of the female believer is manifested, among other ways, through the emanation of the divine glory in her appearance (I Peter 3:3,4). All artifice is viewed as obstruction to her authentic beauty and is to be avoided (I Timothy 2:9,10). Jewelry, (I Timothy 2:9), make-up, (II Kings 9:3) dyes, and any other artificiality, as well as immodest apparel, are viewed as attempts to artificially induce beauty (Isaiah 3:16-24 RSV, I Peter 3:1-5) and replace the lost glow of God’s glory as seen in the face of the believer as well as in the heavens. All this is Scripturally associated with Jezebel, who is both an Old Testament (I Kings 18:4, 19:1-2, II Kings 9:7,30), as well as New Testament, example of seduction and artificiality (Revelation 2:20,22). Thus, “cosmetics,” derived from “cosmos” (arrangement, as in the universe) are attempts to “make-up” the sparkle and glow, which is normative in the presence of the living God as well as within the believer (Philippians 2:15) (([Worldwide](#)*

[Pentecostal Fellowship](#), Accessed 2008-06-23)).

It is clear that out of the three views the WPF's is both the most restrictive and the one with the most Scripture citations. I could write an entire article responding just to the things that the WPF said in the above quotation (and I probably will). For now I would just like to point out two things. First, Jezebel was never condemned for her artificiality; she was condemned for trying to kill the prophets of God (Rev. 2:20). It is Western society that has associated Jezebel with extreme make-up and jewelry; that idea is not found in the Bible. Second, Phil. 2:14-15 is talking about not grumbling and disputing. The reason Paul says not to grumble and dispute is because we "appear as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). To say that I think it is a logical stretch to teach that cosmetics are wrong because they make us sparkle and glow would be an understatement. (Come to think of it, I've never seen any cosmetics that make someone glow; I think it would be pretty cool.)

If we exclude the WPF's connection between cosmetics and artificial glowing then it becomes apparent that there are only two passages that are used to support the no-jewelry (or limited jewelry) rule: 1 Tim. 2:8-10 and 1 Pet. 3:1-5. I will deal with those two passages in a moment, but first let's look at some Scriptures that the holiness groups probably never showed you.

## **Some Scriptures Your Pastor Never Showed You:**

*Ezekiel 16:8-15, NASB*

*Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine, declares the Lord God. Then I bathed you with water, washed off your blood from you and*



anointed you with oil. I also clothed you with embroidered cloth and put sandals of porpoise skin on your feet; and I wrapped you with fine linen and covered you with silk. **I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hands and a necklace around your neck. I also put a ring in your nostril, earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour, honey and oil; so you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty. Then your fame went forth among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you,** declares the Lord God. But you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot because of your fame, and you poured out your harlotries on every passer-by who might be willing. ((New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update. LaHabra, CA : The Lockman Foundation, 1995))

*Song of Solomon 1:10-11, NASB*

**"Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, Your neck with strings of beads. We will make for you ornaments of gold With beads of silver."**

*Pro 1:8-9 NASB*

Hear, my son, your father's instruction And do not forsake your mother's teaching; Indeed, **they are a graceful wreath to your head And ornaments about your neck.**

*Son 7:1 NASB*

"How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O prince's daughter! **The curves of your hips are like jewels, The work of the hands of an artist.**

*Isa 61:10 NASB*

I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, My soul will exult in my God; For **He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself**

*with her jewels.*

*Isa 49:18 NASB*

*"Lift up your eyes and look around; All of them gather together, they come to you. As I live," declares the LORD, "You will surely put on all of them as jewels and bind them on as a bride.*

Now, when I read these Scriptures I asked myself a question: If jewelry is so sinful, then how come God repeatedly used it as an analogy of beauty? If it's such a sin to wear jewelry then why would God promise to clothe people with "garments of salvation...as a bride adorns herself with jewels"? If jewelry's a sin then isn't God making some really, really bad analogies?

To put it another way, if jewelry is bad, then was God really saying, "I'm going to give my bride a bunch of jewels, and they'll make her look really beautiful, but she'd better not wear them because they're bad!" Or, "Wow, my bride rocks, the curve of her hips are like jewels! Too bad she can't wear jewels because it's a sin."

Isn't it a stretch to think that God would make these analogies if jewelry is bad?

## **Does the Bible Ever Say That Wearing Jewelry Is A Sin?**

This is a really important question. You see, everything that is a sin in the New Testament was also a sin in the Old Testament Law (I.E. Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy). Let me say that again: *Everything that is a sin in the New Testament was also a sin in the Old Testament Law.*

Now, the converse is not true. Everything that was a sin in the Old Testament Law was *not* necessarily a sin in the New Testament. The reason is because the Mosaic Law was broken into three parts: Moral, Ceremonial, and Penal. The moral law

was (for the most part) what we call the 10 Commandments, as well as commands against fornication, homosexuality, drunkenness, and so on; the ceremonial law involved the sacrifices, the foods that a person could eat, whether or not you could dig your donkey out of a ditch on the Sabbath, and things like that; the penal law gave the penalties for breaking the moral or ceremonial law. ((International Standard Bible Encyclopedia , James Orr, M.A., D.D., General Editor, "Law In the New Testament"))

When Jesus came on the scene He fulfilled the ceremonial law and the penal law. He did *not* fulfill the moral law. ((Ibid.)) Instead, He "put [His] laws upon [our] heart[s]" (Heb. 10:16 NASB).

