

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER : SALVATION AND SERVICE : PART 1

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Following the Lord's rejection of King Saul, He sent the Prophet Samuel to the house of Jesse to anoint young David as the new king of Israel. Upon arriving at Bethlehem, Samuel assumed that Jesse's eldest son, Eliab, would be next in line as king. However, as we read in the following verse, the Lord used the situation to teach Samuel a very important lesson regarding judging by outward appearances:

"But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the

outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

1 Samuel 16:7, KJV

How true this is indeed! In our self-righteous pride, how quick we are sometimes to judge people by how they look physically, or by how they dress, or by how they talk, or by their mannerisms, or by how educated they are, or by their social status, etc. The Apostle Paul reiterated this same sentiment when he had to deal with the fleshly Corinthians who were trying to judge between themselves as to who was saved and who wasn't. Consider this verse:

"Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's."

2 Corinthians 10:7, KJV

A few verses later in the very same chapter, Paul stresses the point even further when he adds the following:

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

2 Corinthians 10:12, KJV

The following verses expose the error and the folly we commit when we foolishly assume that we always see or understand things the same way as the Lord does. His ways are simply too profound for our limited understanding:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Isaiah 55:8-9, KJV

"Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number."

Job 9:10, KJV

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge

of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Romans 11:33, KJV

Likewise, on more than one occasion, Jesus exposed this human tendency to lift ourselves up above our fellow human beings in erroneous judgment, when He said the following in the Gospels:

"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:"

Luke 6:37, KJV

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

John 7:24, KJV

Taken collectively in the context of this article, these verses carry a very clear message for us all. In short, the Lord knows His business much better than we. He knows who belongs to Him and who doesn't. It is not for us to try to determine who is saved and who isn't. We each should worry about our own Salvation and not pass judgment on another person's walk with the Lord. As Paul said in his letter to the Philippians:

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

Philippians 2:12, KJV

If we were all more conscious of our own sinful condition, perhaps we would not be so quick to pass judgment on our neighbor across the way who might be going through a rough time in his spiritual walk with the Lord. We would all be wise to remember that while it may be them today, it may very well be us tomorrow, because we are all subject to the same afflictions, trials and tests from the Lord, as we see by the following verses:

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation

also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."
1 Corinthians 10:13, KJV

"Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

1 Peter 5:9, KJV

The best thing that we can do for people we love who we see are faltering in the Faith, is to pray for them. Instead of setting ourselves up as self-righteous judges, what we ought to be doing is taking upon ourselves the humble task of being prayer warriors for friends, family and other people with whom we have shared the message of Salvation. This is made evident by verses such as the following:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;"

Romans 15:30, KJV

"Pray without ceasing . . . Brethren, pray for us."

1 Thessalonians 5:17, 25, KJV

"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:"

2 Thessalonians 3:1, KJV

"Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly."

Hebrews 13:18, KJV

"For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;"

Romans 1:9, KJV

"Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;"

Ephesians 1:16, KJV

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the

Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"

Ephesians 6:18, KJV

"We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints . . . For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;"

Colossians 1:3-4, 9, KJV

"Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:"

Colossians 4:3, KJV

"Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

Colossians 4:12, KJV

"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;"

1 Thessalonians 1:2, KJV

"I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;"

2 Timothy 1:3, KJV

"I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,"

Philemon 1:4, KJV

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man

availeth much."

James 5:14-16, KJV

"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

1 Peter 3:12, KJV

"The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

Psalms 34:15-18, KJV

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

1 Timothy 2:1-6, KJV

Sadly, despite the wise counsel that is found in the previous Scriptures, as some of you will know, one practice which has become common amongst some self-righteous Christians is that of harshly judging a person who falls back from the Faith, or who abandons their service for the Lord. In some cases, motivated by their pride, these pharisaical Christians dare to question whether or not the fallen brother or sister was ever really saved to begin with.

Within the Christian body, this falling away from the Faith or from service for the Lord, is commonly referred to as "backsliding". This term is used quite extensively by the Old Testament Prophets to describe ancient Israel's falling away from the Lord, and worshipping the pagan gods of the heathen nations around them. I discuss this topic at length

in the series entitled "The Fruits of Disobedience". In his second Epistle to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul spoke of a falling away from the Truth which would occur in the Last Days -- that is, the Endtime -- which is a period of time that precedes Christ's Return. Consider these verses:

"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;"

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, KJV

Many Christians -- such as myself -- believe that we may now be living in the climatic years of this Endtime period. But exactly where we stand is a very hotly-debated point which depends upon one's personal understanding of the Scriptures. As I point out in such articles as "The Misguided End of the World Predictions of Harold Camping" and "Sorry . . . Jesus is Not Coming at Any Moment!", it is very foolish for any of us to endeavor to set precise dates for Christ's Return. At any rate, in the previous verses, the term "falling away" is derived from the Greek "apostasia", and thus it is commonly referred to as the Apostasy:

To continue, aside from their own self-righteous pride, part of the problem with those people who adopt this critical attitude towards other Christians, is that some of them seem to be equating Christian service with Salvation. It may be because of their confusion regarding these two issues that they are claiming that if a person stops serving the Lord, then he must never have really been saved to begin with. At times, this may be true. Such might possibly be the case with Judas Iscariot -- the Lord's betrayer -- who I discuss in more detail in articles such "Are You Clean Every Whit?".

