

A CHANGE OF
MIND

DOES GOD FORGIVE OUR SINS?



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VOLUME 3

A Change of Mind

How Good Do I Have To Be? Volume 3

Contents

Chapter 1 Does God Forgive Our Sins?	1
Chapter 2 Does God Forgive Our Sins? (pt. 2)	5
Chapter 3 Does God Forgive Our Sins? (pt. 3)	13
Chapter 4 Receiving The Gift	17
Chapter 5 Believing Is Seeing	24
Chapter 6 How Good Do I Have To Be?	30
Chapter 7 Talents.	35
Chapter 8 Worketh Not	46

Does God Forgive Our Sins?

To begin, I want to read you something, and although I agree with much of what is written here, there are a few points along the way that I must mention so that there is no confusion. This author begins,

“Our greatest need ... is the Good News of the Kingdom....”

However, before we get to the Good News of the Kingdom, we first need the Good News of the Gospel. That is what gets us to the Kingdom. So, I already have some disagreement with this statement.

“This ... the Good News of the Kingdom ... meets the greatest needs in our lives. Through Jesus, God forgives us our sins and reconciles us to himself.”

Yes - it is through Jesus, without a doubt, but is the author sure about his statement, “God forgives our sins”? So, before we go any further, maybe we need to think about the following question: Does God Forgive Our Sins? One brave soul listening to this message responded, saying, “Through Jesus,” [which I don't disagree with] “God forgives our sins and reconciles us to Himself.”

Here are other responses to that same question:

“Does God forgive our sins? I thought Jesus’ blood erased our sins, so the Father cannot see them. If He does not see them, if they are erased, I guess forgiveness is not necessary. Like you stated before, it is hard to comprehend concerning His omnipresence and all knowing.” [That's true, but God being God, He can do anything He wants.]

“Does God forgive our sins? With everything I’ve learned here, it would seem to me that the question needs clarification.” [No, it does not; do not complicate the question.]

“God, meaning God the Father, sees us through Christ’s blood who washed away our sins as if they never existed. Which Christ, God in human form, forgave through grace. So, I think the answer is Yes and No. Does God forgive our sins? What definition of forgive are we using?”

“Not sure what to say except I know He doesn’t cover them but cast them from us.” [He does both.]

“No, God does not, but through Jesus, He does not see the sin in us.”

“There you go again, asking very basic questions of something we’ve been told for a very long time, namely does God forgive our sins? Since we are covered by the blood of Christ, God no longer sees our sin, He sees Jesus. Our sins are washed away. I do not see a forgiving action there; I see a blotting out action.”

“I feel like I always get the pop quizzes wrong, but here it goes... I think that Christ covered our sins rather than removed them.” [No, that is not what scripture says. You need to go back and listen to some of the Table of The Lord messages where I point out the scriptures where it is saying our sins are removed.]

“As a previous pastor puts it... ‘He sees us through rose colored glasses that Christ covered with His blood’.” [I never really agreed with that definition either. God does not need his vision blurred from my sin because my sin is not there. He does not need his vision blurred with rose-colored glasses if my sin has been removed. Go back and listen to the Table of The Lord messages again where I make the distinction and where we find in scriptures the promises of removal of sin, not just covering.]

If you recall the illustration I've used previously, I preached that, through Jesus, God forgives our sins and reconciles us to Himself. I've also used the illustration of a magician who puts something underneath a drape, or cloth covering, and tells everybody the object is going to disappear. In that example, Jesus Christ's blood is the covering. Our sins are underneath it and when He removes that blood covering, there is nothing! It has disappeared and is not seen by God the Father.

God, being God, can choose anyone He wants, including his Son, and He chose His only begotten Son to come for us, to die for us, and to be raised from that grave for us. He can also choose to not know of my sins, even though He is all-knowing, and this is what gets me so frustrated! If there is one message that Satan has been very successful in twisting and confusing, irrespective of denomination, is what Christ told us to remember. We are to remember *His* sacrifice and to keep proclaiming it as often as we eat and drink. It's a very simple message but it has been twisted and confused.

God does not forgive our sin because He does not see our sin, although some might ask how then can we justify reciting the Disciple's Prayer? Instead, put that question in context, so we understand what is really being asked. Jesus's disciples asked Him how they should pray. When Jesus was asked that question, He hadn't died and risen out of that grave yet, did He? In answer, He said when we do pray, we are to say and ask for certain things and one of those things was “forgive us our trespasses,” and that is where the confusion comes in. Some may wonder if we are to ask God to forgive us our trespasses. But Jesus paid that price and said that we should trust and have faith in Him; we must have confidence in what He would do at Calvary to be sufficient. Where sins were, as that one HOF said, are now blotted out. Our sins are gone! It's only Christians who like to bring up our sins repeatedly. They must have something to hold over our heads to keep us in line and in that self-righteous image they've created.

Jesus reconciled us back to the Father by going to Calvary, stepping in where we deserved to be, dying because of Adam's sin, and we are in the image of Adam. God, in His grace, allowed His only begotten Son in human flesh to come, to die, to rise and to present His Blood at the heavenly mercy seat. God doesn't need rose-colored glasses and He doesn't need His vision blurred, because there is nothing there to see. Preaching this message puts us in the good fight of faith more than anything else we ever face in life. It is the one message that Satan hates with a passion because he doesn't like the truth to be told about The Last Days and Eschatology. He doesn't want us to know about spiritual warfare or knowing our enemy, which he is.

And the thing that he hates even more than the rightly divided Word of God is our hearing what Christ did for us and what a wonderful benefit that is for us. I'm convinced that some of the poundings in my life these last few years are because I have really stirred up Hell and its forces by exposing the true message of what Christ did for us, without all the bondage, without all the twisting, and without all the colorful illustrations that prevents us from getting to the meat of the matter.

Concerning forgiveness, God only has two choices according to his Word: to not see anything because it has been removed by Christ; it is gone forever, or to see those who have not put their trust and faith in His only begotten Son, waiting for the day where all things will be fulfilled, where His wrath will pour out and punishment will come. Through Christ, Adam's sin has been removed and isn't seen by the Father. The Father cannot forgive what he cannot see or what He chooses not to see, in honor of His Son. That Blood at the mercy seat of heaven is a shield that blocks out all sin from the Father. Period!

The disciple's prayer was to be prayed prior to Christ's death and resurrection. Put it in context. I don't pray the "Our Father Which Art in Heaven" prayer, because there are things in that prayer that only pertained to individuals prior to Jesus going to the cross. After the cross, some of those things were eliminated. There are some things in that prayer that you can pray, but we don't have to pray any longer for the Father to forgive us our trespasses or that we forgive others. Now, we are to forgive others, but the Father does not have to forgive us. He has that blood shield that keeps all sin away from Him for the faithful - those who trust in Him and his Son and what His Son did for us. God, being God, sees all others and their sins, but for the ones who are in His Son and His Son is in them, He sees nothing! (However, that doesn't give us a license to go do as much sinning as we can.)

These comments were only on the first two sentences that I read at the beginning of this message. Our greatest need is Jesus Christ, not the Good News of the Kingdom. The Kingdom has already started to establish itself, but it's not complete. It doesn't meet the greatest need in our life - Jesus meets the greatest need in our life! The Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ meets the greatest need in our life, and that is the starting point in our journey that will continue when the Kingdom is complete, and we live on forever more in Jesus's presence throughout eternity.

This author writes, "Through Jesus, God forgives us our sins...." No! If that were true, what Christ did on the cross and coming out of that tomb meant absolutely nothing. God doesn't see our sins, so no forgiveness is necessary. God isn't up there with rose-colored glasses. He doesn't need to be blinded from our sins because He can never see our sins. They have been removed, and because they have been removed through Christ, we can be reconciled back to Him.

That is where I will begin in the next message. I didn't get very far in reading from this author. I intended to read three or four pages, but I only read two sentences. I don't care if you agree with me or disagree with me, but if you disagree, prove me wrong. Better yet, prove to yourselves that I am wrong, without using man-made traditions that have corrupted the blood of Jesus Christ.

I'm going to have more to say about this in the next message because many will scripture pick from all the forgiveness passages, especially those passages in the New Testament. I might choose a few of those as well, but then I will go deeper.

To be continued...

Does God Forgive Our Sins (pt. 2)?

During the last message, I started to read the following, and I didn't get far,

“Our greatest need ... is the Good News of the Kingdom....”

I then went on to explain that before we get the Good News of the Kingdom, we need first and foremost, the Good News of the Gospel of peace and grace. This author also wrote,

“... and it meets the greatest need in our lives. Through Jesus, God forgives our sins and reconciles us to himself.”

In closing part one of this series I said that God sees no sin. In fact, I still have the message here that I received, and I commented on that stated, “A previous pastor says God sees us through rose-colored glasses that Christ colored with his blood.” My comment to that message was that God doesn't need rose-colored glasses because He should never see our sins. I also heard that same explanation from the same pastor; I didn't believe it then, and I still don't. Nowhere in scripture does it state that God has rose-colored glasses that Christ colored with His blood to “protect” Him from our sin or doesn't allow Him to see our sin. I will take it a step further and say that because of what Christ did, God never sees sin, period. He doesn't need rose-colored shades to keep Him from seeing what we truly are now, and that is sinners saved by the blood of Jesus Christ.

What I want to concentrate on in this message is the life after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. You have seen the words *forgive*, *forgiveness*, *forgiven* used often enough in the New Testament, but what do they mean? To help find their meaning we'll look at the Greek words they came from. There are many definitions for these Greek words, over and above the three words *forgive*, *forgiveness*, *forgiven*, and some of the definitions are not even related to forgiveness or *forgive* in the way we understand.

Before I get to that, however, I have often said to be careful with Greek dictionaries. The authors of these Greek dictionaries have their own bias in how they explain and define words and what they think these Greek words mean. I can tell you right now that some of them never cared to look at the historical writings prior to the Gospel records, or other works or letters written at that particular time, to determine how these words were used in Greek everyday language. They also didn't care to determine how much of this meaning was incorporated into Christianity. There is also the “Koine Greek” which consists of anything between five hundred and a thousand Greek words, supposedly created by Christians to communicate a secret message that the Greeks couldn't figure out. (That has been proven as hogwash by the way.) One source reads,

“Of the about five thousand words in the Greek New Testament, approximately three thousand are found in the ancient or classical Greek writings from Homer to Demosthenes covering a period from about 700 B.C. to 300 B.C. Until fifty years ago New Testament scholars reckoned about 550 words to be peculiar to the New Testament. Through the discovery of the Koine Greek, especially in the papyri, the number of Greek words peculiar to the Bible has been reduced to less than fifty.”

[Note it is less than fifty.]

In the study in the New Testament, whether doctrinal or devotional, a word study of the papyri becomes valuable....The papyri show that the Greek of the New Testament is not a language that stands by itself, but 'its main feature was, that it was the ordinary vernacular Greek of the period.'

The New Testament writers often make use of the Septuagint version instead of the Hebrew texts. There is close connection between the general phraseology of the LXX and the New Testament. 'Thus we may see that the study of the Septuagint is almost needful to any biblical scholar who wishes to estimate adequately the phraseology... of the New Testament.'

[Other words to be considered are in the Apocrypha.]

[The] "... Apocrypha, though destitute of all authority [although it should not be], have much value in connection with the Hellenistic phraseology of the New Testament, The Septuagint version had been formed on a Hebraic mold, so that Hebraisms were sure to manifest themselves; but in those books of the Apocrypha which were originally written in Greek, we find just the same Hebrew cast of thought and expression. Thus the Hellenistic phraseology of the New Testament was not a new thing, even when applied to the original composition.

Even though a Greek dictionary gives the various usages of a New Testament word, it is of great value to the student of the New Testament and of Christian doctrines to attain for himself [outside these dictionaries, by the way] illustrations of the usage of a specific word directly from the sources available."

With that, in this message I want to look at two Greek words in particular that have been translated as *forgive*, *forgiven* and *forgiveness*. I want you to expand your mind and ask yourself the following question – Why do we get the word forgive or forgiveness, when these English words are incapable of defining “the action of something that is taking place?” Ask this question specifically when I show you where these words are used in the scriptures.

The first Greek word I want to look at is ***aphiemi***, which in the Septuagint has been translated from six different Hebrew words. However, no matter how you look at this word, whether from a Hebraic point of view, a Septuagint point of view, or even in classical writings that are not scripture, the definition of *aphiemi*, (from studying and analyzing all the sources), is “to send away.” *Aphiemi*, to send away, also carries a meaning of being separated from something, with one exception being forgiving, forgiveness, or remission. It carries a definition that simply means “a sending away: a separating from something”. I could add another definition: “a release from something, and then to be sent away”. This word is seen many times in the New Testament, and these two Greek words, in general, are translated as forgive.

The second Greek word I want to look at is ***charizomai***, which comes from the word *charis* that means *grace*. This word should be familiar to many of you who listened to previous teachings. The word appears 27 times in the New Testament and simply means “to show or to grant favor.” *Aphiemi* means “to send away” (or a separation) and *charizomai* means “to show or grant favor.”

Although this doesn't sound complicated, we certainly have complicated it, and here are some examples of how that has been done.

First, let's look at *aphiemi*. When translated from the Greek scriptures, and kept in context, it simply means “to send something away” or “to have separated from something.” This word *aphiemi* is used quite a lot in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and a few times in John. Usually the King James translators wrote *left* or *sent* but mostly wrote *left* or *left something behind*, and only a few times has the word *forgive* or *forgiven* been used. The Disciples Prayer and the few verses after their prayer is such an instance. To illustrate what I am saying, let's start from the back of the New Testament and work our way to the front of it. Go to the Book of Revelation, chapter two. Here you will see the most common way the word is used - not just in the Book of Revelation but throughout the New Testament and especially in the Gospel records.

Revelation 2:4 states, **“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”**

The Greek word used there is *aphiemi*, and, as I said, it's sometimes translated as *forgive*, *forgiven*, or *forgiveness*, but here in the Book of Revelation and in most of the Gospel record, *left* is used instead of *forgive*, or *forgiven*. In addition, “left thy first love” isn't a good translation. What they did and are accused of doing here is separating themselves from their first love. They started to love the world more than they loved Jesus, so, “Thou hast sent away thy first love” could have also been written.