I said all of that to say this: You cannot find a sin in the New Testament that was not also a sin in the Old Testament Law. The reason is simple—the Law defines sin! Paul put it this way: "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet" (Rom. 7:7 NASB).

Now let's get back to my original question: Does the Bible ever say that wearing jewelry is a sin? The answer is apparently "No." The Bible never says that jewelry is a sin. For that matter, it has more good to say about jewelry than it does bad!

## **So What Does The Bible Say?**

As I showed at the start of this article, the no jewelry (or limited jewelry) doctrine is defended by two Scripture passages: 1 Tim. 2:8-10 and 1 Pet. 3:1-5. Before we look at those passages, though, please allow me to make one brief point. If I thought that the Bible even hinted that jewelry is a sin then I would be one of the doctrine's strongest defenders. When I was in the apostolic movement I never had any desire to wear jewelry; I never cared one way or the

other. So please do not think that this article is about me wanting to wear jewelry, or me “rebellious,” or anything like that. Because it’s not.

With that said, let’s look at 1 Tim. 2:8-10 and 1 Pet. 3:1-5. Let’s do 1 Pet. 3:1-5 first.

*1Pe 3:1-5 NASB*

*In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands.*

Now, when presented with a passage such as this, we have two options. The first option is to assume that the author is presenting a principle, and that the examples that he uses to illustrate the principles are just that: examples. The second option is to assume that the author is laying down a set of rules, and that he expects people to take him literally. The one thing that is *not* an option is to take part of the passage literally and part of it figuratively—yet that is exactly what the UPC and other holiness organizations frequently do.

For example, if Peter expects us to take him literally then we need to do just that. If he is speaking literally, and he is laying down rules, then here is what we can glean:

1. Peter is speaking only to wives. The things that he is saying do not apply to single women.
2. Wives cannot braid their hair.
3. Wives cannot wear **gold** jewelry (other kinds are

presumably allowed).

4. Wives must not wear dresses.

That is option one.

Option two is that Peter is using fancy hair styles, gold jewelry, and fancy clothes as examples because they help him make his point. If option two is correct then we can glean these principles:

1. Peter is speaking specifically to wives—especially those who have unsaved husbands—but the principle can apply to us all.
2. His principle is that we should not focus on our outer appearance—on our lavish hairdos, fancy clothes, and expensive jewelry—but we should instead focus on cultivating “chaste and respectful behavior.”

I will let you decide which of those two options is correct. All that I will say is that one of them *has* to be correct. I want to stress again that it is illogical and absurd to read this passage and pull one word out—jewelry—and teach that it is wrong while maintaining that braided hair and dresses are alright.

Now let's look at 1 Tim. 2:8-10:

*1Ti 2:8-10 NASB*

*Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension. Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness.*

We are once again presented with two options. Is Paul using braided hair, gold, pearls and costly garments as examples in order to make a broader point, or is he laying down a set of

rules?

If he is laying down a set of rules then this is what we can glean:

1. Men always have to lift their hands when they pray. Furthermore, they cannot lift their hands if there is any wrath or dissension in their heart.
2. Women must dress modestly and discreetly.
3. Women must not braid their hair.
4. Women must not wear gold or pearls.
5. Women must not wear costly garments.
6. Women must wear good works (what store do you buy those in?).

There are a couple of problems with the first option. One might reasonably wonder how a woman can wear good works. On the other hand, if Paul is making a broader point, and he is just using braided hair, gold, pearls and costly garments as an example, then this is what we can glean:

1. Men need to cultivate a holy attitude. When they pray they should examine their hearts and make sure that they are not harboring any wrath or dissension.
2. Women need to do the same thing. They need to make sure that they are focusing on the inside and not the outside. They need to dress modestly and discreetly. If they are poor then they need to not worry about not having gold and pearls and servants to give them fancy hairdos, and they should be content that they can dress modestly. If they are rich then they should not focus on their gold and pearls and fancy hairdos—they might even want to consider getting rid of some of that and helping folks out who are in need. That's good works, and that's what a godly woman should be worried about.

Now you might disagree with my broader interpretation of what Paul is saying to women, and that's fine if you do. But my

original point remains the same. Either Paul is speaking literally or he is making a broader point using examples that were common for his day. It's one or the other, it can't be both at the same time. It makes no sense to say, "Paul said don't wear gold or pearls but it's OK if we braid our hair!" That makes no sense at all.

## Conclusion

Do you see how ridiculous this gets? The UPC and associated organizations allow women to braid their hair, but they don't allow them to wear most jewelry. They allow women to wear "costly dresses," even though Peter said they shouldn't wear dresses at all (if we take him literally). Most of them allow women to wear gold wedding bands, almost all of them allow gold watches, and every single one allows gold-rimmed glasses, but they won't let them wear a silver necklace (even though neither Peter or Paul said anything about silver).

Folks, I have a name for this sort of teaching: Hypocrisy. Apostolic Pentecostal organizations have no problem taking Scriptures figuratively when it fits their agenda. They have no problem saying that when Stephen saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God he was speaking figuratively. They have no problem saying that Paul was giving a cultural command when he commanded (on four separate occasions) for brothers to greet each other with a holy kiss. They have no problem saying that women can talk in church even though Paul specifically commanded against it.