The question then is this: If a person ceases to serve the Lord, does this really mean that they are no longer saved, or that they were never saved to begin with? The issue of Salvation and works has received a great deal of attention,

and has been a source of controversy since the very First Century of the Christian Era. The Apostle Paul spent a great deal of time addressing this topic in his Epistles and made such historic remarks as the following:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Ephesians 2:8-9, KJV

"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

Romans 11:6, KJV

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"

Titus 3:5, KJV

When Catholic monk Martin Luther discovered these Truths within the pages of the Epistles of the Apostle Paul, and began to voice his opinions, he quickly became the object of wrath for daring to defy the "infallible" teachings of the so-called Holy Mother Church -- that is, the Roman Catholic Church -- which erroneously taught, and which continues to emphasize, the link between Salvation and good works.

Even today, despite our rich Christian heritage, the subject of Grace versus works still seems to be a hazy area where it has been very difficult for some Christians to find common ground. As you may know, some people maintain that Salvation is obtained strictly -- and freely -- through faith in the Sacrifice of Christ alone. In contrast, there are others who claim that Salvation can only be earned through good works. Still others believe that our Salvation is a result of Faith coupled with good works. Oh what a confusing doctrinal mess!

In my view, the latter position seems to imply that Faith in the Blood of Jesus Christ isn't good enough. It suggests that we need to provide the Lord with some help to really save us, and then to keep us saved. Quite frankly, I am of the belief that those people who erroneously rely solely upon their own

supposed "good works" have in effect nullified the Grace that is bestowed upon us through Jesus' Sacrifice on the Cross. For these reasons, I personally and firmly embrace Paul's position that Salvation is by Grace alone.

I already discuss these topics at length in some of my other articles such as "All Are Given a Chance, But . . ." and "Is Salvation Meant for All Men?". Therefore, I will not belabor the point here. One thing which is certain, is that there are a number of Scriptures which have been used to support all three of these positions. The bottom line is that it is a matter of one's personal understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures.

As I pondered the view which claims that if a person stops serving the Lord, he must have never been saved to begin with, I was reminded of the Parable of the Sower. Jesus gave some very specific examples in that story which may shed some light on this issue. In reading the Parable closely, it seems to me that Jesus was not just talking about Salvation, but rather about service as well. As I point out in "Are We Once Saved, Always Saved?", I believe that there is a difference between Salvation and Rewards. It is my view that many people will be saved, but that not everyone will acquire Heavenly Rewards, because not all will go on to produce fruit for the Lord after acknowledging Him in their lives. This is why some Saints will shine like the stars, while others will live in shame and everlasting contempt as we are told in the Book of Daniel:

"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

Daniel 12:2-3, KJV

You will notice that those people who are awakened -- that is, resurrected -- are clearly divided into two categories. Some will receive Everlasting Life, while others will suffer everlasting shame and contempt. The question I have always pondered is this: How could those poor souls suffer such a consequence unless they too are existing in some everlasting

state?

At this current time, the only way in which I can reconcile these thoughts is to assume that once judgment is passed on those people who have rejected the Lord, while they may face certain destruction in the Lake of Fire, the memory of their failure will live on in the minds of those people who receive Everlasting Life. In this sense, their shame will be eternal. Of course, if punishment in the Lake of Fire is not eternal, then it opens some new possibilities. Please consider reading the series entitled "Hell, the Lake of Fire and Universalism.

Let's take a look now at Jesus' explanation concerning the Parable of the Sower. Hopefully, it will become clear to you the reader that while Jesus is talking about Salvation here, He is primarily discussing the rewards of service. Let us begin with the following verses:

"Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side."

Matthew 13:18-19, KJV

In the above verses, it appears that these people hear the words of Salvation, but their understanding is so darkened, and their hearts so hardened, that they don't know what it means. Thus, they quickly reject the Word of Truth and never even receive Salvation. I am reminded of what the Apostle Paul wrote in his Epistle to the Ephesians:

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

Ephesians 4:17-19, KJV

This is exactly what Jesus meant when He said the following regarding the unbelieving Scribes and Pharisees of His day:

"Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."
Matthew 15:14, KJV

"Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."
John 9:41, KJV

"Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. "
Matthew 23:24, KJV

Jesus then continues the Parable of the Sower by relating the following:

"But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."
Matthew 13:20-21, KJV

In these verses, it appears that these people not only hear the Word of God, but they receive it joyfully as well, and thus truly experience Salvation. However, please notice what happens. Because of their lack of spiritual depth, because they don't stay close to the Lord and His Word, they fall away from the Truth during times of persecution when their Faith is seriously tested.