Now go to 1 John 1:7, where the subject matter is the blood of Jesus Christ. This verse states,

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son....”

This verse is showing God the Son. Is Jesus God? Absolutely! Is God the Father God? Absolutely! Is the Holy Spirit part of all that and God as well? Absolutely! There is one God with three Identities, and even though we are in the image of Adam, we have still some God-like qualities; body, soul and spirit. As humans we are only able to see the three-dimensional part, our bodies. That is also the only thing we saw when God moved into a "tent" of human flesh in Jesus Christ, but the three-dimensional part isn't all that's there when we place the word God behind or in front of the word Son. There's more than that and that is why Christ said, “You see me, you see the Father.” I know it can be hard to understand, and much of the conversation about the Holy Trinity we must accept in faith. And why not? Do you believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Do you believe everything else that is verifiable in the Word of God? The point is that there are some things we must have trust and confidence in, even though we cannot clearly understand it and cannot actually see for ourselves, because of our limitation of a three-dimensional perspective.

Returning to 1 John 1:7-10 we read,

“...and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

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

If we confess our sins, he [Jesus Christ] is faithful and just to forgive....”

In this verse, I think the word *forgive* falls short of exactly what Christ did for us, because we could never be reconciled back to the Father if Jesus just "forgave" our sins. He did more than that, and I believe it is a huge error on our parts to use only the basic understanding of the English word *forgive*. What Jesus Christ did was **send away** our sins. He separated us from sin by removing it. (So, God doesn't use rose-colored shades to blind Himself from seeing our sin.)

For another example, go to Psalm 103:11-12 where even in the Old Testament it clearly states:

“For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear [or are in awe of] him.

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.”

What Christ did here was not only to forgive, (in our simplistic understanding of what we think the definition of the word forgive means), but He sent away and separated us from sin. That is the only way we can be reconciled back to the Father. So now we are right with God the Father, in our relationship with Him, because Jesus Christ, who died horribly for us, paid the penalty that we deserved. He rescued us, washed and removed our sins to a place where no one can find them. Now we are separated from those sins if we continue to trust in Jesus Christ.

So, what the verse is saying here is that if we confess our sins, He is faithful, and He sends away or separates us from our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. That is what the blood of Christ does. The blood covering cleanses and the blood spilling removes those sins.

Let us continue with 1 John 2:1,

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:”

The Greek word for *advocate* is very simply, “one called upon to help” with the Father, because Christ’s blood is right there at the throne where Jesus Christ is saying, “That is My blood. That means yes, they have sinned, but their sin is removed. Their sin has been separated from them, which means that You, God the Father, can still be reconciled to them.” With the Father, only Jesus Christ is righteous.

Now further in that chapter you see in verse 12,

“I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his [Christ’s] name’s sake.”

Once again, the Greek word used here is *aphiemi*; it is the same word used in 1 John 1:9 and also in 1 John 2:12. Now let's continue with Romans 4. Here the Bible is speaking of Abraham and then David; in verse 7 we read,

"... Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven...."

The Greek word here again is *aphiemi*, which is not forgiven, as understood with the basic understanding of the English language, but "they are sent away." So, this verse should read,

"... Blessed are those whose iniquities are sent away, and whose sins are covered."

Another word poorly translated is *covered*. A better translation would be *concealed where it cannot be seen*. This means that by whatever Jesus does, my sins are concealed in a place where they cannot be seen by the Father. My sins are separated from me; they are sent away. Do you get the idea? I can give you verse after verse, especially in the gospel records and some in Acts, where this word *aphiemi* was translated as *left*, however, I don't want to go through all those verses, because I want to focus on where the word is used as *forgiven*, *forgive*, or *forgiveness*.

Now, there is another word that has been translated and used for forgiveness, not just in the King James Version but in other translations as well, and that word is *charizomai*, which means *to show or grant favor*. Let's look at some examples. First, I will go to Colossians and then to Ephesians to give just a few of the most popular examples.

First, go to Colossians 2:13

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he [Christ] quickened together with him, having forgiven all your trespasses;"

The Greek word here is *charizomai*, but it should not say *having forgiven*; it should read, "... hath he quickened together with him, to grant or show you favor in all your trespasses."

Now, obviously by showing us favor we can carry it out to the logical conclusion. He granted or showed us favor by sending away and removing our sins from the sight of God the Father, because nothing unholy can exist in His presence. And because of what Christ did and from the blood that He spilled and what He accomplished through that, he removed and sent away of our sins; He showed us favor and granted us favor with God the Father.

Colossians 3:13 says,

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

Again, this is not a good translation. The Greek word here is *charizomai*, which comes from the word grace or favor, and *charizomai* is to show or grant favor. So this verse should read,

"Forbearing one another, and granting favor to one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as God granted favor to you, so also do ye."

I have always disliked it when fellow Christians, who thought I did something wrong to them, would say, "I forgive you." Liars! Some of you may have been guilty of it yourself; I sure have

been in the past. I'm not sitting here pretending to be guiltless, but I'm saying this about every one of us: Very few of us, if any, have the attitude of forgiveness where someone is shown favor, in that their sin is completely separated from them and forgotten. Very few can send that sin away and remove the thought of whatever it is they did to cause you harm, whether physical or emotional, completely from your mind forever. It's almost physically impossible to wash the slate clean in our minds and not ever remember what that person did to you, especially if you have further dealings with that person.

For example, what if a Christian person cheated you in some business transaction and asked you to forgive him? If you have another business transaction with him in the future, do you think that in the back of your mind you're going to remember what he did to you in that previous transaction? The truth is, that if you do remember, then you didn't send away and separate yourself from that previous sin towards you. I'm not saying we shouldn't strive to achieve that level of *aphiemi* or *charizomai*, but because Christians don't understand what is really involved in the act of true forgiveness, it is cheapened to where it doesn't really mean much. Here this verse says,

“Forbearing one another, and charizomai [showing favor to] one another, if any man have a quarrel [or complaint] against any: even as Christ charizomai [showed you favor], so also do ye.”

He is saying that God extended His grace, so you do the same.

Now, the last verse I want to go to is Ephesians 4:32, a continuation of verse 31. It is another example in Scriptures where the word *charizomai* is used and not *aphiemi*. You may have also heard Christians refer to this verse as well,

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

Some may use this as evidence that God does forgive, but that is not actually what the original Greek word in this instance means, or what should have been used. In both cases, the words translated as *forgiving* and *forgiven* in this verse is *charizomai* and should really read,

“And be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, showing or granting favor to one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath shown you favor.”

God, for Christ's sake, has shown you favor. If He doesn't, then He is a liar and God is not a Man to lie. God said what would happen: His only begotten Son came, His only begotten Son died, His only begotten Son rose from the grave, and His only begotten Son presented His precious blood at the heavenly mercy seat. For His Son’s sake, He has granted you favor.

My purpose in this message is to put a different perspective on the words forgiveness, forgiving and forgive. I want to explain the actual meaning of those words and what Christ really did for us when the word *aphiemi* is used. What He did on the cross was to send away and remove our sins, and if we have trust and faith in what He did for us, then we in turn are connected back to the Father. And the Father cannot say no to us when we approach Him boldly at the throne because

His promise is right here in Ephesians 4:32; for His Son's sake, for Christ's sake, He will show us favor, and that is exactly what He has done.

I know the question I asked – “Does God forgive our sins?” - was complicated. It's not easy to explain the one true God although we know God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. However, because of our limitations of a 3-D perspective, we only see the physical. None of us has seen Jesus Christ in physical form, except for those who lived 2000 years ago and came into the presence of the only begotten Son of God, God in a tent of human flesh. So, the rest of us must go on faith that what we read here in the New Testament is true.

I think it is very easy to have faith in God's Word once you understand it, study and verify it, and see how it came to pass then and how it is still coming true today. Nothing is missing. I did say that it is hard to fully understand the concept of the Trinity. No one ever can, unless you get a special revelation from God, (which I do not see anywhere), to show how the triune God works along with the different aspects of Him - that is, one God with three different identities, each one for a purpose. We are created in His image, although we only see the three-dimensional part of ourselves and even though we are descended from Adam, some things didn't change. We have a soul and a spirit. We are a Trinity within ourselves that God created to image Him. The only thing that is missing from our lives, because we are born into sin, is the Holy Spirit, who Jesus said He would provide if we trust and have faith in what His redemptive work did for us, to fully comprehend how precious the blood is, and to truly understand and apply it in our life. When we do, God the Father's promise to us is that for Christ's sake, God the Son shows or grants us favor. Then from that point on we use God the Holy Spirit to continue our faith "work in progress" journey. Do not insult or blaspheme against the Holy Spirit because without the Holy Spirit we are as good as dung - utterly useless to God.

I could have gone into this a little deeper, but for now I just wanted to give you a general understanding of why I disagree with most of Christianity when it says, “God the Father forgives sins.” First, I wish Christianity would be a little more specific about who they are actually referring to when they are referencing God. Even though He is One God, which part of the One God are they referring to? I know that this writer I read from said that God the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ, forgives sins, but God does not forgive sins. That's why His Son's, [that is God the Son's] blood is so important. Sin never gets to God the Father. God the Father does not see sin because it has been removed, it has been sent away, it has been separated from Him to a place where He cannot see it and it is also separated from our lives where it does not affect our relationship with God the Father anymore. That is why we can be reconciled back to Him. It is a shame that Christianity has not been more specific in the understanding of the Triune God in all its aspects and possibilities.

Understanding this builds faith in what a true and wonderful God we serve! God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. In other words, He has us covered at every turn because of His Son's sake so God the Father must show us favor.

In closing, the word forgiven is used too loosely and treated so cheaply. Instead, I would rather have the understanding of what Jesus Christ did for me. I thank Jesus daily for sending my sins away as I keep trusting in Him to separate me from them and also to separate my sins from God

the Father. His promise is that He will do that. Glory to God the Father, He will show and grant us favor, now and forevermore.

It is hard to summarize this in one message. That's why it is to be continued in the next message. The main idea I wanted to communicate here is that the two predominant words used in the New Testament for *forgive*, *forgiveness* and *forgiven*, are *aphiemi* and *charizomai*. *Aphiemi* is to send away, to separate. Christ sends our sins away and separates us from our sins. Also, our sins are separated and removed and concealed forever so that God the Father cannot see them anymore, and if He cannot see them, it means that we can be reconciled back to Him. Once we are reconciled back to Him, *charizomai* begins because it is for His Son's sake, that He shows and grants us favor.

What a wonderful promise this is when we truly understand what the original language communicates. That is why I am not in favor of Greek dictionaries that take shortcuts. Maybe in future I'll have time to show you some of the available classical writings and how these words were used by the Apostles in their everyday ordinary Greek language. This will show you even further that what I teach is accurate. I believe that the regular Hearers of Faith trust that I do my homework, and hopefully, you will too. What a wonderful promise we have, knowing that our sins are sent away - concealed and separated from us and from God the Father. Now we can boldly approach God the Father's throne and say, "Because of your Son's sake, grant us favor." You are favored, and I am favored, so stop walking in shame and be a true disciple of Jesus Christ. You have been granted favor by God the Father. Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Jesus for what you have done for us.

To be continued...

Does God Forgive Our Sins (pt. 3)

I want to respond to an e-mail I received after preaching “Does God Forgive Our Sins Part 2”.

The e-mail reads:

“Hello. Will you be continuing on the subject of forgive, forgiving or forgiveness? You started with a book review of its content but have not finished.” [The book had nothing to do with that subject. It just had one sentence that I used. It had nothing to do with forgive or forgiveness or anything like that.] *“Of course, we had some discussion of it for a number of differing reasons; not bad questioning, just questions. [There is nothing wrong with that.] Of course, one thought was that if God, clarified as God the Father, does not forgive us, then why did Jesus asked Him to [forgive] when He said, ‘Father forgive them for they not know what they do?’”* [He asked that in a verse, some believe, either while being nailed on the cross or when He was already on the cross hanging there. Either way it really does not matter.] *“So why did Jesus ask Him to when He said, ‘Father forgive them for they know not what they do?’ In this case forgive would be separate or set them apart from or left, going by the general understanding we received this evening. Clearly in 1 John, Jesus is the forgiver in context, but here the Father is requested to be.”*

Are you sure? But before I answer this one question, I want to repeat the one I just asked; are you sure? What this person is referring to is what you find in only one of the gospels. The Gospel of Luke 23:34. So let us turn there quickly and read the verse,

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.”

In the Greek, the word forgive is *aphiemi* and means “to send away” or “to be separated” - in this case, from our sins. However, this prayer, up until the middle to late second century, was not in some of the oldest manuscripts. Then, in the late second century in one of the codices, a scribe wrote the words underneath the verse, “Father forgive them.” The word *Father* was not necessarily added, although there is another manuscript that eliminates the word Father completely, but the phrase “forgive them” was not in that verse and was added later by a scribe. The verse should really read, “Father for they know not what they do.” Why would Jesus ask the Father to do something that He was doing at the cross? In the early Alexandrian manuscripts, the early Syriac manuscripts, and the Bohairic manuscripts, this part of the prayer is not included in the verse either. However, scholars argue that these words should be added here because God the Father forgives sins, although I argue that no, He does not. God the Son does this, because God the Father does not forgive what He cannot see, which is what Jesus did for us.

The point is, it's important to know that some of the best early manuscripts do not contain these words, and this prayer did not come into existence until over two centuries after Christ had died. Many argue that God wouldn't forgive their sins because the Jews were mad at the Romans or Jews were mad at the Christians. These writers were trying to relay a different perspective about why God would have to forgive the sins instead of Jesus. Also, some of you may have heard of the interlinear Greek works by the authors Nestle and Aland, and you will also find that in some of the modern interlinear pieces like the USB (and some others) double bracket this section of the verse. What they were trying to suggest is that this section wasn't in the earlier manuscripts. I told

you about the principle that everything must be verified in the Word of God. In this case we look for verification, particularly in the New Testament, because this is where Christ features predominantly. According to the New Testament, He is the only one mentioned who can forgive sins. Can God the Father forgive sins? Sure, He can, but He chooses not to because of His Son's redemptive work. That was for His only begotten Son to accomplish, whom I believe was the Creator of all things on this planet. When He, God the Son, saw His creation fall, He wanted to rescue it, to rescue us. So now the scholars argue back and forth about whether the scribes added this section or not. Well, in some of the manuscripts there's no question that they did add it. I believe that if you go to Cambridge University, you can see in some these older manuscripts where the scribes have added it in later, as it was written in right below that verse. Those words not there originally. (It may be even available online to see for yourselves.) For me, the New Testament verifies exactly everything Christ said He was going to be, everything that He was, and everything that He still is today.