And you know what? I agree with the UPC's interpretation of those passages. I do think that the command for brothers to kiss each other was entirely cultural. I do think that Paul's command for women not to speak in church was a command for order in the church, and the reason that he specifically commanded women not to speak was because of the cultural norms of his day. I do agree with the Oneness Pentecostals **and Trinitarians** when they say that God the Father does not have a

physical body. Frankly, I don't know what Stephen saw, but the one thing that I do *not* think he saw was two Gods. Two Gods is both logically and Scripturally impossible, and the Trinitarians would agree with me on that.

Folks, God gave us a brain...let's use it! At some point we have to step back and look at a Scripture passage and capture the meaning as well as the words! If one steps back and just reads the passage with an open mind then it becomes clear that Peter and Paul were saying the exact same thing: Both men and women should be focused on cultivating inward holiness and not outward beauty! We should dress modestly and discreetly and avoid gaudiness and extravagance so that people can see our good deeds and our good behavior.

## **Conclusion:**

If you are an apostolic woman reading this article, and you feel that God has led you to not wear jewelry, then I want you to know that I am not ridiculing you at all. You have my respect. My problem is not with you, it is with a religious system that creates man-made rules and regulations and then demands that people follow them. My problem is with a religious system that adds to the offense of the Cross. My problem is with any denomination, organization, or church that creates barriers between the lost and God.

You have heard my opinion of the subject, but if you would like to read "the other side of the story" then you can do so at these two links:

- <http://www.upci.org/doctrine/scripturesModesty.asp> – This is the UPCI's official position on clothing, jewelry, and hair.
- <http://www.apostolic.edu/biblestudy/files/bwahrpt3.htm> – This is a Bible study written by a Oneness Pentecostal minister. It is not an official paper from the UPC, but it does give a very good overview of the sort of



teaching that goes on in holiness churches. (*By the way, I have [written a response to his Bible study.](#)*)

## **Additional Study:**

Studying the subject of jewelry can be hard since different words were used (ornaments, ornamentation, pearls, etc.). If you would like to do your own study into the subject then here are a couple of links that I hope will be helpful!

- [ISBE](#) – This is a link to the ISBE (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia) article on "Ornament."
- [Smith's Bible Dictionary](#) – A link to the "Ornaments, personal" article in Smith's Bible Dictionary.
- [NASB word search](#) – A link to the results of a search for the word "ornaments" in the NASB (New American Standard Bible).

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## **[What does the Bible say about wearing make-up?](#)**

Anyone who is familiar with the UPC knows that the majority of UPC churches and their affiliates teach against women wearing make-up. The official position of the UPC on make-up is this:

*"Since the primary effect of makeup is to highlight sex appeal, we reject makeup as immodest ((United Pentecostal Church International, [Position Paper on Modesty](#), Accessed 2006-12-21 20:02:31))."*

However, since I spent my whole life in the movement I know from personal experience that this is not the view taught in the churches. (At least, I have never heard this view taught.)

The argument against make-up that I always heard was taken from three Scriptures (2 Kings 9:30, Jer. 4:30, Eze. 23:40). The reason that it was taken from three Scriptures is because there are only three Scriptures in the entire Bible that say anything against make-up!

You see, make-up is a non-issue Biblically. Nothing was ever said about the subject positively or negatively. There are three Scriptures that make reference to make-up in passing, but none of the three even hint that make-up is a sin. Again, it's a non-issue.

Unfortunately, the UPC takes these three Scriptures, twists them out of context, and creates a doctrine out of them. That would be bad enough of its own, but the situation is made worse because many UPC churches teach that wearing make-up is a sin. In other words, it's not an optional doctrine in any UPC church that I've ever attended. (The one exception is a church that I attended for five years. The pastor—who I dearly love and respect—allows make-up as long as it does not change the base color of the skin. He is considered extremely liberal by many other pastors.)

In this article I am going to show what the Bible says about make-up, and then respond to the UPC position on the issue.

## **Is Wearing Make-up A Sin?**

Now, if you've read my article on [Jewelry](#) then you read about how sin is defined. I'm not going to repeat it all here. Instead I recommend that you read the section of the article titled "Does the Bible Ever Say That Wearing Jewelry Is A Sin?" I will briefly recap the subject here by reminding you that the Old Testament Law (Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy) defines what sin is (Rom. 7:7). Everything that is a sin in the New Testament was also a sin in the Old Testament Law, but everything that was a sin in the Old Testament Law was *not necessarily* a sin in the New Testament.

The reason that I said that is to say this: The Bible never defines make-up as a sin. The Old Testament Law was completely silent on the issue, and the New Testament never mentions it at all!