As I explain in the article entitled "Science and Technology: The Forbidden Fruit", in this increasingly ungodly world, as science and technology exert their power as the "gods" of our modern society, remaining a true, Bible-believing Christian becomes more unpopular and more difficult with each passing year. In articles such as "Dear Teacher: Standing Up for Our Children's Rights", "The Public School System and School Prayer" and "What is Wrong with Modern America?", I highlight the plight of Christian school-aged children who are scoffed at by their peers, and ostracized by the American educational establishment when they refuse to embrace the devilish poison which they are taught in the public school system.

As you may know, the Lord spoke very clearly regarding how seriously He views those people who offend -- or place a stumbling block in front of -- His little ones, when He said the following:

"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Matthew 18:6, KJV

I am also reminded of the many televangelists who are more concerned with pleasing their audiences than they are with pleasing God. They just love the praises of men, as we see by the following verses where Jesus accuses the Scribes and the Pharisees of being guilty of the very same thing:

"But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."

Matthew 23:5-12, KJV

"And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation."

Mark 12:38-40, KJV

"Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved

the praise of men more than the praise of God."

John 12:42-43, KJV

As the Apostle Paul writes, some of these modern preachers love to tickle people's ears -- and the people love to have it so -- but they do little to stand up for the full Truth that we find in God's Word. Rather, such persons prefer to promote a non-offensive, politically-correct, watered-down, socially-acceptable Gospel which does not convict people's hearts of sin. Some of them in fact preach another Jesus and another gospel. I'm reminded of verses such as the following which warn us to beware of these misguided brethren:

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

Acts 20:28-30, KJV

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."

Romans 16:17, KJV

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him . . . For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 13-15, KJV

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is

not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Galatians 1:6-9, KJV

"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."

1 Timothy 6:3-5, KJV

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;"

2 Timothy 4:3, KJV

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."

2 Peter 2:1-2, KJV

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

2 John 1:9-11, KJV

Please go to part two for the continuation of this series.

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THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER : SALVATION AND SERVICE : PART 2

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Beware Of Misguided Brethren Who Preach Deceptive Doctrines, Persecution Arising From Multi-Religious Homes, Abide In The Lord, Don't Be Ashamed Of The Gospel Of Christ, Beware Of Materialism And Riches: The Seed Which Fell Among The Thorns, Satan -- False God Of The Present World -- And His Offerings, Modern Churches Of Laodicea, Seed Which Fell On Good Ground, Not Everyone Bears Same Amount Of Fruit, Different Levels Of Christian Discipleship And Heavenly Rewards, Not Everyone Is Capable Of Serving God In The Same Capacity, Apostle Paul's Advice Regarding Marriage And Discipleship, Importance Of Being Fruitful Branches For The Lord, We Can't Wins Souls Or Force Anyone To Accept Christ, Won Only By God's Spirit

As I concluded in part one, to our shame, there are some modern televangelists and other preachers who seem to be more concerned with the praises of men than they are with preaching the full truth of the Gospel, and pleasing God. These deceivers preach a non-offensive, socially-acceptable Gospel that is full of compromise. Some of them are in fact false brethren who preach another Jesus and another Gospel. While many naive, gullible people are taken in and deceived by these smooth-talking snakes, as the following additional verses reveal, we are not to be deceived by such people, or by the poisonous false doctrines which they preach:

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:"
Ephesians 4:14-15, KJV

"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein."
Hebrews 13:9, KJV

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;"
1 Timothy 4:1-2, KJV

As many of you will already realize, the truth of the matter is that if these people were to preach the whole counsel of God -- instead of their so-called "prosperity gospel" which promotes the "abundant life", their sickening liberal gospel which blesses gay and lesbian relationships, and their "all is well" gospel which claims that hell is not real -- they would quickly fall from popularity, and their pocketbooks would likewise feel the effect as well. So, they compromise instead by preaching a feel-good gospel, in order to ensure that the money just keeps rolling in.

Returning to our main subject matter regarding the Parable of the Sower and Salvation, Christian service and rewards, another example of persecution which may weaken the seed of faith is the friction which may develop in families where different religious beliefs are espoused. For example, one parent may be Christian, while the other is Jewish, or maybe an atheist.