Now, this e-mail goes on to say,

“I’m not sure how much I agree with the church world what God sees or cannot see or can be in the presence of as He must have seen something that He sent his Son to the garden when He did, to find a fig-leaved Adam and do not quite see how we are not in the Father's presence even now.” [Who says we are not in His presence?] *“In short, the idea that God is so holy He cannot allow defilement in His presence makes me question this, since Satan was until he was cast out of heaven. Room for my error here since I do not fully understand the ultimate heaven (and who does) and cast to earth in woe was now and that was not done until our AD time according to the teaching I have had. Satan rebelled before mankind was here, the heavens suffered, and now it can rejoice, and we wait, looking unto Him. Sin has to be seen as sin in and in one's presence to be identified as a sin before it can be cast out as sin, I would think. Even if it was a millisecond, it was still in His presence.”*

Let me clarify one thing right now: sin is still in God the Father's presence. The only sin that is not in God the Father's presence is the sin that is covered, removed, sent away and separated from Him; the sin of the people, the disciples, the true Christians who put their trust and faith in Jesus Christ. I am sure God the Father is pissed off about sin and it is quite clear that His wrath is getting stronger and stronger as time marches on. There is a judgment coming, not because there is no sin, but because there is sin. It is no big deal if Satan was in the presence of God after he rebelled, which we know just by reading the book of Job. No one is arguing that point. But was Satan in the presence of God with the same relationship he had before he rebelled? That is what you can't forget and that's the difference. I would much rather stand in God the Father's presence, Him seeing me without sin, than in Satan's position: in the Father's presence but without any reconciliation. We have reconciliation; Satan does not. There is a big difference. We are reconciled back to God the Father because of what Jesus did on the cross. Satan can never have that. If Satan could now be in the presence of God the Father, (although I don't believe he can), he would be in there unreconciled, not having that wonderful divine relationship that only we who are under Jesus have.

We are in Him and He is in us, and Jesus had to die to be in us. That is the method He chose for our benefit, and He is in us through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Satan cannot have that!!! Can sin be in the presence of God the Father? Absolutely, just as Satan was but after Satan's fall he

wasn't in His presence any longer, in oneness with the Father. When Jesus pierced them with His precious blood, He cast Satan the accuser out, and even though he tries to this day to accuse in whatever methods he can, he knows he is once again out of luck. If we trust in Jesus Christ, that is all God the Father is concerned about. He will show or grant us favor.

I find the following ironic. The day after I preached about the words *forgive, forgiveness* and the two Greek words we find in the New Testament, one meaning “sending away and separating us from our sin and the other meaning “God shows us or grants us favor”, someone wrote in saying, “I have to be a forgiver because of the disciple's prayer.”

Now, I told you, don't be too quick with your attitude, thinking “I am a forgiver.” It is not that easily done. To see this, let's go to the disciple's prayer found in Matthew 6. After the disciple's prayer what do we see? Keep in mind the disciple's prayer in verse 13 finishes by saying “Amen.” Also remember the disciple's prayer was given prior to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which makes a huge difference. After the disciple's prayer, we see in verse 14:

“For if we forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you:” [So basically, our works in the act of forgiveness saves us.]

“But if ye forgive not men in their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

In these two verses both words in the Greek for forgive are *aphiemi*, which is *sent away* or *be separated* from your sin. You see, Christ hadn't gone to the cross or spilled His blood yet. Christ was not yet the only way we could be reconciled back to the Father.

Christ had the power to forgive sins even prior to His cross. A good example of this is the man who was lowered on his couch through the roof. He dealt with his sins before He healed him, but this was not the way as promised and established with the different types of Christ in the Old Testament or how sin would be redeemed once and for all through the blood of Jesus Christ. So, prior to the cross, I have no problem with these verses. After the cross, however, there is a huge problem. Go to Ephesians 4:32,

“And be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving [charizomai, showing favor to] one another, even as God [after the cross] for Christ's sake hath forgiven [or showing favor to] you.”

Prior to the cross and the disciple's prayer, it is *aphiemi*. After the cross, it is *charizomai*, showing favor. There is no doubt that in the New Testament, after the cross, it is God now that shows us favor because of Christ's work on that cross. So, when you read the Scriptures keep it context and have some sort of chronological order to understand this. Back in Matthew, Christ said this,

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Do you know how difficult that is to do, if it is even possible? I'll give you just one illustration. I will keep it anonymous, as this person was going through a relationship situation where something bad happened. Keep in mind that I said we throw these words around cheaply, as this person writes,

“After a long while I forgave him. I have had a hard time trusting him again....”

So, after a long while, after you have worked out your differences in the relationship, and the harm this person did, you forgave him. Well, did you send away from your mind forever the sin that he committed against you? Or did you just show him favor, for Christ’s sake, a Godlike quality in your life? This person said they had a hard time trusting him again. Then the question I have is this: did you forgive him? It is either one or the other because if you truly understand what forgiveness means, then you should send away and have it separated from your mind the sin they committed against you forever. If you did that, you would never have a hard time trusting in that person again for whatever reason. This is just one illustration of many I could use.

You could read Matthew 5 all day long and then when you get to verse 14 and 15, it's almost a physical and a spiritual impossibility to accomplish because our minds don't want to act like an eraser and wipe the slate clean. We are suspicious, and that is why Christ had to come. He even had to forgive our lack of forgiveness toward others. That is why, when we get to Ephesians 4:32, Paul puts it in the right context by saying,

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, and charizomai [showing or granting favor to] one another, even as God, for Christ's sake hath shown that favor to you because of what Christ did.

I'm tired of the "know-it-alls." Not the people who wrote those sincere questions, but the others who think they have a full understanding of what *forgive*, *forgiveness*, and *forgave* mean. You do not. Unfortunately, it is not preached to you in the way that it should be preached and the way it should be understood. There is no forgiveness unless we separate forever whatever we are forgiving. I have not reached that plateau of spirituality. Maybe I am behind and maybe you are there already. I sincerely doubt it, but maybe you are. That is why I need Jesus. John was correct when he said that those of you who say you have no sin are liars. You are a liar in so many ways, and you probably don't even realize how you're lying. That is why we need Jesus. Thank God for Him. Thank God for Him sending away our sins forever so that God the Father can now show favor to us because what He doesn't see what I am guilty of, thanks to Jesus.

Receiving the Gift

Open your bible to 1 Corinthians 15.

Verses 1-4, ***“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory [hold fast in your memory] what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”***

Someone sent me a video link of someone expounding on Genesis 1:1, looking at the Hebrew. I listened to some of it, and it's nothing new. It's very informative if you have never studied it before. I have no complaints about that part, but about a third of the way through it, something turned me off so badly that I couldn't even listen to the rest of it. The other reason I stopped listening to it is because I was already familiar with what he was preaching on. But just one statement turned me off, because if you don't get this right — I don't care how educated you are, how much scripture you know — you will always be off course, and that is dangerous. The one thing he said was that all you have to accept is that Christ died and rose again to be saved.

Now someone listening to this would believe that to be so because the information I listened to up to that point was clear and precise. (Like I said, it's nothing new. It is a good study tool.) But then it went so off course in that one statement. All the good that Bible study accomplished (at least for me) was skewed from that point on. That person said all you have to do is accept that Christ died and rose again to be saved. That is the furthest thing from the truth. (You're probably wondering what I mean.) “Of course, I accept that Christ died and rose from the grave.” I'll get to it. Keep listening; don't turn me off yet.

Religion and people's point of view about salvation is like trying to fit someone with glasses according to their preconceived notion of how they see should see things. However, when you open yourself to seek God's Word, He opens your eyes, and you won't just accept every established religious tradition out there, especially in Christianity, that says this and this and this must happen for you to be saved.

This country (the USA) sent out more missionaries than all other countries combined. This country's churches influenced the world, and there were prophetic reasons for that. So, if Satan could corrupt the message in this country, then he could corrupt the world – and that's what he's done.

There is so much heresy and false teaching circulating out there, (whether it's television, radio or print media), concerning what a person must do to be saved; it's mindboggling. People are getting confused as to what the gospel says because there are so many different points of view. I'm going to tell you, you don't have to guess what the gospel says. Paul makes it very clear in I Corinthians 15:1-4. There are three things in these verses that are very important to understand. Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He went to Calvary, just as was prophesied, for our sins. This was the necessary element that needed to be completed and fulfilled to be made right again with God. He was buried, and his body resurrected from the dead three days later.

“ By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins [#1] according to the scriptures; And that he was buried [#2], and that herose again the third day [#3] according to the scriptures.

Understand that you cannot leave out that Christ died for our sins. And I'm pretty sure the person who sent me that little video of that person teaching the Hebrew concerning Genesis 1:1 heard it too but didn't really catch it. "Well, maybe it was just a *faux pas*." There are no such luxuries out there for *faux pas*'ing the salvation message. You must get it right 100% of the time. Otherwise, you become an instrument of leading someone into believing something else is a gospel message to be followed. That is another gospel that Paul also warns about. It can't happen that way, my friend. There are no *faux pas* in delivering the salvation message. It is the one thing you must get right, and you have to get it right every time. Once you come to the knowledge of the truth, there is no other option. (If you don't acknowledge what the truth is declaring, then you have further problems that need to be dealt with.) Scripture makes very clear: 1) HE HAD TO DIE FOR OUR SINS, according to the scriptures. Not according to Joe, not according to anyone else, according to the scriptures. 2) HE WAS BURIED. 3) HE ROSE AGAIN THE THIRD DAY. Once again, this is according to the scriptures. None of it can be left out. Don't ever leave out the number one thing Paul mentions here.

Now, you will hear people say, "There are several things you must do or believe in to be saved." For example, Jesus is the supreme being of the universe. Or Jesus was raised from the dead and sometimes they just leave it at that requirement. Or they will make up a couple of requirements that are different from this requirement. All those types of "plans" of salvation are shallow, my friend. All those "plans" of salvation are heresy. It isn't here in scripture. The false plans don't mention the *starous* in the Greek, the cross that He died on for our sins. They don't mention that we all are condemned as sinners in front of God, condemned by God's Law and deserving only one thing, and that is hell. And this concept of having to recognize Jesus as the supreme being of the universe is part of that "Lordship Salvation." "Well, isn't He that?" Sure, He is! But Jesus never set that criteria for His salvation concerning us.

So, many people aren't clear on how this salvation thing works. I've made it simple, and I've said it from day one. The first thing you better understand is that you need to recognize you are a sinner. Unless you have a change of mind about what Christ has done for you and his payment for your sins and my sins, you will spend eternity (or whatever length of time) in a very unhappy place. I have said it from day one, unless you trust in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, (and the scriptures make it very clear), you cannot be saved.

Now, there have been many preachers, teachers of God's Word who are well meaning in their intentions to save people, but just about all of them require some human effort to be saved. For example, forsaking sinful behavior. That's the big one: forsaking sinful behavior as a requirement to be saved. Just in case you think I am saying to go out there and just sin it up, I'm not saying that either. But the forsaking of sinful behavior, as a requirement, is not the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. My friends, it is a false gospel. It is not here in God's Word. If we have to repent of all our sins to be saved, then there's not much hope for any of us. We all are going straight to hell because of the lack of understanding of what repentance means.

Repentance unto salvation is a change of mind. I repeat, repentance unto salvation is a change of mind, **not** a change of behavior.

You might ask, “Isn’t my life going to be changed through the wonderful salvation experience and the gift God has gifted us?” Yes, a changed life is the Fruit of the Spirit that is working in you. It is the attributes of the fruit of the Spirit that goes to work on you because of the indwelling Holy Spirit that is in you. But that is not a requirement to be saved. You can’t find it in the scriptures. And I know, I’ve received this question lately, “Well, couldn’t a person be saved even though they are confused about salvation?”

We’d all like to think so. I preach there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The problem is you must be in Christ Jesus, and there’s no confusion about it. So, the answer to your question is, “No,” because they have the wrong mindset. Usually that produces an attitude, and a practice, that doesn’t trust in the redemptive work of Christ. Let me just put it this way; if you believe wrong, you are going to trust wrong. Unless you are totally confident and totally resting (and this is what I Peter declares) in the precious blood (which I have covered in the Table of the Lord series) that removed, that washed away your sin, then you haven’t been born again by the Holy Spirit of God. Period. There’s no way around it. That is why I keep saying you cannot get this wrong! If I do anything in my lifetime, if I make any impact, I pray I communicate this message in every way I can, so you get it straight.

I want you to read Acts 10 in context of this message. In the chapter, there was a man named Cornelius. He was a devout religious man. He prayed, paid tithes, fasted, and feared God. Yet, as you read the story, he was religiously lost, a lost man on his way to hell. Why do I say that? By this time Jesus had already come and gone, and he wouldn’t have received the message if he didn’t respond to it. So, God sent Peter to witness to Cornelius; and we find as we read later in the chapter that Cornelius was saved. Notice all the good works that he did — when you read the chapter in context — didn’t save him. The gospel of the good news of what Christ did for him, and a change of mind about all the traditions he grew up with saved him. He probably wasn’t changed the first minute or two he started hearing the message, but the Spirit draws you. So, if you are honestly seeking to know the truth, it will capture you and you will have a change of mind experience, just like Cornelius did in this chapter.