## **What Does the Bible Say About Make-up?**

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, make-up is only mentioned three times in the Bible (2 Ki. 9:30, Jer. 4:30, Eze. 23:40). Here is what these three Scriptures have to say:

*2Ki 9:30 NASB*

*(30) When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it, and she painted her eyes and adorned her head and looked out the window.*

*Jer 4:30 NASB*

*(30) And you, O desolate one, what will you do? Although you dress in scarlet, Although you decorate yourself with ornaments of gold, Although you enlarge your eyes with paint, In vain you make yourself beautiful. Your lovers despise you; They seek your life.*

*Eze 23:40 NASB*

*(40) "Furthermore, they have even sent for men who come from afar, to whom a messenger was sent; and lo, they came—for whom you bathed, painted your eyes and decorated yourselves with ornaments.*

One does not have to be a Bible scholar to see that none of these Scriptures say anything about whether or not a person should wear make-up! However, there is also a fourth Scripture that I often heard used to preach against make-up. It is 1 Tim. 2:9, which says:

*1Ti 2:9 NASB*

*(9) Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper*

*clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments.*

You might be asking at this point how 1 Tim. 2:9 has anything to do with make-up, and that's a very valid question! The confusion seems to come from a misunderstanding of the KJV translation of the Scripture. The KJV uses the word "shamefacedness" instead of "modesty." As near as I've been able to figure out, many UPC preachers assume that "shamefacedness" means that a person shouldn't wear make-up. The logic seems to be that it has the word "face" inside of "shamefacedness" so therefore it must be talking about make-up. This is an example of the sort of shoddy Biblical study that is done by many UPC preachers and pastors.

## **Overwhelming Evidence?**

I think anyone will agree that these four Scriptures are hardly overwhelming evidence against make-up! The fact is, the Bible just doesn't say whether or not a woman can wear make-up! We have to assume that if it mattered at all to God then He would have mentioned it at least *once*, right? Why should we have to take a few Scriptures that are hidden in the depths of the Old Testament and twist them together in a convoluted fashion to form a doctrine? It seems to me that God was pretty plain about the stuff that mattered to Him! For example, look at Gal. 5:19-21:

*Gal 5:19-21 NASB*

*(19) Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,*

*(20) idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,*

*(21) envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

That's pretty plain, right? I just don't think God's sitting up there seeing how many people He can trick into going to hell! A god who does that is the antithesis of the God of the Bible!

## **A Few Questions for the UPC:**

Here's a question that I have for the UPC:

If make-up is evil because it enhances our sex appeal, then what other things are we not allowed to do?

- Are we not allowed to wear deoderant?
- Are we not allowed to brush our hair?
- Are we not allowed to wear color-coordinated outfits?
- Are we not allowed to wear matching socks?

You see, I really want to enhance my sex appeal! I'm 26, and I want to get married some day! Because of that I do all sorts of stuff to enhance my sex appeal! I brush my teeth twice a day, I style my hair, I make sure my socks match, I exercise regularly enough to keep the worst of the flab off, etc. What's wrong with doing that? Just because a woman wants to make herself attracted doesn't mean that she's promiscuous! Every single one of us does things every day to enhance our attractiveness to the opposite sex!

Here are a few other questions:

- If 2 Kings 9:30 is saying that make-up is evil because Jezebel used it, then doesn't it also mean that we can't look out the window?
- If Jer. 4:30 is saying that make-up is evil because Israel wore it while they were backslidden, then doesn't it also mean that wearing scarlet is evil?
- If Eze. 23:40 is saying that make-up is evil because Israel wore it while they were backslidden, then doesn't it mean that it's also evil to take a bath?

Isn't this all a little bit ridiculous?!

## **Conclusion:**

You see, this is the problem with UPC theology: It's a house of cards. The UPC has made the claim that they and their affiliates are the only ones who possess Truth. But what happens when they find out that something they taught as Truth was wrong? It throws everything else into question! If they can be wrong on one point then they can be wrong on other points as well.

I believe that this is what is happening with make-up. The UPC has been backed into a corner. More and more people are seeing that there is absolutely nothing wrong with wearing make-up. There's no Scriptural basis for not wearing it, and there's no logical reason for not wearing it. Now the UPC is forced to defend a doctrine that makes no sense, because if they back off this doctrine then it might cause their members to doubt other doctrines as well.

This is why I believe that the Bible should be the ultimate rule of authority. If I find that I've misunderstood something in the Bible then I have no problem changing my beliefs. I don't claim to have a monopoly on Truth. I claim that *Jesus* is the only way to God, not any one Christian denomination!

Folks, God doesn't care whether or not you wear make-up! If He cared then He would have put it in the Bible! If you are a woman who feels that God does not want you wearing make-up then that is between you and Him, but God never gave any organization the right to dictate a doctrine that has no Scriptural basis as being necessary for salvation!

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## Featured Comment by Angela – May 22nd, 2012, 8:18pm ([link](#)):

*Most of the comments above sadden me. I mean they really cause my heart to ache.*

*When are we going to realize that “being in the world but not of the world, “come out and be separate”, and “peculiar people”, etc. have absolutely nothing to do with wearing make-up, a skirt, long hair, jewelry, etc.*

*It really makes my stomach turn to think that this is what the focus of salvation has become while the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. It wouldn't surprise me to discover the laborers are few because we're all squabbling over what Sister Suzy Q wore to church last Sunday.*

*Last year I felt like I was being prompted to search out the word holiness. Having been raised Pentecostal/UPC, all I knew that holiness meant (to them) was associated with a manner of dress. This didn't make much sense to me due to Hebrews 12:14. It reads, “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.” NKJV*

*I started with the definition of holiness since the Bible continuously states that God is holy, holy, holy. I had a hard time reconciling this to God wearing a dress. To be holy, according to bible.org is to be distinct, separate, in a class by oneself.*

*Exodus 15:11 says, “Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?”*

*It goes on to speak of His mercy and His strength and His redemptive power.*

*I then went on to look up the word holy in Hebrew. The word is kadosh, and means to be set apart from the common, habitual or profane. Just to make sure I wasn't missing anything, I then looked it up in Greek. Hagios (holy or*

sacred) means likeness of nature with the Lord, different from the world.

