

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Jesus' Teaching on Salvation

Scripture: Matthew

Code: 80-39

This morning I mentioned to you that I was going to try to get a copy of the introduction to the book I'm writing on the issue of Lordship salvation. I was informed today that I can't do that because I am currently under contract to a publisher and they do not want it to be released. That sounds a bit clandestine but they have their reasons. So I thought in the event that I couldn't do that I would just read you a few things out of that introduction tonight. I'm really setting aside what I had intended to do and then speak to that issue, because if one person has asked me that question fifty people have asked me this question through the day. And I want to try to set in your mind the issue at hand and then look together to God's word. I'm not going to preach a sermon, I just want to take you through some things in God's word and have you consider this most important subject.

It really came about in my life as a matter of studying the gospel of Matthew over a period of about eight years and during that time the Lord was crystallizing in my thinking the very essence of his gospel ministry and as a result of all of those years and studying down every rabbit trail imaginable in the process I came to understand what I believe to be the biblical teaching on the theology of conversion, the theology of the gospel. I didn't really realize how much diversity of opinion there was on that subject until I began to get feedback from things that I was saying, which seemed to me to be rather apparent from the Scripture. And all of that has led to the point today where there's a need for some clarification on this whole issue.

Let me just read a couple of excerpts and then we'll look to the word of God. This will sort of set your thinking for you. Our Lord's words about eternal life were invariably accompanied by warnings to those who might be tempted to take salvation lightly. He taught that the cost of following him is high, that the way is narrow, and few find it, and that many who call him Lord will be forbidden from entering the kingdom of heaven. Present day evangelicalism, by and large, ignores those warnings. The prevailing view of what constitutes saving faith continues to grow broader and shallower. One segment of evangelicalism going to ridiculous extremes to emphasize that salvation is not earned by good works has even begun to propound the doctrine that conversion to Christ involves quote, "No spiritual commitment whatsoever" end quote. Those who adhere to this view of the gospel teach that salvation requires only that a sinner believe the facts about Christ and ask for salvation. "There need be no repentance, no resulting change in lifestyle," and I'm quoting here, "no commitment, not even a willingness to yield to Christ's lordship." Those things, they say, amount to human works, which corrupt grace and have nothing to do with faith. The result is that the community of professing believers is populated with people who have bought into a system that encourages shallow and

ineffectual faith. Many sincerely believe they are saved but are utterly barren of the verifying fruit in their lives.

And that's not all. Shocking forms of open immorality have become commonplace among professing Christians and why not? The promise of eternal life without surrender to divine authority feeds the wretchedness of the unregenerate heart. Enthusiastic converts to this gospel believe their behavior has no relationship to their spiritual status, even if they continue wantonly in the grossest kinds of sins and expressions of human depravity. The distinctions between the church and the world are all but gone. Recent statistics reveal that two billion people worldwide say they are Christians. A well-publicized opinion poll indicated more than half of all Americans say they are born again. Those figures surely represent millions who are tragically deceived. Theirs is a deadly false assurance. Contemporary Christians have been conditioned to believe that because they recited a prayer, signed on a dotted line, asked Jesus into their heart, walked an aisle, or had some other experience they are saved and should never question their salvation. I have attended evangelism- training seminars where counselors were taught to tell converts that any doubt about their salvation is satanic and should be dismissed. It is a widely held misconception that anyone who questions his own salvation is questioning the integrity of God's word.

The Bible teaches clearly that the evidence of God's work in a life is seen in the enviable fruit of transformed behavior, I John 3:10, etc. Real salvation is not merely justification. It cannot be isolated from regeneration, sanctification, and ultimately glorification. It is a process as much as it is an event, a process through which we are being conformed to the image of his Son. There are those who would have us believe that the norm for salvation is to accept Jesus as Savior without yielding to his lordship. They make the incredible claim that any other teaching amounts to a false gospel because it suddenly adds works to the clear and simple conditions set forth in the word of God. They've even tagged the view they oppose lordship salvation.

Lordship salvation defined by one who labels it heresy is and I'm quoting, from one of those critics of lordship salvation, quote, "the view that for salvation a person," this is lordship salvation by his definition, "it is the view that for salvation a person must trust Jesus Christ as his savior from sin and must also commit himself to Christ as Lord of his life submitting to his sovereign authority" end quote. That is the heresy they're against. It's astonishing to me that anyone would characterize that truth as unbiblical or heretical but a growing chorus of voices is echoing the charge. And reams of literature that speaks of people making Jesus Christ Lord of their lives is now available.

And I add that we don't make Christ Lord, he is Lord and those who will not receive him, as Lord are guilty of rejecting him. Faith that rejects his sovereign authority is really unbelief. Conversely surrender to his lordship is no more a human work than faith itself. In fact it is an important element of saving faith, not something added to faith. And it goes on and on from there.