Eventually, one of the parents gives in to the other or else a compromise is reached. This kind of situation may result in the children receiving the wrong religious instruction. They may quite possibly receive none at all because their parents cannot reach an agreement. Such a situation may even leave

the children totally confused regarding what to believe, or may cause them to reject religion altogether. The point is, regardless of the source of the persecution, due to their not being well-grounded in the Word of God, some of these people end up in a backslidden state. They may still be saved, but they are not bearing any fruit because they are no longer actively serving the Lord. As Jesus said in the Gospel of John:

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

John 15:4, KJV

If you are interested in learning more about persecution in the life of Christians, I encourage you to read the series entitled "Civil Disobedience and Christian Persecution". As I explain in other articles, if there is one thing which the Scriptures make clear, it is that those Christians who are ashamed to work for the Lord now, may some day discover that He will likewise be ashamed of them at His Coming. Consider the following verses where we are advised to not be ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Matthew 5:16, KJV

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Mark 8:38, KJV

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Romans 1:16, KJV

"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

2 Timothy 1:12, KJV

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,"

Hebrews 2:11, KJV

"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

Hebrews 11:16, KJV

In the next part of the Parable of the Sower, Jesus proceeds to discuss the sad fate of the seed which fell among thorns. He notes the following:

"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."

Matthew 13:22, KJV

You will notice that this person appears to have progressed even further than the last one, which was symbolized by the seed falling in "stony places". This particular person seems to have accepted the Word of Truth and was saved as a result of it. Furthermore, it even appears that he may have started to bear fruit for the Lord's Kingdom. Notice that it says he "becometh unfruitful". This seems to be implying that he was fruitful at first, but then he allowed the cares and riches of this life to drag him away from His service for the Lord. This sounds so much like a lot of modern-day Christians in the Westernized world who have fallen for the very things which both Jesus and the Apostles clearly warned us to watch out for; that is, worldliness and materialism. Consider the following verses:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also . . . No man can serve two masters:

for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Matthew 6:19-21, 24, KJV

". . . Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Matthew 19:23-24, KJV

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Mark 8:36-37, KJV

". . . Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!"

Mark 10:24b, KJV

"And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of

these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Luke 12:16-34, KJV

"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

John 6:27, KJV

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

John 15:19, KJV

"I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

John 17:14-15, KJV

"And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

1 Corinthians 7:31, KJV

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

2 Corinthians 4:18, KJV

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will

receive you,"

2 Corinthians 6:17, KJV

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

Philippians 4:11, KJV

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

Colossians 3:1-2, KJV

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:"

1 Timothy 6:6-14, KJV

"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

2 Timothy 2:4, KJV

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they

had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

Hebrews 11:13-16, KJV

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Hebrews 13:5, KJV

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

James 4:4, KJV

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain."

James 5:1-7, KJV

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

1 John 2:15-17, KJV

It should be clear from the previous verses that we are not to overly desire the things of this world, because we are not truly a part of this world. Furthermore, we should also be content with whatever God chooses to provide for us in this world, realizing that He will never fail to meet our needs, if we are truly seeking first His Kingdom. As the final verses from John's first Epistle reveal, all of these things -- riches and materialism -- are "of the world". More specifically, as the following verses make plain, the truth of the matter is that all of these things are offered to us by Satan himself, because he is really the false god of this current world, as we see here:

"And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it."

Luke 4:5-6, KJV

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

2 Corinthians 4:4, KJV

"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."

2 Corinthians 2:11, KJV

If you are interested in reading more about the subject of the dangers of materialism, you may wish to study articles such as "Have You Sold Your Soul for a Pound of Flesh", "Do You Want Love and Light, Or Rod and Wrath?", "Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God" and "Going Down the Highway". We find the perfect example of certain modern churches which have succumbed to materialism in the Book of Revelation. In the letter that John was instructed to write to the Church at Laodicea, we read the following:

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I

would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:"

Revelation 3:15-17, KJV

Thus we see that similar to many modern Christians who have sadly succumbed to materialism, and who live the so-called "abundant life", this person Jesus spoke of -- who was like the seed which fell among thorns -- may possibly have some rewards in Heaven, but it won't be very much. To conclude the Parable of the Sower, Jesus finally says the following:

"But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

Matthew 13:18-23, KJV

Here we see an example of an individual who -- despite all of the obstacles and temptations which he has encountered in his life -- faithfully continues in his service to the Lord. He perseveres despite everything. He receives the Seed of God's Word, he understands it, and he goes on to bear lots of fruit for the Lord's Kingdom. Notice that Jesus is very careful to point out that not everyone bears the same amount of fruit. This seems to be implying that there are different degrees of Christian Discipleship and Rewards. Jesus emphasizes the same point in some of His other Parables as well -- such as in the Parable of the Talents -- which I discuss in "Sluggards and Sloths: Are You Diligent and Faithful in the Affairs of God's Kingdom?". The Apostle Paul also explains how we will not all receive the same reward when he writes the following:

"There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory."

1 Corinthians 15:41, KJV

Please consider reading the entire chapter. You will find it very inspiring. It is important that we recognize that not

everyone is capable of serving the Lord in the same capacity. In this modern world where it is difficult for many people to make ends meet financially, it would be more difficult for a married man with five children to serve the Lord, than for a single person who can dedicate his entire life to the Lord's Work. The Apostle Paul wrote considerably regarding the topic of marriage and Discipleship in his Epistles. For example, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians he wrote as follows:

"Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you . . . But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife."