The problem is, as much as I hate the cross, I understand the importance of the cross. I hate it because I understand the ramifications and how far it goes back, I believe all the way back to the mark of Cain and what it represents; because I am a sinner, I put Christ on that cross. That is the part I hate about it. But I also love everything about it because of what it represents in the way of what He did for me. Because He loved me so much, I am rescued. That is why there can’t be a cross-less gospel. That is what has crept into today’s church world, which merely says, “Trust Jesus,” and leaves it there. What I mean by that is the “Just invite Him into your heart” attitude. How shallow. Or, “Commit your life unto Christ to be saved.” How shallow. I can feel the tension out there because these are catch phrases you’ve heard for a long time if you’ve been in the Christian world or grew up in the Christian world. You can say and do all these things and still go straight to hell because it leaves the message out.

Back to I Corinthians. ***“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”***

Surrendering yourself to Christ’s lordship is not a requirement to be saved. Yes, you are going to become His possession, and that is the journey you will take after salvation, but it is not a requirement for salvation. There is a clear distinction. You can forsake the world all you want, and, you might have the intent to reform yourself, but it’s still not a requirement to be saved. I will not pollute the message of what is required of me to be saved. Inviting Jesus into your life is not a requirement to be saved. That is manmade tradition that has no backing in God’s Word.

So, what does God require?

He requires that you acknowledge and admit you are a guilty sinner in His holy eyes and have a change of mind about what His Son did for you: He died on the cross for your sins. There is no other way to God except to have a change of mind about what His Son did for you – because if you don’t, God doesn’t see you as one that is saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. He sees you as a sinner.

Forsaking sinful behavior has never been part of the good news. Now, there will be changes in your life after the salvation experience. I don’t doubt that one bit. In fact, I tell you there are going to be changes. But whatever changes God expects of a new believer, that is the Holy Spirit’s responsibility or department. I can assure to you, He will attend to it. Sometimes you don’t like to go through those kinds of changes. I can testify to that too. But He will change you. Stop trying to change yourself. There is nothing you can do by your own efforts and any hotshot knowledge you think you might have that does a better job than the Holy Spirit that is in you. The Holy Spirit will lead you to grow, to spiritually mature more and more each day, week, and year that goes by, to mold you into the being He wants you to be for His purposes. I have said that from day one also.

It is flat out evil to change the gospel message, especially in any attempt to force man to reform their sinful ways. The Old Testament is full of example after example that failed repeatedly. I don’t know what scriptures you’re reading, but it is full of failures because man could not live up to it. I have said from day one that the gospel is a free gift and a gift that need only to be received. What does Romans 6 say? ***“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*** Just to be clear, no one ever, not now, in the past, or in the future...no one ever got saved who didn’t admit to themselves that they are a sinner. We read in Romans 3, ***“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”*** You see, the Bible has this built in silencer for self-boasting, if you think about it. People who go around bragging saying, “I keep the law of Moses;” well, good for you, you are a lost sinner, guilty of being unholy in the presence of God – and, not even in the presence of God. Just go back to the gospel record in Luke 18 and read about the rich young ruler. He kept all the commandments of God. And then in Matthew we see a group of unsaved religious people bragging about their own wonderful works. God called them out. The Law was intended by God to be used as a measuring stick—which incidentally, no one could measure up to. The only way we can measure up is in a way that results in seeing ourselves as guilty sinners. That is what it did. Each of us is a guilty sinner in God’s sight. That’s why He gave us another option; that’s why He sent his only begotten Son.

That is why we must believe the gospel: the good news of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. He went to that cross, not only to forgive, but also to remove all our sin.

I don't care if you use the word repentance. I really don't. That is fine if you put the original language definition with it, the one that has been the definition since day one. *Repentance* is a *change of mind* - the requirement that God says we must do to get to heaven. What is that? I repeat - admitting to yourself that you are a miserable sinner, that you are a guilty sinner in God's eyes. In addition, recognizing that you are totally incapable of saving yourself. There are no rules and regulations, no system or plan that can save you, only Christ. It starts by having a change of mind that says, "Yes, I am guilty, I am a sinner, I need the only begotten Son in my life and I recognize what He did for me, what He did for this world and that He provided a way back to the Father; having spilt His blood that forgave my sin, He paid the penalty, He paid the price, and His blood is sprinkled on the heavenly mercy seat, where God looks at it and says when He sees us, 'Well there are my holy ones. Not, there are my guilty sinners. There are my holy ones, righteous because of what Christ did, imputed by Christ's righteousness. Not imputed by self-made righteousness according to works.'"

"Well, I just like the way some of these lexicons and dictionaries describes repentance." I am sorry; they all are about "turning from sin." Repentance does not mean turning from sin. Some of those who espouse that are part of the Lordship Salvation group who foolishly teach those things.

So, what does the Bible teach? The Bible does teach repentance and the right definition of it is necessary for salvation. I don't argue that. But the Greek word for repent is *metanoeo*. When translated into English it simply means "to change one's mind". It never meant to turn from sin. To do that would add works to salvation. If you think about it, repentance for salvation means a change of mind from man's ideas of salvation (there's plenty of them), man's ideas about religion (and there's plenty of them), to an acceptance of God's only way of salvation. What does that produce when you have the right concept and understanding down? A new creation, a new creature. That is nothing new to any of you. We are not reforming the old. I've said that before. My old nature remains as evil as ever after salvation and has not been reformed. Now people will take those words and run with them and use them against me. "Well, what do you mean by it?" My nature, the old nature, can now be controlled by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

See, many teach repentance for salvation incorrectly, because they include some form of human effort or righteousness, such as their willingness to "turn from sin" and this is what has confused many people. It adds works to salvation and causes many people not to understand God's gracious gift. The way they present it, it's more like probation instead of salvation. It's not scriptural and it's what the book of Galatians warns against. It is a counterfeit gospel. It leads to shallow Christian lives and that is very unfortunate. If you are living one of those shallow Christian lives, it cannot be cured — I repeat — it cannot be cured by adding works to salvation. Salvation has never been about what we do. Go to the book of Acts, Galatians, Ephesians, II Corinthians, John, Titus and more. It has never been about that. I can give you scripture after scripture.

What are the reasons to come to Jesus to start with? To be saved from your sins. So why not start recognizing from the very beginning that you are a guilty sinner who needs a savior? Repentance and faith happen at the same time and are inseparable. Repentance, (the way scripture defines it) without faith is just a mere declaration of "sinnership" or a reformation, a turning over a new leaf, but that's not biblical repentance unless it is accompanied by faith in Christ, in what He did and promised.

I mentioned in a previous teaching that Judas repented. But the word there in the Greek is a different word for repent. He was remorseful and the reason why he was remorseful is because he got caught, but he never came to the realization that he was a guilty sinner.

So how does salvation work? What is another way I can put it, so you are clear? First, you must acknowledge the guilty condition you are in. Second, recognize your inability to save yourself. Third, simply believe on the Lord Jesus Christ who died in your place and receive his gift, the good news to be saved. That is why He spilt His precious blood. That is how salvation works, my friend. Stop trying to complicate it and cease from your own dead works; and that is what they are, dead works. Just rest on what Christ has done for you.

I Corinthians 1:18, ***“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”*** You don’t have to be water baptized or do anything else to get to heaven, other than trust upon the Lord as your savior. I am not against water baptism. I will baptize you as long as you understand it is not a requirement for salvation.

Romans 4:5, ***“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”*** What a marvelous truth this is. Our faith is counted for righteousness. That means there is no self-righteousness involved in salvation. There is nothing you can do. Why? Because it is the gift of God. We don’t have any righteousness to offer to God. We can’t manufacture any. No matter how good you are and no matter how much good you do, or how much bad you can undo, it isn’t acceptable to God. The only acceptable payment is what Jesus did for us, He paid a debt He didn’t owe. We owed the debt, but we couldn’t pay it. Salvation, my friends, is receiving, not giving. (I’m not talking about offerings; I mean your own self-made righteousness you offer to God, so you can save yourself.) We are sinners and Jesus is the savior. So, when you really boil it down, where the rubber meets the road, (and this is why Jesus dealt with this too), unbelief is the only sin which will keep you out of heaven.

There you go, I said it: Unbelief is the only sin that will keep you out of heaven.

Read I Corinthians 15:1-4 and understand what it teaches. See, trusting Jesus is meaningless without the cross. You must believe that Jesus, according to the scriptures, died for your sins, was buried, and rose again. I’d like to add a fourth thing to that; when He rose, He went to God’s throne and sprinkled his precious blood on the heavenly mercy seat, and that removes our sin forever, past, present, and future, from the presence of God. He doesn’t see us as guilty sinners any longer, but as holy ones made holy by Christ himself who has implanted His righteousness in us to make us right with God.

“Is it that simple?” *Yes*, it is that simple. It is scriptural, and it is part of God’s plan. Jesus took our sins and charged them to His account, to His own record. That’s why we remember Jesus when we go to the table of the Lord, because He went to the cross and paid the price, the penalty for our sins. He spiritually made us a new creation, not a reformed one, a new creation. We only need to willingly receive His gift of grace without any conditions that we somehow produce to justify our reason for being or consciousness that we did something to earn our salvation.

Mark chapter 1 says, “Repent ye, have a change of mind and believe the gospel.” That is where it starts. You can’t get that message wrong because if you do, you are off course for the rest of your journey. There’s no *faux pas* allowed. Another gospel is not allowed. There is only one. All the others are perverted gospels. No matter how good intentioned you are, if you get this wrong, it sets the dominoes to fall and fall rapidly from that moment on in your spiritual journey. Get it right. It’s that important.

Believing Is Seeing

Open your Bible to John 4:43-54.

“Now after two days he [Jesus] departed thence, and went into Galilee. For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country. Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galilaeans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.

So, Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house. This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee.”

Some people believe this story is the same story we find in Matthew 8 and Luke 7. In fact, some of your Bibles might cross reference them. I don't believe this story is part of those other two. Those two other stories cover the centurion with a sick servant. This story is about a nobleman who had a son. It is a separate and different story.

The title of this message is: *Believing Is Seeing*.

“What do you mean by that?”

Everyone has heard of the phrase “seeing is believing.” It's just part of a larger phrase that became popular in the 17th century. Since everyone has heard the phrase, I looked it up. One description states, “Seeing is believing is an idiom first recorded in this form in 1639 that means ‘only physical or concrete evidence is convincing’.” In other words, if you can see it for yourself, then you'll believe it. Only physical or concrete evidence is convincing. That was one description; another is, “Seeing is believing (also “I'll believe it when I see it”) is used to say that you will only believe that something happens or exists when you actually see it.”

Most people credit Thomas Fuller coining this phrase in the 17th century. He was a doctor. Some say he was a clergyman - a quasi-clergyman. We only use half of the phrase now, but the whole phrase that he coined was “Seeing is believing, but feeling is the truth.”

Back in the 17th century (the 1600's,) feelings had several different meanings. One of those meanings was connected to belief, but it was more of a conscience emotion, what one feels about something. So, basically what he was saying was seeing is believing, concerning how one feels

about something. Seeing is believing, but feeling is the truth; so, what you feel about something will be the truth. Now it has been butchered and analyzed and I am not going to get into all that, but that is where we get the phrase "seeing is believing," or "I'll believe it when I see it."

When we dive into God's word and study it, "seeing is believing" really doesn't hold any water, or else we'll be like the disciple Thomas. He had to see and touch the wounds of Jesus to believe that He rose from the dead and that it was Him. Thomas gets most of the credit for doubting and that is where we got our term "doubting Thomas". But all the apostles (and just about everyone) weren't expecting Jesus to come out of that tomb. They all were doubters; it's just that Thomas stands out in the group by the way he communicated with Jesus when he first saw him after the resurrection.

We don't function in "seeing is believing." Disciples of Jesus Christ don't function by the attitude, "I'll believe it when I see it." If you do, you have problems, because it is counterproductive. It goes against everything we should be, if you really think about it, as individuals that trust in God and His word. As we analyze the gospel record in John, we come to see that, through the nobleman, this is true. So, really, the opposite of "seeing is believing" would be the truth. The man in that story didn't have to see it to believe it. That's why *believing is seeing*. That is what this story and the gospel records communicate to us and what we should be like daily as Christ's chosen. Not the attitude of "Well, if Christ comes through I'll believe it" but "I believe in God so whatever He does do for me, He knows better, and He is in control, no matter what the circumstance and no matter what requests and petitions that are presented to Him as I communicate with Him".

For this nobleman or anyone who chooses to follow Jesus, I want you to remember this: *believing is seeing*.

Now, Jesus and his disciples return to Galilee. They had to leave Jerusalem once again because the religious leaders of the time sought to arrest Jesus, as they obviously didn't like what He was teaching or claiming about Himself. When they reach Galilee, Jesus immediately starts drawing the crowds. When we read the story, we see many of those people had been down in Jerusalem for the Passover celebration and they are returning home. They heard about Jesus and heard Jesus teach; maybe they even saw the miracles, the signs, the wonders. His reputation grew and grew, so His reputation as a miracle worker preceded him. The reports about Jesus caught the attention of this nobleman. How else would he have known? The word started spreading and it spread quickly.

John 4:46-47 says, ***"So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death."***

The Greek word, *basilikos*, in verse 46 that is used to define this man, is translated as "nobleman," but it literally means "king's man." He was an officer, a high official for King Herod. What makes you wonder is that this powerful person, this nobleman, this king's man, this probably busy person, walked twenty miles from Capernaum to Cana in search of Jesus. Do you think this busy person would walk twenty miles seeking out Jesus if his son wasn't deathly ill? It took a serious

and very critical condition to motivate this king's man, this nobleman, to leave his home (probably early one morning) in search of a miracle for his son. He most likely had access to the finest medical personnel of his day. He almost certainly had access to any type of treatment that could have helped his son, and he could probably afford it. Being a high officer of King Herod, of course he had the means – but they couldn't provide what this nobleman needed for his son.

This man in this high official position was a man who was used to being in charge. This man, because of his position, didn't have to worry about how to take care of his family. He could probably get pretty much anything that he wanted, at any time that he wanted. If his family had a need, he could fulfill it. He had the position, the power, and the means to do it. He could probably buy them the best clothes, the best means of transportation at that time, and the best living conditions. And like I said, if they were sick, he could probably afford the best medical treatment. But here in this story, all his money, all his political power was completely useless in the face of a sickness that threatened to kill his son.