But I just read you a few excerpts in order that you might kind of begin to get a grip on what the issues really are and they are grave issues to put it mildly and they must be dealt with and that is what we're endeavoring to do. And because there's so much query about this I feel the Lord directing my heart in that way and so rather than preach a sermon I'm just going to take my Bible and I want you to take yours and let's go to Matthew's gospel and let me take you on a little trip through Matthew and see if we can't learn from the Lord Jesus Christ what are the essential elements of saving faith.

And we'll begin in the very wonderful and God-blessed 5th chapter of Matthew with the beatitudes. I'm going to read them to you. I'm not going to say much about them. They'll come back into play in your own thinking as we move through Matthew. I can't say everything I'd like to say, but then again I never can. Time is always the pressure, but in fact I don't even know what I'm going to say since it's rather unplanned and I'm trusting God's Spirit as we look at this together.

But in Matthew chapter 5, I believe in the beatitudes Jesus laid down the kind of attitude that characterizes a person who is coming into the kingdom, the attitude that characterizes a person who is coming into new life in Christ. And he says in verse 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." That is people who are beggars in the spiritual sense realizing their absolute bankruptcy.

"Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." Another characteristic of people in his kingdom, not only are they spiritually bankrupt and they know it but they mourn, they are broken over their sinfulness.

"Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." By the way the promises that come behind the beatitudes all speak of life in the kingdom and the beatitude itself speaks of the attitude that characterizes those who are entering in.

And then it says, "Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness." And then blessed are the merciful and blessed are the pure in heart, and blessed are the peacemakers, and blessed are the persecuted and so forth. And what we gather there is the essence of the kind of attitudes that characterize a person who is brought into the kingdom. They're very general in the sense that they don't specifically talk about entrance into the kingdom, they don't specifically talk about saving faith as such, they don't sort of interact with gospel truth relative to the death and resurrection of Christ yet to come, but they nonetheless are characteristics of kingdom citizens, those who are entrants into God's kingdom.

With that in mind let's go to chapter 7. And after the Sermon on the Mount main thrust comes the invitation in verse 13, this is the invitation at the end of the evangelistic sermon, which I believe is the greatest evangelistic sermon ever preached, certainly ever recorded, and it is in verse 13 that the

invitation comes. Our Lord says to those whom he has just really attacked, he has destroyed the Pharisees' system, the system of the religionists of Israel and all who would adhere to that system. He showed them that their religion was bankrupt, their ceremonies were bankrupt, their prayers were bankrupt, their alms were bankrupt, their hearts were bankrupt, and things they did on the outside that didn't touch the heart were absolutely meaningless to God. In fact, they were blasphemous to him, they were of a righteousness that came far short of that which was acceptable.

And so he then offers them the invitation in verse 13 and it comes in this form: enter in at the narrow gate. "For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction and many there be who go in that way. Because narrow is the gate and compressed, or hard is the way, which leads to life and few there are who find it." Now Jesus proposes to his audience that there are two ways, there are two paths, and there are two gates that grant entrance to those two paths. One is a narrow way, a compressed way with a narrow gate. One is a broad way with a broad gate.

Now it is important for you to understand that Jesus is not contrasting the road to heaven with the road marked hell. The religionists never mark their road hell, they always mark it heaven, it just doesn't go there. And the broad road is the road that goes to hell even though it says heaven. That's the issue. Nobody is selling tickets on a road to hell, certainly not religion. And what Jesus is doing is characterizing false religion as a broad road that is it is latitude ness in what it tolerates. You can lollygag from one side to the other at your will, you don't have to give up anything, you don't strip down going on because the gate is as wide as the way is. It is tolerating every conceivable view, every conceivable religious attitude, feeling, doctrine or whatever. And so Jesus is saying you may choose the road of religion. The latitude ness wide gate, anybody gets on with any baggage and can live just about anyway they want and not fall off. But on the other hand there is a narrow gate and you go through that gate bare, stripped, you can't take your luggage, as one teacher said through a turnstile, and onto a compressed way where living is very circumspect and very prescribed and very demanding, and that is the way of salvation. Jesus then is calling men to come through the narrow gate to the narrow way, the hard way, the compressed way rather than the broad way that leads to destruction.

Now I want you to pick up the word few and just think about it. Few there be that find it. Few there be that find it. I believe that there are few, because Jesus said it, who enter in at the true gate so the reality of true salvation. How few I don't know, but few. You say, "Do you mean to tell me that heaven will be minimally populated?" Well my whole theology sort of adds a few folks since I believe that when a child dies before the age of accountability God in sovereign grace redeems that child at the point of death and takes it into his presence, and so if nothing else heaven will be massively populated with a whole lot of little ones who died and it seems to me merciful that in most, that the more pagan the country is the higher the mortality rate. That again is the grace of God.

I'm not talking about the number and the population of heaven because of that, but what I'm saying is what Jesus said, "Few there be that find it." On the other hand, the road of religion is still with many people. Isn't it true there are many more people on the road of religion that ends up in hell than there are on the true path to heaven?