1 Corinthians 7:27-28, 32-33, KJV

To what degree we each choose to serve the Lord is a matter of personal faith and motivation. What is important to the Lord is that we bear some amount of fruit for His Kingdom, as we see by the following verses:

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."
Psalms 1:3, KJV

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."
Proverbs 11:30, KJV

"He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

Luke 13:6-9, KJV

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

John 12:24, KJV

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned . . . Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

John 15:1-6, 16, KJV

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

Romans 7:4, KJV

It is important to note that bearing fruit for the Kingdom of God is not a work of the flesh. As the Lord says in the previous verses, "without me ye can do nothing". We must all recognize that we cannot force anyone to accept the Lord. I know that there are some churches and organizations which pride themselves in keeping tabs on how many souls they have won to the Lord. I am sorry to disagree, but you cannot win one single soul to the Lord. You can talk to someone until you are blue in the face, but if they don't want to hear it, or receive it, or believe it, there is nothing you can do about it.

The truth is that Salvation is a very personal matter. As I discuss in articles such as "Free Will and Personal Choice, "All Are Given a Chance, But . . ." and "Is Salvation Meant for All Men?", Salvation is a matter of personal choice. The following verses clearly demonstrate how fruit is born for the Kingdom of God:

"So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

1 Corinthians 3:7, KJV

"Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Acts 2:47, KJV

Clearly, winning souls to the Lord is a work of the Spirit. You can be an on-fire, zealous preacher of God's Word who has thousands of Bible verses committed to memory; but it is still only God -- through the conviction of His Holy Spirit -- who can put it into a person's heart to want to be saved. Only He can truly convict them of sin in their lives, and help them to realize their need for a Savior. Consider the following verses:

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Philippians 2:13, KJV

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Hebrews 4:12, KJV

Please go to part three for the continuation of this series.

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THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER : SALVATION AND SERVICE : PART 3

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The Lord's Desire For Our Repentance Healing And Salvation, Age Of Grace And Personal Choice, God's Faithful Ambassadors, Lack Of Works Does Not Signify One Is Not Saved, Be Doers Of The Word, Return To Your First Love, Backsliding, We Are His Forever, Salvation Is Not Based Upon Our Works, God Alone Provides The Increase In Souls, All Of The Apostles Forsook Jesus In Gethsemane, Jesus Was Offered Up One Time For All Men, Once Saved Always Saved, God Keeps His Promises And Is Not A Liar Or A Deal Breaker, Confusion Regarding Salvation, Jesus Promised Us His Peace, Trust In The Lord With All Your Heart, Peace With God Through Jesus Christ, Church's Control Over Its Members Through Different Legalistic Requirements, The Burden Of The Mosaic Law, Our Burden In Christ Is Light

As I explain in some of the aforementioned articles, insofar as Salvation is concerned, God wishes for all men everywhere to repent of their sins, and to be saved. While at times He may be forced to execute His righteous Judgments in order to shake us up a bit, His ultimate goal is for all of us to be healed, and to be saved. This is made quite evident by verses such as the following:

"Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"
Ezekiel 33:11, KJV

"For the Lord will not cast off for ever: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude

of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men."

Lamentations 3:31-33, KJV

"And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village."

Luke 9:51-56, KJV

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

2 Peter 3:9, KJV

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be

healed."

Hebrews 12:5-13, KJV

The irony of this situation is that while God wants all men to be saved, and while He will even put His desire in our hearts, He will still respect our personal choice. In this current Age of Grace, He will not force Himself upon any man. So how is it that we fit into God's overall plan? The answer is quite simple: We are still here in the flesh. As such, we are the vehicles which the Lord has chosen to use to deliver the Message of Salvation. We are His preachers, His royal ambassadors, and His mouthpieces. God has given us a very important Message to deliver to the world, and it is our responsibility to deliver it faithfully by whatever means are available to us according to our own faith. This Great Commission of reaching the world for Jesus Christ is revealed in verses such as the following:

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! . . . So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Romans 10:13-15, 17, KJV

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

1 Corinthians 4:2, KJV

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

2 Corinthians 5:20, KJV

"And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

Ephesians 6:19-20, KJV

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

Matthew 24:14, KJV

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"

Matthew 28:19, KJV

"And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Luke 24:46-47, KJV

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

Mark 16:15, KJV

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Acts 1:8, KJV

"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house . . . Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

Acts 20:20, 31, KJV

"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"

1 Corinthians 9:16, KJV

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

2 Timothy 2:2, KJV

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

2 Timothy 4:2, KJV

Returning to the Parable of the Sower, except for the first fellow -- the seed which fell by the wayside and the Devil snatched it up -- it appears that in all of the rest of the examples that Jesus gave, the people were saved. As with the Parable of the Talents -- where we could say that receiving the talents was symbolic of accepting the Lord -- each person went on to invest in the Lord's Work in varying degrees of service.