It makes one think about how many people turn to God when they hit bottom, something that I wonder quite often, because in my early years I was guilty of this myself. You see, there's value in a critical situation if you really think it through. Whatever dangerous circumstance or situation, or in the case of this story about a terribly sick child, it can strip away all the pride, all the self-satisfaction that holds you back from reaching out to your Creator. In this case, everything else probably failed. All the efforts failed. This person was probably desperate, and he needed something no human being could give. Now speaking for myself, and others probably have noticed like I have, if we have the right attitude, those critical situations we find ourselves in can be turning points in our lives. Once again, I'm speaking for myself, but I'm sure there are others out there who feel the same way. Most of my spiritual growth, most of my spiritual maturity, has come from hard situations - the situations and circumstances I've been through. That is why I can see these critical situations as potential turning points in life. It gives you opportunities to reach out to God, to press in close, to rely on Him, and to trust Him. When that happens, the spiritual growth increases exponentially.

I am 59 years old. In my lifetime, I've been through a lot of circumstances and situations where I had to turn to God because the outcome was totally out of my control. I didn't like to be put in that position. I didn't like to be put in that position where I couldn't control the situation or the circumstances, but there have been times, looking back, that I realize it was for my benefit that those situations and circumstances happened. Then I could start realizing and leaning on who really is in control. It's not me or you; it's God. That is when we really learn to trust God, to trust Jesus and wait on His answers to our prayers and petitions. That is where our personal connection with Christ can spiritually take hold and grow.

This king's man could have sent anyone, including servants, family members, or even a hireling to find Jesus and bring Him to Capernaum. He had the power and influence to do that. Put flesh and blood on this story. He was a dad, but not just a dad; he was a dad that had concerns for his ill son. So, he went to Jesus personally, as we read in this story, and begged Him to come back with him to heal his son. Jesus' first response was kind of a surprise when we think about it. It really isn't an answer at all. Verse 48 reads, ***“Then said Jesus unto him, except ye see signs and***

wonders, ye will not believe." The word in the Greek for believe in this verse is *pisteuo*. Jesus is saying, "You do not have trust and confidence in Me." Jesus was saying this to the official, but he was actually referring to the crowd around Him. Jesus was back on His home turf in Cana where He had turned water in to wine (vs. 46). Jesus knew most of the people hanging around Him - most of the people following Him - were just waiting for or wanting a show. They wanted to see more supernatural miracles or feats. They were there for the show. (We have Christians like that today.) But Jesus is not a God to just perform miracles to show off. He wasn't interested in those things like some preachers today are. Now, we know He did perform some miracles to give evidence that He was the true son of God, but there are other times where He performed miracles purely (and you can read it in the Gospel stories) out of compassion. That's why He told some people that they had been healed, but didn't tell anyone else. I think He knew the dangers of sign seekers, and there were plenty of those following Him, just waiting for the next miracle. It didn't matter how many miracles He performed, they still wouldn't put their trust and confidence in Him on being the Son of God and all the claims He made about Himself.

There is a danger in these sign-seekers. They put God in a position as their own personal genie in a bottle. When God doesn't come through for them, they often turn away from Him completely, thinking God has failed them. I was telling someone about Ted Turner. He is probably most famous for starting CNN, the news channel. He's not known to like Christians, and there's a reason for that. He is one of these sign-seekers. He was interviewed about twenty years ago or so. He said that he once had plans to become a missionary. So, what happened? He claimed the reason he didn't is because he turned his back on Christianity when his youngersister died from an immune deficiency disease. He couldn't understand how someone who was so innocent could suffer. Therefore, he turned his back on God. He didn't get the miracle, so he didn't think God was trustworthy, which lead to him believing God wasn't even real.

That kind of thinking, that kind of misunderstanding about God throughout the ages, has caused many people to turn away from the best, and (if you really think about it), the only hope for this world. We get the idea that once we become a Christian that we are in some type of Christianity platinum plan or gold plan. When you get God, you become comfortable. When you get God, you become healthy. When you get God, you become wealthy. When you get God, you become happy and safe. While Jesus did make promises concerning those things, He never promised anyone a perfect, healthy, pain-free life, without any troubles or circumstances, or tribulation. In fact, He said, in this world, ye shall have tribulation. That is what He promised. In this world, ye shall have tribulation. So, don't go misunderstanding what God has promised. *Do* understand that this is a fallen world and, in this world, ye shall have tribulation. But in this same gospel record, in John 16, where He said you are going to have tribulation in the world, he also said to take heart because He has overcome the world. He has overcome the world!

These sign-seekers, these people that just keep seeking signs, don't really have a real relationship with Jesus Christ. The best analogy I can think of are these people who marry for money. As soon as their spouse loses all that money, they are out of the relationship because there was never any real love there. That is the point. Faith means trusting in God. Period! Faith means trusting in God, not in all the goodies that you think He should give you. If you put your trust in God, then He Himself will always be more than enough.

When we read this story, we see that this is how these people in Cana were. Jesus grew up in that area; in fact, He performed His first miracle there. I'm sure many people witnessed the miracles He performed at the Passover when they saw Him around Jerusalem. As they traveled back home, they probably shared all they saw and heard. Jesus knew that, and that's why verse 48 seems like a harsh statement to the nobleman. But it wasn't really directed to the nobleman, but to the people there in Cana. Jesus knew no matter how many signs, how many wonders and signs they saw, they would always want more and more and more. Even the most wonderful and amazing miracles would not bring these people to a true faith in Christ Jesus. That is the way they were.

All you have to do is watch religious television today to see people preaching, and they seem so charismatic and so exciting, they appear to do miracles, and people use that as enough of a reason to jump on their bandwagon. These types of leaders (and there are more of them than I'd like to admit) try to build a following with those kinds of tactics, but it's clear in verse 4 that Jesus didn't want that kind of followers. As we read through the rest of the story, it turns out that this king's man, this nobleman, this royal official, wasn't a sign seeker at all. In fact, this nobleman only had one thing in mind. You can almost hear the desperation in his voice when he begs Jesus, "Sir, come down before my child dies," or "come back with me before my child dies." The Greek word used here for son – *paidion* - means "my little child." His heart was breaking for his little child. Jesus, as He often did, answered with loving compassion. He said, "***Go thy way; thy son liveth.***" Another translation reads, "*You may go. Your son will live.*"

What occurs next shows that this man did **not** have to see — and that is where I started this message — to believe. Verse 50 reads, "***Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.***" This man believed and trusted in Jesus and had confidence in the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way. This man took Jesus at his word and departed. This royal official could have ordered Jesus to come back with him to his son's bedside to perform a miracle, but he was willing to believe without seeing. Hence, the title of this message "Believing Is Seeing." The nobleman discovered believing *is* seeing when you have the right spiritual perception, the spiritual sight. We know this because as we read the rest of the verses and as he walked home, he didn't know it occurred, but his servants rushed to meet him with the news that his son was healed. He was out of the danger of dying. First, the nobleman took Jesus at his word. Then he had the wonderful confirmation of his faith in Jesus. Jesus healed his precious little son. In fact, we read the fever left his body at the very set time when Jesus said, "Your son will live."

Now, the naysayers and sign-seekers will argue and be convinced that it was just a coincidence. No, it wasn't, and this king's man knew it was a miracle. He knew he could put his trust in Jesus because verse 53 tells us the result of the miracle. "***So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed [trusted], and his whole house.***" The king's man and all in his house put their trust in Jesus.

It's a wonderful story. It's about someone trusting in Jesus for someone else - in this case, his little child - for healing. All he had to do was hear the word and know that his child would be healed. It is an amazing example of putting your trust in God, putting your faith in God.

It raises questions that I ask myself often: Where have I put my faith? Is Jesus enough for me? Is my faith based on what I want God to do for me? Only you can answer those questions for yourself.

Now, I don't mean we should avoid asking Jesus for healings. Of course not! When our loved ones are sick, or even we are sick, the first one we should run to is Jesus and do what this royal official did - ask Him for a healing. I have said that, and I think you know where I stand on it. There is one miracle Jesus has guaranteed every time to anyone who has asked for it: He says if you put your trust in Him, He will give you eternal healing from the deadly consequences of sin, which is far more important than any other thing we could receive in the here and now. None of us are promised everlasting life on this planet, but, if you put your trust in Jesus, He will absolutely give you eternal life with Him.

This story is about a healing, the physical healing of a boy whose father put his trust in Jesus. All Jesus had to do was say the word, and he put his trust in Jesus and his little boy received the healing. This message is for those of you who have not yet put your trust in Jesus for your eternal healing. That is where it must start, with your eternal healing. That is why Peter, looking back, said, ***"By whose stripes we were healed."*** (I Peter 2:24) In context, we aren't talking about a physical healing here in the Peter epistle. We're talking about the spiritually diseased condition we find ourselves born into that can be healed eternally by Christ himself. If you put your trust and confidence in what He did, what He provided, and that He spilt His precious blood to give you life eternal, it can happen to you. There will always be some that need this message, or as a reminder, for what Christ has done for us. That's why He says when you go to the table of the Lord, "Do this in remembrance of me." Why? Do it because He has spiritually healed us from the spiritually sick and awful disease of sin. All we must do is run to and trust in Him, lean on Him, and have faith in Him, and He will get us through the here and now, no matter what circumstances or situations we find ourselves in. Just keep trusting in Him. If you need healing, run to Him. Pray to Him. Search the scriptures on everything about healing. Study it for yourself and keep petitioning Him for your healing until you receive it one way or the other. If you need to be spiritually healed, he's also provided that. First and foremost, that is what we need to be right with God. Without that spiritually diseased condition healed, we can't be right with God, and we can't boldly approach His throne with whatever petition or prayer request we have. Make sure you are in a place where you are right with God, and that only happens by and through His son Jesus Christ. There are no substitutes; there are no stand-ins. He is the only way to God. He is the only way and He has provided us the truth and the word that can enlighten us and give us the knowledge how that is to be done, through His Word. That is why it is called the Good News and that's through Him.

I don't know what your situation is now or will be in the future when you listen or read this, but remember - **seeing is not believing**. Believing in Him will give you the perception of and the right spiritual eyesight to be someone who can say, **believing is seeing**. All you have to do is trust in Him and you'll see where He takes you with it. He knows best, and He is in control.

How Good Do I Have To Be?

Open your Bible to Galatians 2.

I was reading an article from someone writing about how preachers have fumbled the commission in three main ways: (1) *“They speak in vague spiritual generalities, rarely (or never) mentioning Jesus.”* They mention love, hope, peace, joy, harmony, etc., but hardly ever mention Jesus Christ; (2) *“They avoid the real problem of why we’ve been separated from God,”* and that is sin. I’ll go a step further, stating we’ve been separated from birth, because we were all born with sinner’s blood due to what Adam did. And the article goes on to say, *“avoiding the real solution (the cross)—or confuse its meaning.”* I don’t like to dwell on the cross. I dwell on the person that hung on that cross, the Son of God, because if He didn’t spill his blood on the cross for our sake, none of us would have been rescued. Then the article mentions, (3) *“presenting Christ as mainly a moral example: We tell people to be nice because Jesus was nice. We tell them to be sweet because Jesus was sweet, good because Jesus was good...”* Therefore, good works gets you in. The article goes on to say, *“This is all well and good, but you could substitute Mother Teresa or even Oprah for Jesus and essentially have the same message.”*

I agree, and therein lay the problem. Even though Christians understand and acknowledge (having had a change of mind) that it is through Jesus’ precious blood spilled on that cross that rescued them — that’s what gets them in if they have faith and confidence in what He did in His redemptive work, and that’s where everyone starts; too much of Christianity believes (whether through the preachers fault or just from some understanding of Christian common knowledge circulating out there) that you have to add all these “good works” to keep your salvation, which gives you entrance into heaven.

Have you ever seen people interviewed or read any of their books concerning their dying experience? Somehow, they made it to the heavens and have returned from that death state, telling us what they experienced. However, if you really think about it, they really don’t have that much of a message. They have bestselling books. They go on television and radio interviews. I can’t say the stories aren’t interesting because they are. But they never really answer the question that most people (even though they’re going down a wrong path) ask, which is: how good do I have to be to make it in? That is what most people think: how good, or how many good works do I have to do, so I can guarantee my place, my seat at the table of the marriage supper of the Lamb (if they even believe in such a thing) or my place in heaven? How good do I have to be? They don’t come back and answer that question. They don’t even dwell on it. What good can I do to reserve my spot in heaven? I challenge you to go around and ask people, Christian or non-Christian, what their criteria is to get into heaven. Most will give you a list of all kinds of good things you should do and all kinds of bad things you should avoid doing. I don’t care if you are a genius or have the lowest I.Q., if you are the wealthiest or the poorest of individuals, everyone, for the most part, operates under that same theory: what good things do I have to do to get me there? A lot of those same people don’t believe there is a hell, but they are convinced that there’s possibly a heaven and they want to know how they can get there. What can assure them a place in heaven? What do they need to keep on doing, based on what their flesh produces to get them there? You got it?

The international assumption (and I say it is international) is that somehow “good” people go to heaven. Some believe bad people, if there is a hell, go to hell or they just stop existing after death. That's the international assumption no matter what you believe. They believe there is a good God and a good place somewhere and that He is reserving spots for you if you happen to be a good person here. I'm not saying that as a Christian you're not going to be a good person or as a disciple of Jesus Christ you're not going to be a good person. I have said that for many years, and nobody should take my words and twist them. We are a work in progress. We have an old man and a new man - a new man born of the Holy Spirit and an old man born of the flesh. The old man has sinner's blood in him. The new man doesn't. They are warring between each other in this container of human flesh. I can only pray that as the years go by that the new man wins more victories than the old man, but I know it is going to be a war until He takes me home or comes back for me. But by my faith and my trust and confidence in Jesus Christ, I know the victory is already won. The old man can't seem to get it through his thick skull that the new man has won.

There's also an international assumption, and this is where the fallacy begins, that God comes in many shapes and forms and He has many different names depending on the religion. Jesus Christ made it very simple. There is no one else! He said He was the way and that He could provide the life, and He said to put your trust in Him because He is the only one who provided the truth about how you get there. How do you do that? By faith. Begin trusting in him and his redemptive work for your salvation. That is our rescue plan. Discipleship will lead you on a journey with God and He will have you grow as a work in progress for his purposes.