Now would you notice in verse 13 the word many. Many there be who go in that way. We picked that word many up again over in verse 22. Verse 21 says, "Not everyone that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." Why? There's a lot of folks on the broad road who think they're going to heaven and think they know the Lord, but they're not going to enter in. It's not going to be the one that says, "Lord, Lord," it's going to be the one that what? does the will of my father. So let's ask some questions and I'm going to give you some answers.

Who are the few? That's the question tonight. Who are the few? Who are they? The first thing we learn about them in verse 21 is that they are not the people who say Lord, Lord, but they're what? The people who do the will of God. Write that down. The few are the people who do the will of God.

Verse 22, what's the first word? Many. You know what many this is? This is the many that we saw in verse 13. The many on the wrong road end up at the end to say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name and in your name have cast out demons, and in your name done many wondrous works? And then I will confess to them I never knew you." That as I never have had a personal and intimate relationship with you, he doesn't mean he doesn't know who they are. Of course he does. The word know is used here in the sense of intimacy as it is often in Scripture. I have never had an intimate relationship with you. Leave me you workers of iniquity. And again the issue is not what they claim, but he looks at their life and instead of seeing a pattern of doing the will of God, he sees a pattern of doing what? Iniquity and its rumination of chapter 3, isn't it? He that is born of God does not continue to commit sin as a pattern, for the seed of God is in him and he cannot continue in the unbroken pattern of sin.

So the first characteristic of the few then, the few are those who do the will of my father. And wherein is the will of God revealed? On the pages of Holy Scripture! The first expression of the will of God with reference to the gospel was what God the Father said out of heaven when pointing to Jesus Christ he said, "This is my beloved Son," what? "Hear him. Hear Him." And Jesus said, "I came not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me." And he came to express the Father's will for redemption. He came to confirm in reality that God loved men and wanted them in his presence forever.

The will of God begins then in the gospel sense with the coming of Jesus Christ to express that will and then with everything that Jesus taught. That's why in the Great Commission it says we're to teach everyone all things whatsoever I have commanded you, because Jesus certainly expressed the will of the Father. So first of all it's those who do the will of the Father. If you tell me that someone is

converted and I look at their life over the long haul and I say I don't see them doing the will of the Father then I have a right to suspect whether they're the few.

Go to verse 24. "Therefore, whosoever hears these sayings of mine, the things I have said and does them I liken him to a wise man who built his house on a rock, the rain came down, the flood rose, the winds blew, beat on the house, it didn't fall. It was founded on a rock and everyone that hears these words of mine, teachings of mine and does not do them is like that foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain came down, the floods arose, and the winds blew and beat upon that house and it fell and great was the fall of it and here is the second characteristic of the few.

Characteristic number one they do the will of God. Number two they obey the teaching of Jesus and they're really one in the same, aren't they? They're really one in the same. The will of the Father expressed in the teaching of Christ. The few are recognizable because it's in their heart to do the will of God. It's in their heart to do the things that Jesus taught and that becomes characteristic of their life and that is how the reality of their conversion is ascertained.

So let's sum those two up and just say the few are those who obey God. The few are those whose lives are marked by obedience to the will of God and the teaching of Christ. You show me a person who has little or no regard for the teaching of Christ, show me a person who has no desire to do the will of God, and I'll show you a person who doesn't qualify by the very standard Jesus established with his own words. And may I hasten to say to you folks, it isn't that we always do the will of God and it isn't that we always do everything that Jesus taught, it is that that is the burning desire that we have in our heart. It's there and sometimes it gets clouded but when we fail to do the will of God and fail to do what we know what Jesus taught we suffer for that, the guilt of going against the grain of the new creation.

Let's go to chapter 10. We can't cover them all but chapter 10 and let's hear what Jesus said again in verse 32. Again we're asking the question who are the few who enter the kingdom? Who are the few who come in the narrow gate on God's terms? Verse 32, "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven." That's interesting isn't it? What that says is that true believers make public confession. Verse 33, "Whosoever shall deny me before men him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I am come to send peace," and now he launches into what he means by this. You say, "Well that's easy to confess Christ for me," but for some folks it's a very high price to pay. And that's what he approaches in the next section.

He says, "I didn't come to send peace on earth. I came to send a sword rather than peace. I am come to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes will be the people in his own house." What's he's saying here is germane to the audience to which he speaks because they are all, of course, steeped in

traditional Judaism and the religion of their culture and calling them to salvation, to faith in himself, is to call them away from everything and everybody that's dear to them. And so the price is high and the cost is profound. But what he is saying is if you're not willing to publicly confess me no matter what the cost, then I'm not going to confess you before my Father. There is an element in true faith of courage. It not obeys but it has the courage to take a public stand. Jesus said that. And if you love father and mother more than me you're not worthy of me and if you love son or daughter more than me you're not worthy of me. And if you don't take your cross and follow me you're not worthy of me.