The main point I wish to emphasize is that, in my opinion, a lack of works does not necessarily mean that a person is no longer saved, or that he was never saved to begin with. It simply means that he is currently in a backslidden state, and not doing anything for the Lord. His works did not save him to begin with, and they certainly cannot keep him saved. The Lord still loves him; he is still the Lord's child; just like backslidden Israel; but his faith is dead, because he is not putting it into action, as we see by the following verses:

"Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not."

Matthew 23:1-3, KJV

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

James 1:22-25, KJV

"But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is

dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

James 2:20-26, KJV

"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

James 4:17, KJV

"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

Matthew 7:20, KJV

If we can be honest with ourselves for a moment, haven't we all been in this same condition? I know that I have. There have been times in my life when I have left my work on the wall in order to attend to more worldly pursuits. However, I have always returned to my first love for the Lord and His Word. Maybe some of you still find yourselves in a somewhat backslidden condition as well. In such a case, the Lord still loves us, and we are still His beloved children. However, we may not receive a lot of recognition -- or Rewards -- when we arrive in the Heavenly Kingdom, unless we repent and return to our first love. Consider these verses:

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

Revelation 2:4-5, KJV

Personally, I am by no means convinced that our lack of works means that we are no longer saved. This is contrary to the Scriptures, which indicate to me personally that once we are His, we are His forever. Can a parent truly disown the

child which is born of their own flesh? How much less will our Heavenly Father forsake His children who are born again of the Spirit? Consider the following verses:

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

John 6:37, KJV

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

John 10:28, KJV

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 8:38-39, KJV

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

2 Timothy 2:19, KJV

". . . for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Hebrews 13:5b, KJV

To reiterate, our Salvation is dependent upon faith in Jesus alone, and not on our works as I make clear in such articles as "Are We Once Saved, Always Saved?" and "Message to the World". Jesus is the only one who saved us to begin with, and He is the only one who can keep us saved. Consider these words which were written by the Apostles Paul and Jude:

"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

2 Timothy 1:12, KJV

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;

who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Hebrews 12:2, KJV

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,"

Jude 1:24, KJV

In short, it is the Lord who gives the increase. It is the Lord who saves souls. It is the Lord Who keeps souls saved. As Jude writes, it is the Lord who keeps us from falling. It has nothing to do with our own works. If Salvation is truly dependent upon works, then the Apostles would have all lost their Salvation, because the night Jesus was betrayed, they all forsook Him. It wasn't just Peter alone, as we see by these two verses:

"Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."

Matthew 26:31, KJV

"Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

John 16:32, KJV

To suggest that the Apostles regained their Salvation when they rededicated themselves to the Lord is ridiculous. This would be akin to saving themselves again by their own good works instead of through the Grace of God. As the Apostle Paul also writes, to believe that we can constantly lose and regain our Salvation condemns Jesus to being crucified afresh each time we fall from Grace, as we can determine by these verses:

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall

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

Hebrews 6:4-6, KJV

In the next few chapters, Paul clearly affirms that, unlike the high priest who had to continually offer sacrifices for the sins of the people from year to year, Jesus was offered up one time. That is all that was and is necessary in order to safeguard our Salvation, because His is an Eternal Pact with our Heavenly Father. Consider the following verses:

"Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did ONCE, when he offered up himself."

Hebrews 7:27, KJV

"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in ONCE into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

Hebrews 9:12, KJV

"For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now ONCE in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was ONCE offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Hebrews 9:26-28, KJV

"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ ONCE for all."

Hebrews 10:10, KJV

The Apostle Peter likewise believed that Jesus died one time for the sins of all men, and that there is no need for Him to do it again and again, in order to atone again whenever we fall, as we all so often do. Peter writes as follows:

"For Christ also hath ONCE suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:"

1 Peter 3:18, KJV

The point is, the Scriptures convince me personally that once we have come to Christ and are washed in the Blood of the Lamb, we are saved forever, and that is it. Jesus died one time, and He is not going to do it again. Furthermore, the Lord's mercies are renewed every morning; and as we saw a moment ago, He promises to never leave us or forsake us. This is affirmed again by the following verses:

"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

Lamentations 3:22-23, KJV

"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."

2 Timothy 2:13, KJV

So even when we are weak in faith -- as the Apostles were that dark night in the Garden of Gethsemane -- doubt our beliefs, and perhaps even backslide for a time, the Lord still promises to keep His Word. He keeps His end of the bargain no matter what. He says "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out", as well as "they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand", and that is exactly what He means. Do you believe it? To reiterate, yes, sometimes we do fall; but God's promises through Christ remain sure and steadfast. He is not a deal breaker or a liar. As Moses said in the Book of Numbers:

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

Numbers 23:19, KJV

Following are some additional verses which confirm this same point. They also reveal that if anyone is a liar, surely it is unfaithful and unbelieving men who attempt to cast doubt upon God's eternal Word:

"God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy

sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

Romans 3:4, KJV

"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;"

Titus 1:2, KJV

"Ye [speaking to the unbelieving Jews] are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

John 8:44, KJV

"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son."