Now most all major and minor religions out there will provide you a path, not only to God, but also to the hereafter. Their criteria for the hereafter, according to their instruction, always requires doing good things. Now, it might seem evil to you, but whoever is preaching those instructions to them will turn it and make it sound like it's the good thing to do. Take radical Islam for instance. They don't think cutting people's heads off is evil. They think they are doing a service for Allah. The perspective on what is good is different. That's what they preach and live by. You can take any religion around this world and they have their own perspective and viewpoint on what is good, according to their belief system, that gives them the promise of eternal life in the hereafter. In some religions, you get a second and third go-round in reincarnation; if you're pretty good here now, you're going to be even better the next time around. There is a lot of silly stuff out there with a lot of silly definitions of what good is. None are good. Scripture makes that very clear. Not a single thing that man produces to justify to himself about what they need to do to get there is good. I'm saying that most people (and whatever religion they're following in trying to live their lives by the teachings of that religion or viewpoint), share a common denominator. The common denominator is this: how you live your life now determines where you are going to be when it is over. It determines what happens next. That is their common denominator. In Western thought, all good people go to heaven – based again on good and how good you are. In other parts of the world, like I said, you come back for another lap, providing you the opportunity to be even better than you were before. Now, I know the people who are taught by me, and those that have a good base in Christianity and what the rightly divided word of God has to say in what it instructs us, don't think this way, but there are a lot of people that do. So, let's put ourselves in their shoes and consider a general scenario. If God were to appear before them today and asked, “Why should I let you in heaven?” what do you think their replies are going to be?

“Well, I always try to be good. Therefore, let me in.” “I never did the bad things, the things I shouldn’t have done. Therefore, let me in.” “I did the best that I could do. I sincerely tried to be good. Therefore, let me in.”

So, if you really think about it, the moral of the story is this: behave yourself now. Be good so you don’t have to worry about what happens after your death. That sums it up in a nutshell. But the problem with most people is that they want to be sure they make it, make sure they have a reserved spot in that afterlife (if there is an afterlife somewhere) that's not hell, which is why they keep seeking for what they have to do. That's why they keep seeking answers. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the question that keeps going through their minds is, "Am I really sure that I have been good enough?" Or, "Can I guarantee myself 100% that I’m pretty sure I’ve been good enough?" If they could answer those with absolute surety, they wouldn’t keep seeking other good things to do to make sure that they are part of that (i.e., I did this good thing, so I did my best, and, I never did that, and I always try to do better). So, the question is this: How good do you have to be? How good is enough? What is the standard and where do you draw the line? More importantly, if you believe in that silly theory, what is your current standing? And if they're not sure, they keep asking themselves if they have enough time to lay up good works to counterbalance all the bad things they’ve done in their life.

Most people don’t crack open the Bible and study it, so they think, "Why hasn't God given us a clearer standard?" He has, but most people don't know what it is. "Why doesn't He give us a midterm like in school so we can judge our performance? Why doesn't religion give us the answer on how good we need to be, with 100% surety?"

Now, teachers, preachers, rabbis, lamas (you name it) try to do it. They all are supposedly in the business of getting people to the good place on the other side. They even try (and I believe a lot of them are sincere) to make you understand what you have to do. I am saying their answers and their theories are dead wrong. They don’t get it right. They get it wrong if they drift away from the Gospel and what the Good News of Jesus Christ has declared.

If you talk to most people, the majority - whether Christian or non-Christian - are still not confident, and that is sad. They're not confident where they stand with God. I am so tired of hearing that the Gospel has gone around the whole world and that there is no more fertile ground left. Are you serious? Start talking to people. You’ll have a different point of view when they start opening their mouth and they start presenting to you their theory of how they are going to make it to heaven. Don’t tell me there is no more fertile ground. You can’t walk 100 yards anywhere, if you are in a group of people and not come to realize it is all fertile. It all needs to be seeded with the Word of God, rightly divided, so they get the true message of how Christ provided the way with 100% surety that they will be there with Him on the other side.

Let me tell you right now, nobody can tell you how good you have to be to go to heaven because that's not what it is based upon.

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

Ergon is the Greek word for works: “by the employment of” the Law in your life. If you look at the Law, it is full of good works. But no one is justified or made right with God by the Law. The Law just pointed out how far away we were from God and that we need a redeemer to redeem us back to God and to make us right with God once again. **“But by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed [pisteuo, have trust and confidence] in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law.”** Christ is the center theme here. He always has been and always will be. Nothing that produces good works could make you right with God once again. Nothing! I don’t care how long your list of good works is. You can never be good enough to reserve your spot in heaven. Your trust and confidence needs to be in Jesus Christ and His redeeming work, with the understanding that only through Him and what He did gets you there. That is why it is precious blood. That’s it. **“Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified [right with God] by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”** It can’t be said any clearer than that. **“For by the works of the Law,”** which produces all good things, shall no flesh be right with God.

Verse 20 says, **“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”**

He gave himself for me. He willingly left the heavenlies, came down here in a tent of human flesh, and gave himself for me.

Verse 21 states, **“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”**

If all that is required to reserve my spot there is my good works, as I live by a system of rules, then what Christ did here is in vain. He didn’t have to do it; I could have done it all myself. Whatever system of religious law you follow, you could have done it all yourself and you could be in heaven with whatever God you worship. If you believe that, if you believe being good here gets you there, then what you have done is place yourself in the most miserable, dangerous place you can be in because you have frustrated the grace of God – the one and only true God. If you think you can get there by any other means except His son Jesus Christ, you’re not right in His eyes, and you’re not right with God. Period.

That’s why Christ reminded His disciples, just before going to the cross, and used the meal as a place where they could remember what he did for them, **“and gave himself for me.”** Why? It’s because He loved me. He loves you. He came to redeem this world. The first step is acknowledging that He did that. The second step is changing your mind to see what He did was sufficient.

I believe the most powerful work — and I preach on some stuff out there that really tantalizes the mind because you’ll see insights in the teaching that were never presented before to you in your lifetime — but the most important work that I’ve done and that I will ever do (when I say work I mean the preaching of God’s rightly divided word) is the *Change of Mind* series. That first volume sets the record straight. You should make it your mission to keep it fresh in your mind, the truth of God’s Word; read it or listen to it, once a month, once a quarter, whatever, keep it fresh. Let’s not frustrate the grace of God, because if we do, the gap of separation gets wider. We are not right

with God, we frustrate the grace of God, and we insult His only begotten son by substituting with works a false god and false doctrine. Let's not get in that trap, and let's make it a part of our mission to rescue people who fall into that trap. Let's bring them out of the frustrated place they are with God, or God is in with them, and bring them to a point of understanding the wonderful mercy and grace that God provided through His only precious son because He loved us and He gave himself for us.

It's no accident that communion took place at a meal. When you sit down and have a meal, what greater time to remember what Christ has done for you? Now, you can remember any time during the day, but how can you forget to eat? If you forget to eat or drink, you surely die quickly. So, He made it a point to do it at a meal, so that as they sat down and celebrated His death and resurrection together (or by themselves), they would remember what He did for them, what He did for us. That's why I suggest when you sit down and have a meal you remember what Christ did for you. You can do it more often than that if you want. Just remember. You don't even have to have the elements. You don't even have to have a meal. Keep the true and simple message of what God did for us through His only begotten son constantly in your remembrance. Satan and his minions are going to try to make you forget it. They will try to twist it. They will try to twist the true message of what makes you right with God. Don't let him put you in that place. Remember that He loved us and gave himself for us.

Let's not frustrate the grace of God by bringing some other obstacle into what God made plain and simple. Good works, goodbye! Like I said, it doesn't mean I'm not going to do good works, but it has nothing to do with my salvation and my place with God, which makes me right with God. His blood did that when he spilled it on the cross and presented it on the heavenly mercy seat, saying, "the mission is fulfilled; reconnect with them". That is exactly what happens.

Therefore, let's remember Christ, thanking Him, for loving us so much that He gave Himself for us.

Thank you, Jesus. (Take the elements.)

Talents

Open your Bible to Matthew 25.

I'm going to read to you two messages regarding what I have been preaching lately: salvation that is not determined by our works. Any works done after salvation don't determine whether you keep it or lose it. Those have a different purpose. So, this HOF had some questions and statements. I thought they were good points to bring up and decided to go ahead and share some of the concerns by reading the emails, and then I will take us into Matthew 25.

"Parable of the Talents"

I'm sure you are familiar with it. The common teaching is it has to do with literal money and those who do not put to use that literal money well and garner an increase, but bury it... well, that "worthless servant" will be "cast into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth".

Seems to me this approach can so evolve into a works for salvation perspective. As I understand it, giving generously is a fruit of the spirit. Now, of course, some have said, well, if you do not give generously, then you are not filled with the spirit and that is why that worthless servant was cast out." [It has nothing to do with it, nothing to do with it at all in Matthew 25.]

"Could we have a misunderstanding of this?" [Absolutely.]

"Our salvation is based on what Christ did, not what we do. Obviously, I am not saying we should not give generously financially and giving generously can be more than money, it can be one's time, talent, or giving generously to others the same grace we've been given.

Could the talents actually mean something else...as in to each is given a measure of faith? Some are given a larger measure than others and the measure isn't the issue but how we use what we've been given?"

That was the first email. The second email from the same HOF reads,

"Hope my last question wasn't trying to get ahead of your teaching. I know you have not gone into how discipleship figures into things. But you have made it abundantly clear that salvation is Christ's work alone and we trust in what He has done. We make no contribution to that either on the front or on the back and certainly nowhere in the middle. No problem with that and praise Jesus! and Amen. I agree.

Saved, I am. A disciple, I am--for which I will receive rewards in heaven; each of us receiving what we do, some will get more and some not as much. It is not a socialistic concept.

But when I read one of His servants was worthless and cast into outer darkness, it is a quandary. There is only one unpardonable sin... We all desire to grow in the fruit of the Spirit (though I agree with you that most leave agathasune out of their spiritual goals for growth).

I think it is passages such as this and other warnings coming from pulpits that makes it hard for me to make that division between salvation and discipleship.” [The biggest problem you’re having, especially when you’re dealing with the parables, is you seem to forget that Christ is speaking to believers and unbelievers in and of the church.]

“Perhaps it is quite a complicated matter, and this is why few teach on it or even teach it well-- and perhaps get it totally wrong. But being I feel I need to know this... kinda desperate actually to have this right... that I am more than willing to go the distance on a complicated issue.”

Matthew 25 is considered one of those parables that, unfortunately and mistakenly, too many take literally. The problem is, Christ wasn't teaching us how to be bankers, whether He gave you five talents, two talents, or one talent. That was not the purpose of this parable. It is not concerned with giving as far as material things, such as money, even though it's mentioned there. I think it's mentioned there for other reasons. Being a parable, it's a little bit confusing. So, I can see why people get confused. And I know why it's preached the way it's preached.

What is a parable? Because this is a parable, let's start with that.

At its simplest, the parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought.

“and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt...” (Christ had a reason for that and I'll get to it in Matthew in a minute.) “...and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application...” (What did Christ mean by that, in other words,) “...to tease it into active thought,” (for the ones that can hear.)

The meaning of most parables is not so obvious, or at least it shouldn't be.

If you are going to try to use common sense to read through parables without using the verifiable Word of God, (in a sense like its own Bible code), to figure out if scripture somewhere else or Jesus somewhere else defines what it means, (using it in a different parable to make us connect the dots, to make us understand what he is actually talking about), then you'll get it wrong. Does He do that in Matthew 25? Absolutely. But you don't even find it in Matthew 25. I know that sounds confusing, but I'll get to that.

If we assume we know what Jesus is talking about, we are probably missing the main point;

That's because you're not listening with spiritual ears and you're not reading as a biblical detective, connecting all the dots to figure out what Jesus really meant, which when done correctly pieces it all together.

If we are too familiar with the story (having heard it so often before), we might not think carefully enough about its real meaning.

That is what has happened over and over, not just with this parable, but just about every parable.

Most parables contain some element that is strange or unusual. [Matthew 25 is one of them] They should cause you to say, "Wait a minute! That's not how farmers do their work! That's not what kings usually do! That's not what normally happens in nature!" And this strange element should cause you to think!

Parables do not define things precisely, but rather use comparisons to describe some aspect of how God acts or interacts with human beings. Yet to say "A is like B" does not mean that "A is identical to B in all respects"; so one should be careful not to misinterpret or misapply the parables.

That is done, over and over, behind pulpits every Sunday.

We might think that Jesus spoke in parables to make it easier for people to understand his message. According to the Gospels, however, Jesus surprisingly does not expect everyone to understand them.

Go to Matthew 25. Many preachers use the following parable to teach that a believer (someone that's saved) can be lost. Let's examine it.

Matthew 25:14 says, ***"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants..."***

I've been on this verse before. *Called*. In the English, you would go right by that word and not put much understanding or meaning behind it. In the Greek, it is a totally different matter altogether. Called means "a divine invitation to participate in the blessings of redemption. This is not just for themselves, but to participate with others concerning redemption." So, in the English, you could read right by this with no concept what Jesus is saying here. The ***"man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods"*** is Jesus Christ, who is now in heaven officiating as our great High Priest at the right hand of the Father. What does "his own servants" mean, those called with a divine invitation to participate in the blessings of redemption? His own servants refer to the Church, which, by the way, includes both wheat and tares. Jesus had twelve disciples. One didn't turn out very well, did he? And he was living, breathing, walking, and communing with Jesus Christ. So, don't tell me there can't be wheat and tares in the Church. Too many Christians try to exclude the idea of believers and unbelievers in these types of parables and are assuming the Lord is only including the believers, the ones saved, in the portrayal of what He is trying to teach through these parables. Remember that.

Do you remember that I preached on the *Wheat and Tares* in the Spiritual Warfare series? I'm going to read to you a little bit of my own message again:

Moving on to verse 26, Christ says, "But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also." The word tares in the Greek it is zizanion. Vine's Dictionary on

Old and New Testament Words states, “zizanian: is a kind of darnel, the commonest of the four species, being the bearded, growing in the grain fields, as tall as the wheat and barley and resembling wheat in appearance. [Remember that; they are similar in size and looks.] It was credited among the Jews with being degenerate wheat. The rabbis called it ‘bastard’ wheat. The seeds are poisonous to men and, producing sleepiness, nausea, convulsions and even death. The plants can be separated out, but the custom, as in the parable, is to leave the cleaning out till near the time of the harvest. The Lord describes the tares as ‘the sons of the evil one’; false teachings are in dissociable from their propagandists.