What does he mean by that? He means if you're not willing to leave everything that's dear to you and even loose your life, don't get mystical please about taking up your cross. I get very exercised in my spirit when I hear somebody talk about taking up the cross as if it was some mystical experience. It was a very very concrete objective concept to take up a cross to those people had nothing to do with mystically identifying with the cross of Christ because that hadn't even happened. What it had to do with was very simple. People who carried their cross got nailed to it and what Jesus was saying is if you're not willing to leave your family and leave the people that are dear to you, and loose your life for me you're not worthy to be my disciple. That's what he said.

"And if you're concerned about holding your life," verse 39, "rather than losing your life, then you're going to wind up," what? "Losing it." This is strong stuff. But Jesus is saying, as we saw in chapter 7, the few are those who obey. And here he says the few are those who will confess Christ at any cost. You say wait not everybody will do that. Then the people who won't do that aren't experiencing the powerful transforming work of the Spirit of God in their life. Because when the Spirit of God transforms a person there will be a willingness to leave home, to leave parents.

It always is curious to me to study the martyrs and to study missions history and see that throughout history there have been people who have been willing to give their lives in confession of Christ, get this, who were far less mature than all of us, who were far less instructed than all of us. You say to yourself, "Boy I don't know if I have the courage to do that." But I'm telling you at the point when the Spirit of God is saving you and transforming your life the work of the Spirit of God will make that severance at any cost in your behalf. That's the power of God. That's what Jesus said. It's pretty clear.

Let's go a step further to chapter 13 and all we're doing is following the teaching of Christ. And in chapter 13 you know the parable of the soils, verses one to nine he gives the parable and he talks about the fact that a sower went out to sow, very common in that part of the world and he sowed and of course they would throw the seed with their hand and it would land some of it on rocky ground, some of it on a wayside, some of it on weedy soil and some of it on good ground.

There's six soils mentioned here, not four, but six. Three are bad and three are good. Three bad ones bring no fruit three good ones bring fruit, 30-fold, 60-fold, 100-fold. And typically in Palestine the land

is uneven. The Rabbi's used to say when God dumped rocks on the earth he made a mistake and unloaded them all in Palestine. Well if you've been to Israel you know a little about that. But the soil can be variegated and there can be good ground to the point of producing 100-fold, which is really kind of hyperbole, that's a lot to expect 10,000 fold. There's good ground that can produce 60 and good ground that can produce 30. There is some soil that has underlying weeds in it and when the farmer tills it he doesn't get down deep enough to get those roots of weeds and when he begins to work the soil and water the soil and all the weeds wind up growing faster than the plant and they choke its life out. There are some soil where beneath where the plow touches there's rock bed and the plant goes in, the seed decomposes, sends down its little roots and hits rock bed so all the energy coming into the plant shoots up and it booms up and looks like a bumper crop is going to come. The problem is there's no way the roots can get water. The sun comes out scorches it and it dies. The other kind of soil he mentions, the first one is the hard-beaten path where sometimes the wind will blow the seed, it lands there, the little covey of birds that probably flew behind every farmer who ever sowed a field fly along and pick it up, and the other gospel record tells us that what the birds don't pick up is trampled under the feet of people.

Now the picture here is very graphic, very very graphic. There are some soils that bring forth no fruit. The issue in the parable here is fruit. That is the significant issue. The first soil is hard beaten path, the word hits it, and we know it's the word if you go over the interpretation starting in verse 18, "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom," verse 19. So it's the word of the kingdom, the kingdom is basically the message of how to enter God's kingdom by faith. So when anyone hears the message of entering the kingdom by faith that means that the seed is the word of the kingdom, the gospel to us. When they hear it, they don't think about it, they don't understand it, the wicked one snatches it away, that's the hard ground. That's the wayside. And there are people where you throw the gospel seed and it doesn't penetrate. They don't think about it. It makes absolutely no impact. Right? You've thrown some seed on hard ground haven't you? I have.

And then he says the second is the rocky soil. It's not that there's rocks on the top, it's rock bed underneath and the word comes in. Boy they respond to hear the word, immediately rejoice and they're all excited about the word and we've all had that too. Have you asked yourself where those folks are that you baptized six months ago? Where those people that were so joyous and came to receive Christ and you can't find them anymore?

As one pastor said to me one time, he was pointing to a man in the church, he said, "That's one of my converts." I said, "Oh that's great." He said, "No it's not great. He's one of my converts, not the Lord's." And I think we all have a string of converts that we can't explain how it is that they fell out because everything looked so good when they started.

There are people who have an emotional response. Why? Because most people come initially through the hearing of the gospel and to wanting to receive it out of a felt need, out of a felt need. And

if you can promise them that felt need is going to be met in Christ they're going to be happy to grab that thing and in their happiness and hope they think that everything's going to work out. Then when there's a price to pay, verse 21, they endure for a little while. All of a sudden tribulation, persecution, there's a price to pay, they're gone. That wasn't in the bargain. They are not willing to do what Matthew 10 said. They want Jesus to heal their problems, they want Jesus to fix their marriage, they want Jesus to make them feel good, they want Jesus to eliminate their guilt, but they are not about to commit their life and destiny to him. Not if there's a price to pay.