1 John 2:22, KJV

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."

1 John 5:10, KJV

"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

1 John 1:10, KJV

As a result of the aforementioned teaching which erroneously claims that good works are directly linked to our Salvation, there are many people today who are confused regarding their Salvation. Because they have been made to believe that their Salvation is based upon their own good works, they're always wondering whether or not they are still saved. They worry about whether or not they have been good enough, or whether or not they have prayed enough, or whether or not they have tithed enough, or whether or not they have offered up enough prayers to the Saints. They are never certain exactly where they stand with our Heavenly Father. It's utter madness!

In the Gospel of John, Jesus promised to give us His peace. How can we possibly enjoy this peace when we are constantly in a state of uncertainty, and worrying about whether or not

we are still saved? It is ridiculous. However, you will be happy to learn that the solution is really quite simple. As the Prophet Isaiah and King Solomon both inform us, we need to simply trust in the Lord. We need to utterly place our faith in the Promises of His Word, and believe it when He says that He will never leave us or forsake us once we come to Him. It is this kind of faith and trust which engenders peace in our minds and hearts. Consider the following verses:

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

John 14:27, KJV

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

John 16:33, KJV

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Isaiah 26:3, KJV

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Proverbs 3:5-6, KJV

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:"

Romans 5:1, KJV

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

Ephesians 2:13-18, KJV

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:7, KJV

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight:"

Colossians 1:19-22, KJV

Please notice that the Lord specifically says "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid". Sadly, this is precisely the kind of fruit which results from this erroneous doctrine which attempts to link good works to our Salvation. It does in fact make people worry, doesn't it? Not only that, but this is precisely how some churches -- such as the Roman Catholic Church -- maintain tight control over their members. In other words, they make the laity dependent upon the church and its doctrines for their Salvation and for forgiveness of sins, instead of depending solely upon the Blood of Christ as it should be.

Some of these churches stress the importance of good works, while others enforce all kinds of legalistic requirements, such as requiring church attendance on one particular day over another. They have all kinds of do's and don't's; and if a person somehow manages to observe them all, maybe, just maybe, he might make it into Heaven. Ironically, as you may know, Jesus accused the Scribes and the Pharisees -- who were the prominent religionists of His day along with the Sadducees -- of the very same thing. In other words, as I explain in other articles, they used the power and weight of the Mosaic Law -- that is, the Laws of Moses -- as a tool to keep the common people under subjection, as we can see by the following verses:

"Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,

Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."

Matthew 23:1-4, KJV

"Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also. And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers."

Luke 11:45-46, KJV

Please note that in the previous verses, the word "lawyers" is derived from the Greek word "nomikos". In the context of the New Testament, this word actually refers to teachers and interpreters of the Mosaic Law. In contrast to all of the legalistic requirements which were imposed upon people by the self-righteous religionists of Jesus' day, consider what Jesus actually had to say:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30, KJV

As we saw earlier in this series, the Apostle Paul also wrote "ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ".

Please go to part four for the conclusion of this series.

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Having The Certainty Of Our Salvation, Rewarded According To Our Works, Seek Out God's Will For Your Life, One Body But Many Members, Different Callings And Gifts, Demonstrate Our Faith Through Tangible Actions, Motivated By Love, The Lord Knows Them That Are His, Don't Judge The Salvation Of Others, Work Out Your Own Salvation, Abide In Your Own Ministry And Calling, First Shall Be Last And The Last First, Righteous Judgment, Closing Remarks, Some Additional Reading Resources

As we have now clearly seen, the doctrine of good works-based Salvation -- which engenders doubts, worry and uncertainty -- can't really be substantiated by the Scriptures. We are to be certain of our Salvation, and have peace in our hearts, as the Apostle John writes in the following verses:

"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

1 John 5:12-13, KJV

Notice the assurance and certainty in John's words. With the phrases "that ye may know" and "that ye may believe", John leaves no room for doubt whatsoever. Let me emphasize again that while our works do not save us, they are the source of our Heavenly Rewards. As I explain in such articles as "Are You a Burning Ember for the Lord?", sitting on our fannies and doing nothing for the Lord once we accept the free Gift of Salvation will not do, and is simply unacceptable to the Lord. This is made sufficiently clear by verses such as the following which reveal that we will each be judged by -- and rewarded according to -- our works for the Lord. We must use

and invest our talents wisely:

"If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?"

Proverbs 24:12, KJV

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

Matthew 16:27, KJV

"And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:"

1 Peter 1:17, KJV

". . . I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

Revelation 2:23b, KJV

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Revelation 14:13, KJV

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works."