Vine’s Dictionary tells us the tares are a kind of species similar to wheat and barley not only in size but also in looks. The rabbis called it a bastard species. That is, the false preachers and the false prophets in the church. [It could be any individual with a false message about redemption.]



Lolium temulentum
Darnel "bastard wheat"

Triticum cereale
Wheat

This bastard species is not under the kingdom of heaven, it is under the kingdom of the wicked one, controlled by him to say what he wants to say, and do what he wants to see done, which is destroy the Church and its people.

Easton’s Bible Dictionary says it is, “the bearded darnel, mentioned only in Matt. 13:25-30. It is the *Lolium temulentum*, [in Latin] a species of rye-grass, the seeds of which are a strong soporific poison. It bears the closest resemblance to wheat till the ear appears, and only then the difference is discovered. It grows plentifully in Syria and in Palestine.” As Christ said, the wheat comes up with the tares and you cannot distinguish the two. They look the same, they sound the same, but when it is at its most ripened point, the true message is nothing more than an imitation. In this case, the sower sowing the seed produces nothing but bad seed that tries to choke and overcome the wheat. In the church, this is a false prophet or preacher declaring a false doctrine.

[I’ll go even further: it is anyone spreading a false message about salvation and redemption.]

What does “soporific poison” mean? The American Heritage Dictionary defines a soporific poison as “1. Inducing or tending to induce sleep. 2. Drowsy. A drug or other substance that induces sleep; a hypnotic.”

What are these tares doing? The enemy is sowing his seed, producing tares, the ones proclaiming a false message to hypnotically convince you what they are saying is the truth, when it is anything but the truth. It is definitely not the Gospel. I found that very interesting, so I dug a little deeper, and found that another way to define a tare is ‘a cheat.’ There are many definitions of this word that will be discussed here, however, most understand the common definition is to defraud someone. For instance, some may cheat on a test by looking for the answers on another’s paper. That is cheating because you did not know the answer yourself. Most have been guilty of it, including myself. However, there is another definition for ‘cheat.’ A cheat is also defined as, “Weedy annual grass that often occurs in grain fields [or wheat fields] and other cultivated land; Seeds sometimes considered poisonous, such as the bearded darnel, the Lolium temulentum, tare.” The King James translators really got it right and truly explained what Jesus was telling His disciples to expect in the future, and what others who understand this parable should expect in the future as well. [Now this was a different parable I was referring to here, but it applies here also.] In another dictionary, a cheat is a, “weedy annual native to Europe, but widely distributed as a weed especially in wheat.” From these definitions, we know tares are nothing more than cheaters.

Using the definition most people associate with cheaters, it would be someone who cheats or “deceives by trickery or plunder; to deprive by defrauding, to mislead, to fool, escape.” All those definitions sound like false preachers with their false doctrines.

Looking further into another definition of a cheat, it is “someone who leads you to believe something that is not true.” That is what Jesus said. Tares grow the same as the wheat, they look as wheat while they are growing, but it is not until they reach maturity that they are seen as different, making you believe something that is not true. They disguise their true identity for what they are, hoping that they will defraud you with their message. And that is what Jesus was saying in His Parable of the Wheat and Tares.

Another definition is “a person who tries to bluff other people, a person who swindles you by means of deception or fraud.” I will add to that by saying whether they are doing this willingly or unwillingly, they are still a tool of the enemy, sowing the tare seed instead of the good seed that produces wheat. There is plenty of that on religious television today.

Another definition is “a beguiler who leads someone into danger.” And that danger will eventually be the everlasting fire described in Matthew 13:40, “As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so, shall it be in the end of this world.” Verse 42 goes on to say, “And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Yes, these beguilers will lead you into danger, but as long as I have breath in my lungs and there is life in me, I plan to expose them for what they are, who they are, and who is controlling them.

Other definitions are “a shifty, deceptive person, a person who says one thing and does another, someone who falsifies.” In other words, a cheat is someone who declares the enemy’s message, the false doctrine, or preaching another gospel, rather than the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The message goes on with other definitions, but I think you get the point. You'll see in a minute why I am bringing this up.

Again, the man travelling to a far country is the Lord Jesus Christ. His own servants refer to the Church, which includes wheat and tares. The problem that you read in so many books, regarding the churches of Revelation, is that they only want to include the wheat when they teach on those seven churches. They don't want to include the tares, so they miss half the point immediately—but that is another subject for another time. Like I said, many exclude the idea that believers and unbelievers are included in these types of parables Jesus used to get his point across.

Matthew 25:15 continues, ***“And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.”***

If you look up the word *talent* in the original language, it could be a talent of silver, or it could be a talent of gold. So, the question is this: was Jesus really speaking of money here, or was he using a parable to get another point across? When we go to verse 18, the word money there is not *talent*. It is a Greek word used to define what type of money – silver, but a talent could be either gold or silver. We really don't know what type of talent Christ gave these individuals, if it was money. But when we go down to verse 18, we have an idea now what He was referring to, because there in the Greek it's silver. But was it really money He was referring to, or was He just symbolically placing these ideas in man's head to try to get them to think about what He is talking about and lead them in that direction? Silver points to the Biblical symbol for redemption, and we already know what the word *called* means in verse 14 – “a divine invitation to participate in the blessings of redemption.” Silver shekels were always used to redeem. So, there's no doubt about what Christ symbolically meant and what type of talent, not gold but silver (if you still want to equate it to money, although I don't think He was equating it to money). We have the confirmation of the “kind” of money to be thinking about, because silver is symbolic for redemption.

Now, the talents Jesus are referring to here is not money. It's not literal money. Then what is it? It is the Word of God. You can find this repeated several different times in the scriptures. Like I said, you must use the whole Word of God, like biblical detectives, to make sure you can verify what scriptures are saying. It's especially important when Jesus is speaking. That's why most parables are not really understood when you just try to use common sense. With common sense, you read it for how it reads. You must go beyond that. I told you in God's Word there are so many verifiable ways to truly understand what's being said if you do the Biblical detective homework. What do I mean by that? Go to Matthew 13:10.

Jesus is giving the reason for the parables. We find the same story in Mark and in Luke, but let's read the Matthew version.

Matthew 13:10 states, ***“And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He [Jesus] answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you [given to the one asking] to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath [or lay hold of], to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: [Now, I want to read this verse very slowly because you are going to see something very unique here in a few moments.] but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.***

Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

Why? It's because their hearts are hardened. Talents are just the mere physical example that refers to the spiritual aspect of producing fruit through and by the Word of God — not self-righteous fruit — producing fruit by getting the message of redemption out there. It is getting the message out there of "Jesus Saves"; it's not your works, it's all His. You can go to John and many other places and read about this concept of understanding that Jesus gave here, but most people don't make the connection.

“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.” Remember that and let's go back to Matthew 25:16, ***“Then he that had received the five talents went and traded [employed with the idea of giving whatever that talent was; I am saying it is the Word of God] with the same, and made them other five talents. [He doubled it] And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money [silver].”***

So what did he do? He hid in the ground what was given to him freely.

Verse 19 reads, ***“After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”***

Understand this - rewards will be given at the judgment seat of Christ or the marriage supper of the Lamb. I believe it is the judgment seat of Christ. He will dispense it at his second coming.

Verse 22 goes on to say, ***“He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”***

Notice that the first two servants were servants who were called (*a divine invitation to participate in the blessings of redemption*). Remember I told you at the beginning of this ministry that it's not just all about you. It starts there, and it has to be nourished, the connection has to stay non-severed. You can't sever it or else you are in a heap of trouble. But it goes beyond that, and this is one of those parables that can prove that. The first two servants produce fruit. This has nothing to do with salvation because they are already rejoicing and having joy in the salvation they received, the redemption they were a part of. They took the commission and assignment and said, "You know what? I am going to take this message, God's Word, the message of salvation and do something with it, not so I can keep my salvation, but so others will hear it and be blessed by it and enter into the salvation of the Lord." Rewards are given to the saved in accordance with these types of works. It's not works for salvation. I think I've made that very clear. The word of God and works, in these passages, by someone who saved, a believer, go together with each other.

Verse 24 reads, ***“Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.”***

This servant is a liar. The other two servants were wheat; this servant is a tare. He knew the grace of God, but for some reason, he knew him as a hard man. Obviously, he had no understanding of the free gift of grace. He had no understanding of what the One who went to the far country represented after He died and rose again not just for the other two, for his benefit also, the opportunity at eternal life for trusting in Him only. Nothing else required. Just trusting and having confidence in what He did was sufficient, that the completed mission would fulfill all the requirements of God the Father. This tare was following the righteousness of the Law (works) and didn't have the righteousness of Christ, which comes without works. He was walking after the flesh and not by the Spirit. The tare might have thought it was just a tough road for this servant, for this tare, to follow. Maybe he only knew the hardness of it in his mind. Why? Because he had not been captured by the redemption plan that Christ provided.

What happened in verse 26? ***“His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.”***

Notice here how the Lord condemns this tare, this servant, because he had known about the sowing and reaping or the reaping. Where did this tare get the information? He had access to the Word of God, but what happened? He didn't hear it. This unsaved tare servant, this unbeliever, whatever you want to call him, never produced anything more than what was given him. So, what happened?

Verse 28 says, ***“Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. [pay very close attention to verse 29] For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.”***

This is almost a repeat of what I just read to you in Matthew 13:11. Connect the dots.

Look at verse 11 - ***“He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables...”***

This is a repeat. This tare did not hear the word of God, did not trust the salvation plan enough (or at all), unlike the other two and decided to bury it. I think *money*, *usury*, and *exchanges* are used in these verses because the Jews had a habit in the Old Testament of burying their money instead of lending it, since they weren't allowed to collect any interest from a fellow Israelite. Outside of their nation they could collect interest, for instance from a Gentile (for lack of a better word). If they couldn't make any profit from it, they would bury it in the ground. That was their custom, and Jesus knew what their customs were. So, this tare, this servant who had the invitation to

participate in the blessings of redemption, decided not to believe how important that talent was, not just for his life, but for others. He didn't put any value on it that it could produce something, so he buried it. That is what they would do in the Old Testament. It makes you think he was living under the old covenant and he really didn't want to participate in the New Covenant, the Gospel.

Verse 29 says, ***“For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable [lit. useless good for nothing] servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”***

This has nothing to do with giving money at all. This is about sharing the Word of God, the redemption plan of salvation.

What I want you to gather from this is that parables are not always unique to believers only, to only the people who are saved, because wheat and tares are in the same group. Christ says don't worry about it, at the harvest I will sort them all out. You see that in today's churches; I guarantee that you will see wheat and tares in today's churches.

He buried his lord's money, as a symbol, as a response to the word of God. Now this unprofitable servant, this tare, considered Jesus Lord, his Lord. The problem, which is obvious, is he didn't treat Him as his savior or consider Him as his savior. This third servant is a tare and scripture says he was wicked and lazy, slothful in the King James. Remember what I just read to you about the tares? The poisonous effect produces sleepiness, slothful people, fools, inducing or intending to induce sleep, almost being placed in a hypnotic state. That's what the poison produces when you are a tare. You might look like wheat, but you are not, you are wicked, you are a tare and you are slothful, lazy, and hypnotically seduced to believe, in this case, that there is no redeeming value in what Christ did at Calvary. This third servant was a servant walking in the flesh, not in the Spirit. Even the smallest interest payment (as referred to in this parable) on the talent or God's Word could identify this third servant as wheat, but it didn't. The lack thereof identified him as a tare.

This is not a parable (as this faithful Hearer of Faith was trying to understand and make the comparison) about what I've been teaching lately: *I think it is passages such as this and other warnings coming from pulpits that makes it hard for me to make that division (whatever it may be) between salvation and discipleship. [The reason why?] ... when I read one of His servants was worthless and cast into outer darkness, it is a quandary.*

I can understand why the confusion occurred. It's because you were relating this to discipleship works, which it is, but it is referring to three types of disciples, if you want to put it that way. Remember, Judas was a disciple, but he was the tare in the group. In this case, two of the three servants or disciples here weren't tares but were the wheat producing fruit because they took the divine invitation to participate in the blessings of redemption. They didn't bury it. That is the whole message. They didn't bury it because they took it in, they trusted in what they heard, they acted with all trust and confidence that the One who went to the far country did the completed work that He needed to do here and there, and they couldn't wait to get the message out. They produced double of what they were given. The tare didn't have any trust or confidence in it and all he did

was bury it. How many “professing Christians” who go to churches make up their own doctrines and believe their own way about certain issues that are unchangeable in God’s Word? What they really are is poison, but they’re among the wheat, they look like the wheat, the same size and look, but in the end, Christ will sort them out for what they are.

These verses in this chapter have nothing to do with works for salvation. This has to do with works about letting other people know what God has done for you, in any capacity that God has called you to participate. It has nothing to do with you losing your salvation if you don’t participate. The point Jesus was making in this parable is that this person, from the beginning, never believed in the salvation that Christ provided. He took the message he heard and buried it. He was never saved in the first place. So, he is going to experience the outer darkness where the weeping and gnashing of teeth take place, not because he didn’t produce other fruit, but because he never believed in the redemption that Christ provided at all, period! Don’t confuse the two. I know many have. If you try to read through these parables with common sense, you are going to fall short every time. That is why Jesus spoke in the parable and verse 29 is almost like Matthew 13, ***“For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.”***

Jesus is reminding them again: don’t you remember what I told you about the parables? Some will get it, and some won’t. The ones who do get it will have an abundance of understanding and desire to do something, which these two other individuals did and doubled what they were given. The one that didn’t, it was going to be taken away because he didn’t believe it in the first place. He didn’t put his trust and confidence in the man that was traveling to a far country, which was Jesus Christ himself. So, he was lost. He was an unbeliever from the beginning and that is why he will suffer a dear penalty for it. It isn’t because he didn’t produce fruit, but because he didn’t believe the message in the first place, the message of the Gospel of the good news of Jesus Christ and what he did for us. That is the difference. That is the game changer here. It’s unfortunate that that is missed so often. Hopefully I clarified it, so you understand what the differences are in this chapter, from verse 14 and verse 30, compared to what others are teaching on it.