And then the final one is the one on whoever divorces himself from the love of the world, and I John 2 says, "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." And James 4:4 says, "If a man is a friend of the world he is the avowed enemy of God." That doesn't mean God is his enemy. That means that he is God's enemy and God is after him because he never ever got rid of the love of the world, the deceitfulness of riches. And in every case no fruit and the mark of salvation in the parable is fruit because the good ground is the one who hears the word, understands the word and also does what? Bears fruit.

So we would then say who are the few? Those who obey the commands of Christ and the will of the Father, those who confess Christ at any cost and for everybody that cost may be different, but when salvation is really happening God energizes the willingness to pay the cost, whatever it is. Thirdly, those who give evidence of being good soil because they bring forth what? Fruit. Sounds like James 2, right? Faith without works is what? It's dead.

Chapter 13, verse 44, and again this is a ringing theme through the New Testament. Sometimes I feel like I'm preaching on this all the time and then I realize that a lot of the time I am because it's everywhere. But the parable in verse 44 to 46 has been misconstrued, I think, sadly, and often the pearl and the treasure hidden in the field has been interpreted as being the church, which I think is really foreign to the context. It's a very simple parable and it's all about salvation.

If you understand the whole of chapter 13 is to set up the disciples to understand how evangelism will work. This is the kind of soil you'll have to deal with. This is the problem of tares among the soil. Here's the essence of what is required in receiving the gospel. Beware of the fact that there's going to be false with true. All of the elements here are part and parcel of their training in how to anticipate what's going to happen when they carry the gospel. It's the greatest chapter, I think, in the gospel records to train people for evangelism. It'll tell you everything to expect as he trained the disciples to go out they needed this.

Now notice verse 44, the first parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field." And by the way that's what they did with their treasure in those days. Like pirates they buried it in the ground and kept a map as to where it was. That was the bank. They hid it there so it would be safe from robbers since it was virtually impossible to lock anything up at that day. They buried it in a field.

So it says, "it was hidden in a field and a man, just a man found it. He stumbled across it. He wasn't looking for it. He happened to find it. He took it and hid it and you say, "Well that's not right. He shouldn't done that. That's not ethical." Well it is ethical in this case because it's obvious in the parable that what he found didn't belong to the guy who owned the field. In other words, it was probably buried several generations before and it was no more the property of the guy who presently owned the field than it was of this guy, so he took it and hid it. If he'd been a crook he'd of just stolen it, but he took it and concealed it and because he was so joyful about finding this thing he sold everything he possessed and did what? Bought the field. If he was a crook he wouldn't have bothered to do that. He'd just take it and run. He had so much integrity he actually bankrupted himself to buy the whole treasure to get the whole field, which was ethical in order to purchase the treasure, which was in it. That's how much value it had to him.

Go to the second parable, verse 45. "The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant man seeking fine pearls." The difference in the two parables is the first guy wasn't looking and stumbled across the treasure and the second one he was looking and found what he sought. He was seeking pearls. He found one pearl at such great price he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Now let me ask you what is the common denominator to both parables? What is it? In each case the man did what? Sold everything. And I submit to you that the pearl and the treasure are salvation and some people stumble across salvation when they aren't even looking for it and they are found by God and a great example would be the apostle Paul. And some people are searching for it and they find it, but in both cases get this, it belongs to those who exchange all that they are for all that Christ is. It's the exchanged life. It isn't adding Jesus to your repertoire. It isn't like the rock singer who said I've been born again but don't think it'll change my act or my lifestyle. It's not that. It's an exchange of all that I am for all that he is. It's an abandoning of all my righteousness for all his righteousness. It's a setting aside of everything I thought valuable for the pearl of great price. I would willing bankrupt myself of all my human prizes, right?

Hear Paul: "I count all things but dung that I may win Christ." That's the exchanged life. The few are those who obey, those who confess Christ at any cost, those who are good soil and bring forth fruit, those who are willing to sell all, not just add Jesus to their list.

I shared with our people some weeks ago about speaking to a group and a Muslim guy came up and said he wanted to receive Christ and I was overwhelmed because I'd never had the privilege of giving the gospel to a Muslim and I presented the gospel and we prayed together and he prayed a prayer of confession of faith in Jesus Christ. And then he opened his eyes and looked at me and said, "Now isn't it wonderful I have two Gods, Jesus and Mohammed." And I was just shattered. I said, "It's not like that. You don't add Jesus to something else."