Yes. You are all correct. We are to be separate from the world. We are to be Christ-like. We have to be IN the world, but we don't have to be OF the world. I don't think phrases like Christ-like and nature with the Lord indicates in any way, shape, or form that it is to be translated into a state of dress. What makes me say that? Well, take a look at how the Word described the world.

I Corinthians 5:11 – sexually immoral, covetous, idolater, reviler, drunkard, extortioner...it's also interesting to note here who Paul was talking to and who he was speaking about and what he had to say in the following scriptures. The people he is describing here are "BROTHERS". We tend to do things the exact opposite of what the Bible tells us. We judge those on the outside, while "eating and drinking" with those on the inside who are committing these sins and claiming to have Jesus in their hearts. Wow.

I Corinthians 6: 9-11 Unrighteous, fornicators, idolators, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners...AND SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU. Double Wow.

Galations 5:19-21 THE WORKS OF THE FLESH ARE EVIDENT, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries

Those are just a couple...

Folks, THIS is what the rest of the world is like and THIS is what we are to be separate from! We are to be a light! When I'm handed the paper at work and told, "See what your horoscope says!" My response should be, "No thanks, my future is in the hands of God." I'd label that as sorcery of a sort. Correct me if I'm wrong... When I discover that



my husband has put my brand new dry-clean only dress in the wash after I've told him fourteen dozen times not to, do I yell, scream and throw a fit? Outbursts of wrath. When I join the praise team at church because I have such a beautiful voice and I want everyone to know it, and that guy who runs the local recording studio will be at church Sunday...wouldn't that be selfish ambition not to mention a few others?

We don't think of "sin" as being done in this type of scenario. Does it make it any less sin?

Grace – Josh, somewhere on this site, you made a statement that really blew me away AND gave me confidence to stop second guessing myself. You said something to the effect of because we are not perfect, we do the best we can and trust that God's grace is sufficient to cover what we mess up. I would sure hate to think that the tattoo I got while I was in the world (but knew enough of the truth to live right) was going to be the deciding factor as to where I spent eternity. That's one (tattoos) I haven't studied enough to have an opinion on one way or the other, but I can tell you I don't regret getting it. I still like it! It would kill me to know that because I'm on my second (and last) marriage that I couldn't have a mansion just over the hilltop. What we refuse to recognize though is that God's grace doesn't end when you accept His gift of salvation. It is His grace that covers those little slip ups we make...just like His grace covers my having been married once already. Thank you God!

What we wear, what we apply to our faces, how we speak, how we treat others...it all comes back to one major point. It is a heart condition. When your heart is holy, you will live a holy life. Your dress will be modest, your speech will be holy, things will be ORDERLY (yes, God likes order) and in moderation.

There isn't anything wrong with wearing make-up. There

*isn't anything wrong with ladies wearing tasteful pants, blouses, jewelry, dying hair, etc. (I can not for the LIFE of me listen to Joyce Meyer and think, "It's just too bad she doesn't have the truth.") However, the minute you have applied any of the above mentioned with the the wrong motive in your heart, there's a problem. The great thing about the Holy Ghost is that if He indeed lives in your heart, THAT is when conviction falls. Choosing to ignore that conviction is the sin. Not the action itself. I'd also like to point out that the Holy Ghost DOES NOT convict with condemnation. I keep seeing comments posted from individuals who have stated they have felt condemned over something they did. If you feel condemned (as my Pastor says) that's the devil! My God is gentle and loving and kind and just. And yes, He is jealous and you don't wanna rile His wrath, but wrath doesn't come until you have repeatedly ignored His gentle warnings.*

*I read a few comments on here containing points I wanted to address. I hope that's alright.*

*The first one was someone mentioning that her sister in law knew nothing of the Bible, but after receiving the Holy Ghost, threw her pants, make-up, etc. away. – My thought on that is this; if I were in a book club that met every Tuesday evening to talk about the chapter they read, I would make sure I was reading the same book they were. I wouldn't want to show up with *The Grapes of Wrath* if they were reading *To Kill A Mockingbird*. If someone from the world is going to join the Amish culture, I'm sure they wouldn't feel quite right about wearing bright red blouses and Guess jeans. I am by no means denying the power of a Holy Ghost conviction, nor am I doubting she has one. She very well may, but personally, I don't find that the argument that she threw it all out after receiving the Holy Ghost to be enough to convince me.*

*Second -make-up is not made by God... – neither are*

twinkies.

Neither is Accutane or Benzoyl Peroxide, but I can guaranty you that if you have the means, you will take your child to the dermatologist to aquire either to clear up a case of acne that your kid is being picked on at school about. Is that not vanity? Should you let your child continue to be made fun of because we are not to alter our natural state or because Jesus said we would be persecuted for His name's sake? I don't think the persecution he spoke of had anything to do with make-up or dress or jewelry, etc.