Revelation 20:12-13, KJV

If we really love the Lord and want to please Him, we will each endeavor to do what we can, according to our particular gifts and abilities. As I explain in articles such as "What is God's Will for My Life?", each one of us has a particular calling from the Lord, and we must seek out His Will for our lives. Some of us may be destined to be field missionaries,

while others may be teachers and writers, or hold some other position within the Body of Christ. Even motherhood is an honorable and great responsibility within the Lord's Church; because not only are they raising tomorrow's leaders, but they are also making it possible for their husbands to serve the Lord full-time. As the Apostle Paul explains in various of his Epistles, we are one Body, yet with many members and many different gifts. Consider the following verses:

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

Romans 12:4-5, KJV

"For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."

1 Corinthians 10:17, KJV

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit . . . But now are they many members, yet but one body."

1 Corinthians 12-13, 20, KJV

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;"

Ephesians 2:13-19, KJV

"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are

called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all . . . "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Ephesians 4:3-6, 16, KJV

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful."

Colossians 3:15, KJV

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

1 Corinthians 1:10, KJV

In my view, this is the main intent of the previous verses where the Apostle James admonishes us that faith without works is dead. We must each demonstrate our faith through tangible actions of one form or another. We should do it, not because our works for the Lord are what actually save us, but rather simply because we want to please the Lord, and because we are motivated by our love for lost souls, as well as by our desire to spiritually feed and shepherd our Christian brethren.

In conclusion, as I mentioned earlier, it is wise to not be too quick to judge other Christians, or to try to determine whether or not they are saved. I firmly believe that this is God's business alone, and not ours. Jesus made it very clear that He knows who His sheep are, as we see by the following verses:

"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine . . . My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:"

John 10:14, 27, KJV

As we saw earlier, the Apostle Paul also echoes this very same sentiment in his second Epistle to Timothy when he

writes the following:

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

2 Timothy 2:19, KJV

Rather than judge who is, and who is not of the Lord, let us each demonstrate humility, and concentrate on working out our own Salvation with fear and trembling, as the Apostle Paul advises us to do in the following verse. Let us also abide in our own ministry and calling, and mind our own business. Consider the following verses:

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

Philippians 2:12, KJV

"Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand."

Romans 15:20-21, KJV

"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called . . . Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God."

1 Corinthians 7:20, 24, KJV

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is

increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand. But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."

2 Corinthians 10:12-18, KJV

"But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision."

Galatians 2:7-9, KJV

The truth of the matter is that someday we may all be very surprised to find out who has made it through those Pearly Gates, and who has not. There will be many heartbreaking disappointments, as well as many unexpected surprises. If you doubt that this is so, then please consider these verses:

"And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all."

Mark 9:35, KJV

"But many that are first shall be last; and the last first."

Mark 10:31, KJV

"And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all."

Mark 10:44, KJV

"And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come

and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee."

Luke 14:7-10, KJV

In contrast to the previous verses which encourage a spirit of humility, once again consider the following verses which expose the high and mighty officials of organized religion, who sometimes act very similar to the proud, self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees of old:

"And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation."

Mark 12:38-40, KJV

"Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets."

Luke 11:43, KJV

"Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation."

Luke 20:46-47, KJV

Before concluding this series, allow me to mention that this series does not fully address the issue of judgment. While we are admonished to not critically or self-righteously judge our Christian brethren, the Bible does clearly teach us that there is an acceptable form of "righteous judgment". For a fuller explanation of this topic, please refer to the article entitled "Exposing the Judge Not Fallacy".

With these final thoughts, I will bring this series to its conclusion. I trust that you have been blessed by it, and I

hope that you have learned something new along the way. If you have been inspired by this series, I ask you to please consider sharing its URL with your online friends. If you have an account on Facebook, Twitter or Google+, I would also appreciate if you would take the time to click on the corresponding link which is found on this page. Thank you so very much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, you may want to refer to the list of resources below which were either mentioned in this series, or which contain topics which are related to this series. All of these articles are likewise located on the Endtime Prophecy Net web server:

All Are Given a Chance, But . . .
Are We Once Saved, Always Saved?
Are You a Burning Ember for the Lord?
Are You Clean Every Whit?
Civil Disobedience and Christian Persecution
Dear Teacher: Standing Up for Our Children's Rights
Do You Want Love and Light, Or Rod and Wrath?
Exposing the Judge Not Fallacy
Free Will and Personal Choice,
Going Down the Highway
Have You Sold Your Soul for a Pound of Flesh
Hell, the Lake of Fire and Universalism
Is Salvation Meant for All Men?
Message to the World
Science and Technology: The Forbidden Fruit
Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God
Sluggards and Sloths: Are You Diligent and Faithful in the Affairs
Sorry . . . Jesus is Not Coming at Any Moment!
The Fruits of Disobedience
The Misguided End of the World Predictions of Harold Camping
The Public School System and School Prayer
What is God's Will for My Life?
What is Wrong with Modern America?

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