Let's go to chapter 18 and in verses 3 and 4 of this great chapter, which I so dearly love, Jesus said, Truly I say to you unless you be turned around and go the other way." This is a very important thing. Unless you are totally turned around and go the other way, and become as little children you'll not enter the kingdom of heaven. Here's a condition of salvation. You have to turn around and go the other way like a little child. What does that mean? You're proud. You have to become what? Humble. Verse 4, whosoever, therefore shall what? Humble himself as this little child, that one is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Who are the few? The humble. Not the proud who think they're doing Jesus a favor, not the people who keep their proud, self-centered, selfish ways who want Jesus as Savior, but don't you think you're going to run my life, that's not humility, that's not humility. The humble are those who are mourning over their sin. The humble are those who are meek before Holy God. The humble are those who know they don't have righteousness and they hunger and thirst for it. That's the humble.

Go to chapter 19. There's so much more to be said, but chapter 19. And here is really the locus crucius, the very important point. This is the most carefully written incident in the life of our Lord relative to conversion; perhaps parallel only by the account of Jesus and the woman at the well and Jesus and Zacchaeus. But for the sake of time tonight this is sufficient to see Jesus in the process of personal evangelism. Verse 16, "Behold one came said to him, 'Good Master what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?'" That's a fair question. He wanted to know how to have eternal life. And some of you will say well his problem was he said, "What good thing shall I do? Well that's a fair question. If somebody came to you and said what shall I do to be saved? You wouldn't get on your soapbox and say, "Don't say, I do. That works." No, that's a fair question. If somebody says, "What do I do to get eternal life?" You tell 'em.

Now if you compare Luke and Mark's account you'll find that the man was a rich young ruler, which probably was the arconeof the synagogue, the leading religious layman in his town. He'd risen riches, youth, popularity, success to being elected as the key layman in his synagogue, a respected religious man. He came running to Jesus, which shows a certain amount of desperation. He got there and fell on his knees, which showed respect to Jesus and then he called him good and he called him teacher or master or Rabbi and he asked him the right question. He came to the right person in the right attitude and asked the right question. How do I possess eternal life? He had religion but he didn't have the hope in his heart of eternal. He didn't sense the quality of knowing God that secured his future.

To the Jew eternal life was a kind of life that gave you hope in the face of the future and took away the fear of death and he didn't have that. Jesus said, "Why are you calling me good? There's none good but one, that's God." And then he says this most incredible thing, the guy says, "How do you receive, how to I obtain eternal life?" and Jesus said to him, "If you want to enter life," do what? "Keep the commandments." I can say without fear of contradiction that if you wrote that down on a quiz in

any Bible college in America you'd flunk. No one would ever consider that the right answer.

Jesus said, "Keep the commandments." Now here comes a guy with a felt need. He's got a big hole in his heart and he's afraid of death. He's got religion, he got money, he's got popularity, he's got prestige, he's got position of leadership, everything is going his way but he's got this ache in his heart because he has no hope for his future. And he doesn't sense the life of God within him and so he asks the question, "What do I do have eternal life?" And any good self-respecting person would say, "Believe. Pray a prayer. Receive the Lord." Jesus says, "Keep the commandments. Keep the commandments." Is that a right answer? It is. You could be saved if you if you would keep the commandments.

But look at his response. He said, "Which ones." Jesus gave him the second half of the Decalogue, it's easier than the first half. Both are impossible but it seems to be relative to the impossibility of the first five, which deal with your relation to God. These deal with your relationship to man and then he throws in one other one about honor your father and your mother and love your neighbor as yourself. Don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't bear false witness, honor your father and mother, that's the second half of the Decalogue, then he throws in love your neighbor as yourself. And intent in there is not just action but what? Attitude, right? Sermon on the Mount again. It's not just what you do on the outside, it's what you've got in your heart. So he says no murder, which includes hatred. No adultery, which includes evil thoughts. No stealing, which includes coveting. No lying, which could include a false spirit. Honor your father and mother he says, which could deal with bitter hatred in the heart and so forth, and loving your neighbor as yourself, would be an overt act of love, but it could also indicate the heart.

So he says, "What about these?" And the young man said to him, "All these things have I've kept. What do I lack?" Now I don't know how that hits you but that's pretty repulsive to me. Jesus wanted him to acknowledge his what? His sin. Would he do it? No he wouldn't do it. That was the whole point. Jesus would not accept this guy on the basis of a felt need without a recognition of sin, because salvation is all about repenting from what? From sin.

So he said, "I can't figure any lack in my life." He was the first guy in line for the vacancy in the Trinity. He was under some kind of incredible illusion that he had lived his whole life and never broken the law of God. So Jesus said, "Let me go a step further." Verse 21, if you want to be perfect and perfect is simply to be right with God. Back in Matthew 5 Jesus said in verse 48, "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect." So if you want to meet God's standard do this: sell everything you have, give to the poor and you'll have treasure in heaven and come and follow me. Now this is not salvation by philanthropy. Is Jesus here saying you get saved if you give your money away? This is like another wrong answer.