Third – Make-up makes you sexually attractive.- Umm...I'm simply going to say...REALLY think about that. I hesitate to make the comment I want to out of consideration for other's feelings and the way it may be percieved. I will say Linda Tripp before ...alterations.

Fourth – Man can not see your heart. – OF COURSE NOT!! Matthew 7:16 – You will know them by their fruit – and I do not recall any one of the fruits of the Spirit being au natuale faced. Now back up for a second to the scripture I mentioned above. I Corinthians 5:11 – correct me if I'm wrong, but Paul WAS talking about those IN the church. How were the “righteous” to know not to associate with them? They were to test the Spirits! I'm sure most of the offenders were not walking around bragging on their exploits so that the “righteous” knew not to associate with them.

Fifth – Are you putting on make-up to entice someone or to look nice or better? – How many times have you stood in front of the mirror before Sunday evening church service or a date with hubby...or wifey, thought your outfit didn't LOOK GOOD on you and changed? I will raise BOTH hands on that one!

When you were shopping and tried on that skirt that was so cute on the hanger, and it ends up being hideous on you

cause it makes your hips look ten feet wide, are you going to go on and buy it cause it downplays your natural attributes?

Sixth – Pastor's were given to us to convey these safety nets – Pastor's were given to disciple what has ALREADY BEEN GIVEN! I recently read a FB post by a Pastor on this exact issue. He said, (and I quote) "The saints can NEVER make up the RULES. God does and he gives them to his ministers." Again...the "rules" have already been given! If God decides to make new ones, it won't be a secret for the ministers to impart to the congregation. The saints will have the revelation too, and if you disagree with me, then I'd say that you were thinking one in the body of Christ higher than the other.

Frankly, his comment sounded like a Pharisee to me. And no, I am not judging. I have formed an opinion. LOL!

Seventh – Pastor's want real holiness – By who's standards and definitions?

I sometimes wonder what heart sins a man making all these rules for his congregation has. I question whether or not he is trying to keep himself out of trouble.

Eighth – Lust of the eye was mentioned – Lust of the eye is mentioned as one of the three sins. All sin falls into one of three. Lust of the eye, lust of the flesh, pride of life. All revert back to the heart. It's a heart condition. I think Chris Helmsworth is great eyecandy! I do not covet him. With that thought in mind, let me point out that the Bible placed emphasis on beauty when it was possessed. Esther was "lovely and beautiful" according the the book of Esther, and STILL had to go through 12 months of beauty treatment! Just for the sake of arguement, let's say she refused make-up to enhance her natural beauty...to her face during those beautifying treatments for fear of sinning. She was still treated with oils and "preperations for beautifying women" on the rest of her body!

Rachel was "beautiful of form and appearance" according to Genesis.

Abram said to his wife that she was a "woman of beautiful countenance" in Genesis 12:11.

'm sure many would argue..."See. The women were beautiful in their natural state!"

What about Leah?

I have fasted, prayed and studied over the past few weeks while asking for wisdom and knowledge to find truth in the scriptures. Not what I want them to say, but what they actually say. I believe God led me to this site. Earlier this year, I received prophesy in which He stated that there had been many fragments and pieces of truth scattered here and there throughout my life, but He was going to bring them together in solidity and confidence. I know He is doing that.

I read this quote today actually, and find it very appropriate for all that this web-site encompasses.

"No man ever believes that the Bible says what it means; he is always convinced that it means what he says." George Bernard Shaw

When we as Christians wake up and realize that there is a hurt, lost world out there aching to know the Master, these issues will seem so minute. Let the walls of division fall. Jesus said in Mark 9:40 For he who is not against us is on our side. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

Read that story. When John tells Jesus, "we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name..." think about inserting a denomination in there. Jesus, we saw the Baptist casting out demons in Your name. Jesus, we saw the Protestants casting out demons in Your name...

There had to be SOMETHING different about them if John

*referred to them as "someone who does not follow us".*

*In Love,  
Angela*

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## **What does the Bible say about women wearing pants?**

The first thing that we must understand when asking this question is that no one in the Bible wore pants. They did not exist back then—at least not in the form we have them today. Because of this, the Bible never dealt with the subject of women wearing pants. [Note: I have added [an article on what the Israelites did wear when they were in Egypt and during the Exodus](#).] The Mosaic Law does, however, deal with the subject of cross-dressing. The Mosaic Law says, "A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God" (Deut. 22:5 NASB). The argument against women wearing pants that I always heard when I was in the UPC was this:

1. Deut. 22:5 applies to us today. Even though we are not under the Mosaic Law anymore, something that is an abomination to God is always an abomination. (This is based off of Rev. 21:27, which says that "no one who practices abomination" (KJV) will enter into the New Jerusalem.)
2. Since pants are men's apparel, and dresses are women's apparel, it is an abomination for a woman to wear pants or for a man to wear dresses.

Notice that I said that this is the argument that I heard during my time in the UPC. It is only fair to say that the official position paper of the UPC uses a different line of reasoning. They say, "[W]e should avoid...slacks on women because they immodestly reveal the feminine contours of upper leg, thigh, and hip ((United Pentecostal Church International, [Position Paper on Modesty](#), Accessed 2006-12-30 21:10:16))."