Sorry, this isn’t a parable on how to be a good banker for Jesus. It has to do with redemption. It has to do with the fact that once you receive it, you will be overjoyed to participate because you have been divinely invited in the blessings of redemption and to share it with others. How do you think the Gospel message would be spread if that doesn’t happen? Some will do it better than others. Some will be given different abilities than others to get it done. That is why they had a different amount of talents. But the one who wouldn’t even consider it, it fell on deaf ears: “If I can’t profit from it, I’ll just do what the Old Testament Israelites did; I’ll just bury it in the ground.” If it can’t do anything for me, in other words, I’ll just bury it until he gets back and maybe he will be happy with that. No, Christ wants you to have trust and confidence in Him. He is not looking for appeasers. Even though faith pleases God, it must be the right type and kind.

Get the elements and we will quickly go to the Table of the Lord.

Open your Bible to Micah in the Old Testament.

Micah ends his prophecy by noting that his total confidence was in God. Despite Israel's sins, and they were great, he proclaimed God indeed pardons iniquity and does delight in mercy. Micah also declares that He casts our sins far away, into the depths of the sea. Of course, all this is based on God's unchanging promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Micah 7:19 states, ***“He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”***

In other words, He will remove them from His sight where they can't be seen any longer. I've been saying that now week after week. Christ is the one who fulfilled this prophecy. Christ didn't come to cover, that was an Old Testament practice. He didn't come to cover our sins; He came to remove our sins. And Micah says He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. They cannot even be seen anymore.

Verse 20 continues, ***“Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.”***

Like I said, this is an unchanging promise from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It would go unchanged and He did fulfill that promise.

So now, whatever your sins are, know this: there is nothing you can do to remove them on your own. It's all Christ's work. He would cast into the depths of the sea, He would remove them forever, but He also said that after that we would be imputed with His righteousness. That is why self-righteousness is ugly, because it is all based on what we do, and all we do winds up in sin.

Yes, another reason, another scripture that we can go to and remember what God promised He would do with our sins - cast them into the depths of the sea where they can no longer be remembered. I don't care how bad of a sinner you think you are, I don't care what you've done. You put your eyes, focus, trust, and confidence on Christ. You are a new creature in Christ, sins removed. Just start trusting and having confidence in Him day by day. Have faith in Him. Keep hearing to be persuaded about what God's Word has to say about Him which will build the *pistueo* faith, having *trust* and *confidence*. I know one is a noun and one is a verb, but I would rather use those definitions because they build upon each other. Rejoice today with me and remember what Christ has done for us. I think the deepest trench, probably in the Pacific Ocean, is about seven miles deep. I don't know where your sins are, but my sins are not only seven miles deep, it's so dark down there that no one can see them. They are removed, and that is where they will stay for those who keep trusting and having confidence in Christ and His redemptive work, day after day, until He returns. That is where I am putting my faith - in Christ. Be part of the wheat that I just spoke about, not a tare that takes the redemption message and digs a hole and places it in the ground, not to be seen, not to be believed by even the one that had it given to him, (the one that heard in other words), but refused to believe it to be true. Be a wheat. If you are a wheat, remember daily what Christ has done for us as He has asked us to, and thank Him for removing our sins and our iniquities far, far away.

Take the elements now in Jesus name.

Worketh Not

Open your Bible to Romans 4:1.

We will be going to the Table of the Lord, so get the elements.

“What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified [made right with God] by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. “[God would have none of it.] “For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed [pisteuo; the amen or so-be-it faith, the faith that produces trust and confidence in God] God, and it [or that] was counted unto him for righteousness.” [He trusted and had confidence in God. I taught on what Abraham saw in the stars. He saw the future - the Son of God coming, the Savior of the world. That is what he trusted in. He trusted in Jesus, though never even seeing Jesus. He trusted in Jesus and for that it counted to him for righteousness. Nothing that he could ever do in the flesh would be sufficient in the face of God.] Verse 4, “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” [This next verse is probably one of my favorite verses in Romans, verse 5.] “But to him that worketh not, but believeth [again, pisteuo; having trust and confidence, that so-be-it faith] on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

Highlight those words “but to him that worketh not.” That's it in a nutshell. What can I possibly say after that? “But to him that worketh not” are simple words but carry a huge impact if properly understood. The Word of God is proclaiming that eternal life is obtained without works (the assumption being good works).

“Well, I have all these good works.” If you believe that you earn salvation or keep your salvation by your works, all you produce is self-righteous works, because you have believed a lie about what those works can do for you.

This scripture, “but to him that worketh not,” silences the Pentecostals who believe we are in works, the Lordship-Salvation people that I have preached against, and anyone who teaches that salvation can be lost if we do bad works. Nowhere in God’s Word does it say any such lies about what self-righteous works can do for you...if you think they can do anything for you.

“Well, you preach that we need to participate in works.” That is not about Salvation. There are works, but that is part of Discipleship; it’s not part of your salvation. I have said it since day one, and I will repeat it as many times as I need to because we always have new people. You do nothing to earn Salvation. You cannot possibly do anything to earn Salvation.

“But to him that worketh not.” There is one thing you can do, and that is have trust and confidence in Him who justifies the ungodly. Then our faith in Him and what He’s done for us is counted for righteousness.

“But to him that worketh not” is a marvelous statement. There are a lot of impostors behind pulpits today who deceitfully teach that works must accompany faith. I repeat, it will accompany faith,

your faith journey and your discipleship pathway, but that has nothing to do with Salvation. It's unfortunate that these impostors make Salvation difficult.

Go to John 10. Jesus gives some simple illustrations concerning Salvation if you really think about it. Verse 9, ***"I am the door,"*** everybody knows what a door is; ***"by me,"*** it doesn't say by your works or anybody else's works. It says, ***"by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."*** It's a simple illustration here that He's using by saying "I am the door: by me if any man enters in, he shall be saved."

John 4:10 provides another simple illustration. ***"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God,"*** [if you really knew who was in front of you] ***"and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. "***

There is nothing hard or difficult to understand about these examples of God's salvation. Nothing at all! We just need to receive it through Jesus Christ (if you haven't already) because He shed His blood to take and remove away all our sins. There's nothing difficult about understanding that either, but then, the "repentance" that is preached out there has messed up thought patterns about Salvation, and what it really and simply, through the scriptures, informs us to do to receive it; it's a free gift. [See *A Change of Mind*, Volume 1]

I don't care who you are - you cannot work your way into heaven. All those works will not earn you salvation; all those works will not get you there.

Titus 3:5 says, ***"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us,"*** [you can't get any clearer than that] ***"by the washing of regeneration*** [restoration or spiritual rebirth taking place], ***and renewing*** [to make new] ***of the Holy Spirit."***

When you're saved, you're not saved because you deserve it. We deserve death. We're saved simply because God let us get saved. He has called you and He has chosen you for His purposes, and He's given you an opportunity for the free gift of grace. Do you know how fortunate we are? Everyone is always trying to win the lottery. This is a spiritual lottery of all lotteries! People receive Christmas presents; this is the best present you will ever receive! Nothing can compare to the free gift of grace. He's asking you to have a change of heart, which comes from a change of mind. He will attend to everything else in your life that needs developing, as you become His disciple. But you start by simply trusting in Him. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. You have to become persuaded that what you heard about Jesus is true, so you can then have confidence about what you've heard, and you can act upon it and say, "I want Jesus! I have been persuaded by everything that I have heard, and I have full confidence that only He can rescue me. He is my only savior and the only savior I will ever need." The Lord will then attend to your needs, your spiritual growth; but it first starts with trusting in Him. It is such a simple message. It is easy to understand if presented clearly.

Why are some ministers requiring lost sinners to walk up the aisle to be saved? When has that ever been a requirement? Why can't sinners be saved right there in their chairs? What does ten to twenty to thirty feet have to do with anything? Why do you have to go up there in front of everyone,

when the only person that really matters regarding salvation is Christ Jesus? The power of grace is just as sufficient in the pew as by the altar. Of course, there are ministers that require people to feel sorry for their sins. Is there going to be a sense of remorse once you understand what Christ did for you and the price He paid? Absolutely, because you have come to an understanding of how rotten of a person you are (myself included) and how we deserve death. Jesus voluntarily put himself on that cross, but He did it because of us in the first place. Yes, He loved us, but first and foremost, He was doing the will of the Father. God loved us so much He sent His only begotten son to rescue us. His son, knowing that, being equal with God, left the heavenlies, and came down here in a tent of human flesh. He became a slave of the flesh without sinning, died, rose again, and placed His blood on the heavenly mercy seat to make the statement that sins have been totally removed from the Father's eyes. Jesus was a willing obedient servant in the flesh. Now He sits in the heavenlies and has been given a name above all names.

Of course, another thing I've preached against is the "you have to tell these people they have to be willing to turn from sin" as a requirement of salvation. That brings us back to that Lordship-Salvation nonsense. They provide a false plan of salvation, my friend. I encourage you, even if you've heard me preach it or read the written work, to go through *A Change of Mind* again and refresh your mind on how all this other stuff is nonsense.

Jesus gave simple easy examples, such as walking through a door or drinking a cup of water. He didn't confuse the subject matter. He kept it simple for a reason, so it wouldn't be confused with all the other nonsense that preachers are now saying are requirements to be saved.

Do you remember the story in John 8 about the adulterous woman? You can read it in your own time, but Jesus didn't require this woman to say to Him that she was be willing to turn away from her sin to be saved. The mob was ready to stone her. Jesus intervened, and they walked away. He didn't turn to this woman and say, "You'd better be ready to turn from your sin or else you cannot be saved." No! Jesus saved her and then simply turned to her and said, "Go and sin no more." In other words, stop being an adulteress. Don't be an adulteress anymore. That is all He said.

When we come to Jesus with a change of mind, realizing that we were hell bound sinners under the condemnation of the Mosaic Law, placing our faith in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross to remove our sin and also in His resurrection from the dead for our justification, then we are saved eternally. It's not difficult to understand. It is after we are saved that Jesus says to all of us (ref. John 8), ***"Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more."***

This is why Paul says in Romans 8:1, ***"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."*** So, don't give me this or that of what I need to do to be saved. I need to have my trust and confidence in Christ for what He has done for me to save me and thank Him for the gift of grace He provided to rescue a wretch like me.

Romans 4:5 again, ***"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."***

These are some of the most precious words in the book of Romans: "but to him that worketh not." We are saved by God's imputed righteousness by faith in Christ Jesus. Imputed simply means—

and don't confuse it with anything else—that Christ took all our sins, past, present, and future upon Himself on that cross. And the moment we trust Him as Savior, His righteousness is placed on us.

II Corinthians 5:21 says, **“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”**

Jesus did all the work, all of it. Nothing is required by us, except for trusting in what He did for you and me. We serve an awesome Savior, my friend. If you are not serving Him, now is the time. You are not hearing this by accident; recognize who the Savior is.

For the rest of us, as we take these elements, remembering what He's done for us, we praise God for His precious and only begotten son, His gift to save wretches like us. That's what Jesus asked us to do at that last supper with His disciples and it carries on to us this day: remember what He did for us. And He's not through; He's coming back. If we are still alive, what a glorious day! If He takes us before that, we are still coming back with Him. Hallelujah!

Always keep remembering, no matter what anyone else tells you, “but to him that worketh not” is not dependent on what you do as far as works go to earn your salvation or to keep your salvation. You can't. It's all dependent upon Jesus. Then, He will take you and develop you as His weapon and tool or instrument to be useful and purposeful for His agenda. He will develop you through His Word and make you a disciple. Yes, that part will require some works, but it has nothing to do with Salvation. Those works that we do as a part of Discipleship also come with a promise which earns us rewards – rewards that He's waiting to present to us when all that He said would happen is done on this planet.

A great day is coming, my friend, and there are going to be inexhaustible rewards for our faithfulness and our works, which is part of our discipleship. But never confuse that with Salvation. Salvation is a free gift from God who sent His only begotten son, who willfully went to the cross as an obedient son to his Father. He did the will of the Father. It was the Father's will to save us and Jesus did exactly that. That was all that was required. Now, on our part we must have trust and confidence that what He did was sufficient and that's it. Once you do, just keep remembering that daily, anytime you have a meal or a drink. Whatever your system is of remembering Him, do it consistently. He wants you to because He wants you to remember Him. The focus is always on Him when you are at this table remembering Him. Keep it on Jesus and thank Him for that precious gift of grace. Also thank Him that it doesn't require any of our efforts, because we would fall short. And remember, (if or when you think it does require your effort), “to him that worketh not.”

You should make that a banner in your home or office, “To him that worketh not.” What a great conversational piece when someone comes in, prompting questions of, “What does that mean?” “But to him that worketh not? Let me tell you what that means.” What a great introduction to express your true feelings on what your Savior means to you and provided for you. There are always ways to tell people about Jesus.

Thank you, Jesus, it didn't require my works. Thank you for rescuing a wretch like me. Thank you for spilling your blood. Thank you for presenting your body as a sacrifice instrument to get the job done that none of us could do.

It's all about Him, but I did want to say one last thing. He also said to remember that He is coming back. I'm looking forward to that day and not forgetting it too is part of the commandment of going to this table; it's not only looking back at what He's done for us, it's also looking forward to that wonderful day when all is said and done and fulfilled. Thank you, Jesus, for being my Savior.

Take the elements.

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In 2 Corinthians 9:7 it reads, "God loveth a cheerful giver." The Greek word for cheerful is Hilaros which means when someone is prompt to do something; they are ready in mind, with a joyful heart. In the Septuagint it also means to cause to shine. Today I am looking for Hilaros Givers who are ready and full of joy for the opportunity to cause others to shine by hearing, learning, and growing in God's Word. Join with us today and participate as a Hilaros Giver. If you wish to participate use the following link <http://www.teachingfaith.com/giving>

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