Jesus is saying, look, we tried to establish the issue of sin, now that's relative to my being your Savior, now let's establish the issue of authority and that's relative to my lordship. So he gives him a command. It wouldn't have mattered what the command was. The command could have been anything. The command happened to be sell everything you have, give it to the poor, come and follow me and all Jesus wanted to establish was that this man had a heart of submission.

Two things the Lord was after in this personal evangelism encounter: one will you recognize your sin? Two will you submit to me? It doesn't matter what I ask, it's a question of submission. And if the Spirit of God is bringing to pass true conversion in the heart those elements will be there. And the young man was very rich and he went away.

The hottest prospect in the New Testament. He would have signed on any dotted line. He would have walked any aisle. He would have raised both hands on the first verse of Just As I Am. He would have done whatever you asked him. And Jesus put walls up to prevent the guy from being saved on a sham basis so he didn't put another person on the broad road who someday would hear, "Depart from me, I never knew you." That's the issue. That's the issue.

Who are the few? Those who obey, those who confess Christ at any cost, those who are good soil and bear good fruit, those who sell all, those who humble themselves, those who are willing to repent from their sin and submit to Christ and it just keeps going like this. How much further can we go? Look at chapter, well let's go to chapter 22, our time is gone. We'll close here. We could even go on to chapter 24, chapter 25.

Look at chapter 22. "Jesus answered and spoke to them by parables saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who made a marriage for his son.'" Is that hard to figure out? The father made a marriage feast for his son who represents the Lord. "Sent forth servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding." In other words, invite the people who were already the pre-invited guests, that's Israel. The father called Israel to come to the wedding of his son. Did they come? No the sad story of Jesus' life is he came unto his own and his own what? Received him not. "So he sent forth other servants tell 'em who are bidden." Who are bidden refers to the already called Israel who were already anointed as God's people and already awaiting for the Messiah's arrival. Tell them I've prepared my dinner, my ox and my fatlings are killed and all things are ready. Come to the marriage. They made light of it and went their ways, one to his farm and another to his merchandise. Some people were just apathetic and indifferent. And the rest of them took his servants and treated them shamefully and killed them. Boy that's the story isn't it? Some of the Jews were apathetic, the other ones killed the servants of Christ.

And when the king heard of it he was angry, sent forth his armies, destroyed those murderers and burned up their city. What's that? 70 A.D. the destruction of Jerusalem. Then he said to his servants, the wedding is ready but the ones who were already bidden aren't worthy. And here comes the call of

the church, "go into the highways and as many as you find bid them to the marriage." It doesn't matter whether they were part of the covenant people; go get anybody. "So the servants went to the highways and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good." That means morally bad and morally good. There are such things as morally good people. They can't be redeemed by it, but they're morally good and the Scripture recognizes that. And the wedding was furnished with guests.

And I love this part, it's so clear. "And when the king came in to meet the guests he saw there a man there who didn't have a wedding garment on." I call this guy the kingdom crasher. He had no business being there, but he was there without a proper garment. "He said to him, 'Friend how did you come in here not having a wedding garment?' And he was what speechless." He had nothing to say. "The king said to the servant, 'Tie him up. Take him away. Throw him into outer darkness, there'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" Jesus used that frequently to refer to hell. Throw him into hell. You can't crash my kingdom without a wedding garment. Say what does that mean? What is a wedding garment?

Well there are lots of ways to discuss it, but one verse sums it up and says it all: Isaiah 61:10. Do you know that verse? Listen to it. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall be joyful in my God," listen to this, "for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation." He hath covered me with the robe of what? Righteousness. Who are the few? They're the righteous. What does that mean? They're right with God. You say, "Wait a minute. That's strictly forensic, that's judicial, that's positional." Let me tell you something folks. If you have a doctrine of righteousness that's purely a statement on the part of God that is not verified by the fact of a transformed life then that's not biblical righteousness. It is not simply forensic. You're not just righteous because the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to you. You are righteous because since the righteousness of Christ was imputed to you it is manifest through you, anything less than that is not a biblical doctrine of righteousness. God is not saying things about people that is not so. He's not calling unrighteous people righteous. It is manifest righteousness. That's why it's called a garment.

There's so much more we could say. You remember the parable of the ten virgins; five foolish and five wise and you see the difference there between saving faith and non-saving faith, the prepared heart. Let me sum it up by having you look at the passage I mentioned this morning, James 4. In James 4:6 we have a most beautiful statement. In spite of man's enmity with God mentioned in verse 4, in spite of his lustful spirit mentioned in verse 5, which desires only evil things, verse 6 says, "He gives," the Greek text says, "greater grace," greater than what? Grace that is greater than our sin, greater than our depravity, greater than our fallenness. He gives greater grace, but the question comes then who gets it? And the rest of the verse says it, "Wherefore he says," and he quotes here, Proverbs 3:34, "God resists the proud but gives that grace," to whom? The humble. Who are the few? They are the humble.