In this article I am going to take a look at both views, and then I'll wrap up with an important point about hypocrisy.

*Edit (1/2/07): I found [another position paper](#) from the UPCI on men and women's apparel. In this other paper they do use a modified form of the Deut. 22:5 argument.*

## **Are Slacks Automatically Immodest?**

I think that it is ridiculous to say that slacks are inherently more immodest than dresses. Slacks and dresses can be immodest. It is possible that pants on a woman would have been considered immodest 200 years ago in many Western societies, but that's pure conjecture. Either way, I know of no man in Western culture who is automatically thrown into temptation because a woman wears pants. What we have to deal with is what is modest today, not what was modest 200 years ago or 2,000 years ago. The Bible never defined modesty, it only told us to be modest.

## **Are Pants "Men's Apparel"?**

I do not think that pants can be thought of as only men's apparel in modern Western culture. Cultures and dress codes change over time. They always have. When Deut. 22:5 was written men were probably wearing linen kilts and women were probably wearing "full-length, light weight, loose-fitting dresses ((Nelson's Bible Manners & Customs: How the People of the Bible Really Lived, "5.2 The People of God Wandering In the Wilderness", ed. Howard F. Vos))." In the mid-19th century men were wearing

breeches and women were wearing dresses that did not show even their ankles. Yet now the dress code laid by the UPC is that women have to wear dresses but they can come up to the knee ((United Pentecostal Church International, [Position Paper on Modesty](#), Accessed 2006-12-30 21:10:16)). Why did they choose this style of apparel and not the style that was worn when Deut. 22:5 was written, or the style that was worn in the 19th century? The reason is that cultures and styles change, and the UPC apparently picked the style of apparel that happened to be in fashion when their doctrines started to develop.

There is no biblical excuse for taking a girl who is a third-generation wearer of pants and telling her that she has to only wear dresses. At some point we have to admit that culture has changed. Again, we're concerned with what culture is now, not what it was in the 1800s and early 1900s.

## **Hypocrisy? The Pants Issue Can Be One Way or the Other, It Can't Be Both**

Let me talk to the preachers and teachers for a moment.

Many preachers and teachers in the UPC feel that Deut. 22:5 still applies to us today. I don't take that view, but I'm not going to debate the point. What I will say is that if you are going to apply Deut. 22:5 to the pants vs. skirts debate then you have to apply it to everything. If you believe that it is an abomination for a woman to wear pants (because you feel that pants are men's apparel) then you must be willing to make a complete prohibition against women wearing men's apparel. For instance, many women in the UPC wear pajama pants but they will not wear pants in public. If pants are men's apparel, and if it's a sin for women to wear men's apparel, then that means no pajama pants. It also means that a girl can't put on her boyfriend's jacket or her husband's shirt, or any other article of clothing that is designed for a man.

It can be one way or the other, it can't be both. It must be a



complete prohibition or no prohibition at all. To preach against women wearing pants, and then allow your wife to wear pajama pants, is nothing less than total hypocrisy. If you do preach a complete prohibition against women wearing any men's apparel then I will respect your view, even though I will continue to disagree with it. If you will not do that then I view your teaching as hypocritical in the extreme.

## Conclusion

It is not safe to end this subject without pointing out that cross-dressing is almost definitely displeasing to God. When I say "cross-dressing" this is the usage that I am referring to:

*Nearly every society throughout history has had a set of norms, views, guidelines, or laws regarding the wearing of clothing and what is appropriate for each gender. Cross-dressing is a behavior which runs counter to those norms ((Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, [Cross-dressing](#), Accessed 2006-12-30 23:20:05)).*

I do think that we can extrapolate from Scripture that God would be displeased with someone deliberately dressing in a manner that identifies them with the opposite gender. However, I do not think that a woman wearing pants should be considered cross-dressing. As I said before, women wearing pants is part of the accepted norm in modern Western culture.

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## [What does the Bible say about](#)

# dying your hair?

I was very surprised about a year ago to find out that at least some UPC churches teach against people dying their hair. I do not recall ever hearing anyone preach against people dying their hair until about a year ago, but since then I have come into contact with other people who have heard the same thing preached. It seems to be a fairly common doctrine in UPC churches, even though I cannot find any official UPC position about it.

Since it does seem to be such a common doctrine, I have decided to write a brief article on it.

The first time that I heard anyone preach against people dying their hair was when my last UPC pastor mentioned it in during a church service. He used Mat 5:36 as his argument, which says: "Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black" (Mat 5:36 KJV). Now it is obvious to any casual reader that Jesus is not speaking against people dying their hair. He is saying that people do not have the ability to turn their hair from white to black or from black to white. That is all that He is saying, and nothing more.

I do not know what arguments other UPC pastors use to preach against people dying their hair, but I do know that there is no Scripture in the Bible that says that people should not dye their hair.

Of course, some people might think that the reason the Bible does not say anything about it is because people did not dye their hair during Biblical times. It is a mistake to think that, however, because dying and highlighting the hair was quite common during Paul's day. Nelson's Bible Manners and Customs has this to say:

*Paul...would have noticed that many men had blond hair. A few*

*of them could have been slaves from Germany, but Italian Roman citizens should have had dark hair. Puzzled, on inquiry he might have found out that a considerable number of men dyed their hair because blond hair was fashionable. He would have seen some brown tints too ((Nelson's Bible Manners and Customs: How the People of the Bible Really Lived, "Rome and Italy in the Career of Paul," ed. Howard F. Vos ))).*

Of course, just because the Bible does not explicitly teach against something does not make it right. The Bible does not say anything against abortion, even though abortion and the killing of unwanted or deformed children was very common in the Roman Empire ((Ibid.)). Just because the Bible doesn't explicitly say that you shouldn't have an abortion does not mean that it is alright to do so. However, the fact that the Bible says nothing for or against women dying their hair—whereas it does say something against murder, by implication making abortion and the killing of newborn children unacceptable—leads me to believe that God has no problem with women or men dying or highlighting their hair.

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## **What does the Bible say about men wearing shorts?**

Many churches in the UPC teach that men should not wear shorts. In my experience the only Scriptural backing that is given for this doctrine is this Scripture passage:

*Isa 47:1-3 KJV*

*(1) Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and*

*delicate.*

*(2) Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers.*

*(3) Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man.*

I have already discussed this passage in my article on [Misinterpreted Scriptures](#), so in this article I am simply going to repeat the material that I have already written in that article:

**Misinterpretation:** The UPC often uses this Scripture to try to prove that it is wrong for men to wear shorts or for women to wear skirts above the knee.

**Facts:** If this Scripture is teaching that men cannot wear shorts then it is also teaching that women cannot remove their veils. Let's take a closer look at the Scripture to see what I mean.

To understand this Scripture we must look at what the phrase "uncover thy locks" means. "Uncover thy locks" means "remove the veil." Here is how several mainstream English translations render Isa. 47:2 (I have included Young's Literal Translation, since many UPC pastors use this translation for study):

*Isa 47:2 YLT (Young's Literal Translation)*

*(2) Take millstones, and grind flour, Remove thy veil, draw up the skirt, Uncover the leg, pass over the floods.*

*Isa 47:2 NASB*

*(2) "Take the millstones and grind meal. Remove your veil, strip off the skirt, Uncover the leg, cross the rivers.*

*Isa 47:2 ESV*

*(2) Take the millstones and grind flour, put off your veil, strip off your robe, uncover your legs, pass through the*

*rivers.*

*Isa 47:2 GNB*

*(2) Turn the millstone! Grind the flour! Off with your veil! Strip off your fine clothes! Lift up your skirts to cross the streams!*

*Isa 47:2 JPS (Jewish Translation of the Old Testament)*

*(2) Take the millstones, and grind meal; remove thy veil, strip off the train, uncover the leg, pass through the rivers.*

I included these five mainstream English translations because I want to show that the common rendering of the verse is "remove your veil," and that it is not a translation that I came up with on my own. My point is this: If this verse proves that it is immodest for a person to wear shorts or skirts above the knee then it also proves that it is immodest for women to remove their veils.

It is clear that there is no basis for using this Scripture to try to prove that shorts are immodest on men or women. The UPC teaching that says that men should not wear shorts is a great example of the common UPC practice of pulling one Scripture out of context and using it to create a doctrine that it was never meant to teach. The simple fact of the matter is that the Bible never even hints that shorts are immodest on men or women.

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**What does the Bible say about**

# facial hair?

*UPDATE (6/5/2008): Because of some of the feedback on this article, I fear that I may have been misunderstood. I would like to clarify that, to my knowledge, no UPC or UPC-affiliated church teaches that facial hair itself is a sin. However, every UPC or UPC-affiliated church that I have attended has taught against facial hair for one of two reasons. The first reason is that many of them have said that facial hair is a sign of rebellion (because of those who used to grow beards out of rebellion in the 1960s). The second reason that facial hair has been taught against is because it offends so many people who are against facial hair.*

*I think it is only fair to add that I have attended some churches who allowed members to have mustaches.*

*I hope this clarifies what I am saying in this article.*

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Many churches in the UPC teach against having facial hair. I do not know if that position is officially endorsed by the UPC, but I do know that every UPC church I have been in taught against facial hair for one reason or another. The question is, "What does the Bible say about having facial hair?"

The only rule concerning facial hair in the Bible is found in Lev. 19:27, which says, 'You shall not round off the side-growth of your heads nor harm the edges of your beard" (NASB). It is possible that God gave this law in response to the customs of Israel's pagan neighbors ((Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., Harrison, R. K., & Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1995). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary*. Rev. ed. of: *Nelson's illustrated Bible dictionary*.; Includes index. Nashville: T. Nelson.)), but, regardless of the reasons for the law, it no longer applies to us today.

Aside from Lev. 19:27, nothing is said in the Bible for or against beards. It is a non-issue Biblically.

So why do so many UPC churches teach against facial hair? The reason that I have always heard is that facial hair is a sign of rebellion. This dates back to the 1960s, when it was presumably fashionable for young men to grow beards as a sign of protest of the Vietnam War. My response to this argument is that, while it may have been a sign of rebellion 50 years ago for a man to grow a beard, it is no longer a sign of rebellion today. Since the Bible does not say anything for or against beards, there is no reason why men should not be allowed to grow them today.