Then comes the invitation. See if this doesn't sum up what we saw in Matthew. Verse 7, here are the ten statements that James makes that are a composite call for saving faith. What's the first one? "Submit yourselves to God." That's a call to salvation, beloved. Submit yourselves come under his sovereignty. The second one is, "Take your stand against the devil and he'll flee from you." In other words when you receive salvation is it far to say that you exchange the old master for a new one? You took your stand against the devil and you took your place in submission to God. That's what James is calling for.

Verse 8, and these are not necessarily in any chronological order because the act of salvation resists chronology. It just doesn't come out clearly defined. Verse 8, "Draw near to God," and what? "He will draw near to you." "Come boldly before the throne of grace in time of need," doesn't it say in Hebrews? Draw near to God. That is a most magnificent statement. Do you know where that comes from? That phrase draw near to God basically comes out of the Levitical order of the Old Testament. The only people who had a right to draw near to God were whom? Priests. And only after going through proper ceremony could they draw near to God and here he says to all of us the veil of the temple is rent and in a sense, come on! Draw near to God. You know what that's calling for? A worshipping heart, an adoring heart, and it is so beautifully reminiscent of the great great story of salvation that we know of as the prodigal son. And that's really a poor title for that parable. That is really not the parable of the prodigal son, that's a parable of a loving father. And the thing I love about that is that the son came to the end of himself in the midst of his sin and the debauchery of his life and he said I want to draw near to my father and he's a living illustration of what this is saying. He wanted to go back to his father and as he goes back to his father what happens? The Bible says his father seeing him a far off what? Ran. And who is that father? That's God and as the sinner seeks to draw near, God seeks to draw near and embrace that sinner and the sinner doesn't run to a reluctant God and hear him say, "All right buddy, you're going to get yours." But rather he runs out and weeping embraces his neck. Draw near to God, that's a worshipping adoring heart. That's the essence of the sum of all commandments love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. That is what God desires. It isn't just Jesus as some panacea. It's true salvation rising out of a heart that longs for a new Lord. You see that? That longs for a new Master. Rising out of a heart that wants to love and know and adore and worship and draw near in intimacy to the true God. There's depth in that.

And also, verse 8. Cleanse hands sinners. "Who can ascend into the holy hill of God? He that hath what? What does that mean? Your life there must be a desire to clean your life. Do you think the prodigal wanted that? Sure he did. And then purify your hearts you dupescos, you doubled souled, double minded, double hearted people trying to put one foot in the world and one foot in God's kingdom. Trying to love God and love the world, love sin and love righteousness and those are mutually exclusive. He says, "Clean the inside, clean the outside. And so we find here the sinner comes not only wanting a new Lord in exchange for the old one, not only wanting to love and adore

and be intimate with the true God, but wanting to be delivered from his what? From his sin! Outwardly the behavior to change and inwardly even the impulses.

And he doesn't come in a party spirit, verse 9. Be afflicted. Here's the brokenness. Be afflicted. Realize that you're crushed and then mourn. The affliction that you know is true about yourself turns to mourning in your spirit and ultimately to weeping out of your eyes and the sorrow of true repentance works its way from the very bottom to the very top. And let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness. Don't come with the party attitude of the world. Come in brokenness and sorrow and sadness over your sin.

So what we see here, here is the essence of one who comes as a humble person. What does it mean to be humble and therefore be one of the few who receives the grace of God and therefore enters the gate? It means that you come submitting to a new Lord, not just reluctantly but joyfully because you don't want any longer to serve the old master, Satan. You come because you desire with all your heart, you long to know the true and real God and you want to draw near to him. You come desiring to be cleansed from your sin. You not only want the outside clean but the inside, and you're broken and mourning and weeping over the life that you have lived and verse 10 he sums it up.

All of this means humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, in the presence of the Lord. And the result is he will what? That's the lifting up of salvation. He takes the humble and lifts him up. How about this? What humble man do you remember in Luke 18 with his head bowed to the ground, beating on his breast saying, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner," and would not so much as lift his eyes toward heaven and Jesus said, "That man went home justified." Why? Because God lifts up the humble.

Beloved, this is the message of the gospel from cover to cover in the New Testament. It is invariable and it is unwavering and we have scratched the surface at best. But as I have said so many times, please get this right. We cannot ere here. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we thank you tonight that we've been able to look together to your word and sing songs of praise and glory to your name. Father, we are aware of such a heavy burden of responsibility on every one of us and we are so weak and so frail and so foolish. And at best we offer service that is utterly inadequate and yet Lord, somehow you energize our stumbling, you put power in the mumbling words that fall so far short, and we bless you for that. And Lord, we would collectively say to you that the hunger of our hearts is that we might be your servants, that we might rightly represent your truth, that we might not stand in your way as you build your church, but that because our hearts are right and because our doctrine is right you can use us.

To that end we pray with thanksgiving for Christ's sake, amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).