



*May the fourth be with you.*

Lend a Helping Hand  
**Church**  
**WORK DAY**



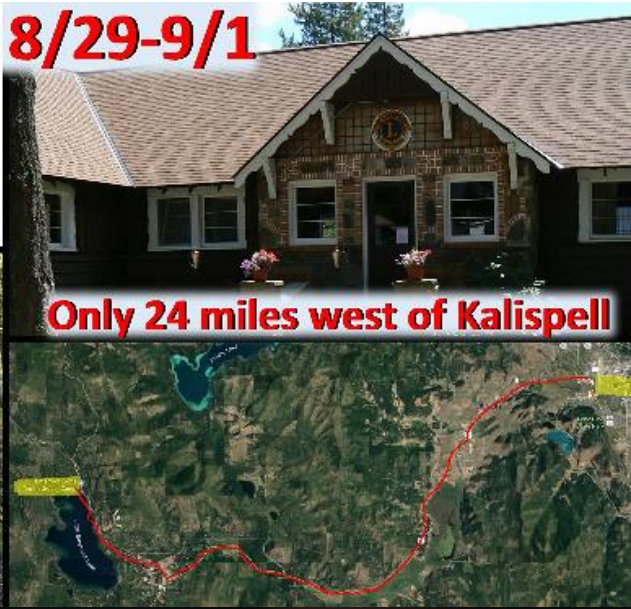
THEME VERSE: BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND.

JUNE 17-21  
 10 AM - NOON



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 10 AM - NOON

GOD'S ROCK-SOLID TRUTH IN A  
 WORLD OF SHIFTING SANDS  
ROMANS 12:2





Last week we left the fledgling first century church in a state of shock and awe with the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira. The backdrop to that event was a Christian church that was flourishing. Success after success, and even the setbacks culminated in successes. Christ was Risen, Ascended, and Returning soon. The Holy Spirit was powerfully working, miracles and deliverances all around, the governing authorities unnerved, and the church was entirely unified in its mission to serve Christ by serving one another and by proclaiming the Gospel Message publicly.

In fact, the church was so united in both its purpose and its fellowship that we today, are dumbfounded. In general, we don't really know what to make of it. People selling their property, laying the proceeds at the feet of the Apostles, no Christian in need... the only thing that we're sure of is that we don't want to follow suit. So, we either ignore it or we rationalize it away as some type of extreme belief that is no longer required by God.

You know what a Christian fanatic is don't you? It's someone who loves Jesus more than you do.



Get this though, people are people. Even then there were those who wanted to be part of this new dynamic Christian movement, but who didn't want to get that carried away. Christianity was fresh and different; it was thrilling because it was also a bit taboo. It was exciting, supernatural, a bit dangerous, and certainly trendy. There were miracles and bold confrontations with the establishment – sticking it to the man. At the time there was the constant reminder about the Messiah's Resurrection, but more sensationally, there was the intense anticipation of His imminent Return in power.

Of course, there was a growing number of those who wanted what being associated with Christianity could give to them, but who did not want to pay the full price of admission... Ananias and Sapphira for example.

Please, if you don't hear anything else that I say today, hear this, because nothing has changed – people are people and we, my friends, are people. People often want what they can get, or think that they can get, out of Christ and out of an association with His church, and out of Christianity in general, but they do not want to pay the true cost of membership. So, a lie is perpetuated. We convince ourselves and then we convince others that we can have our cake and eat it too.

In order to make ourselves feel better and to convince others to join us in our delusion we dumb down the cost or the requirements of admission and pretend that God does not mind.

What is the price required according to Jesus Himself? It's one word it is to "believe." Perhaps that's part of the problem because while that one word seems quite benign, simple, and straightforward in English, in the

original language of the New Testament, it anything but.

As we've repeatedly discussed, the original words are substantially altered to give incredible nuance to the basic meaning. As an example, a very basic noun can have 30 different forms. That's nothing compared to a verb, which can have four different moods, as well as three different voices, as well as three different persons, as well as three different numbers. Now if you take just the mood, let's say the indicative mood, there are seven different voices possible within that. Here we have what is called a participle which combines the aspects of both a verb and a noun. The point is that far more information is carried by a single Greek word than we can possibly get from a similar English word.

How do we normally convey all that information in English? We do it by adding a bunch of helping words. We say a whole lot more words to communicate the exact same material, but in Bible translation, we are afraid to add those extra words because it starts to blur the line between translation and interpretation. Christians often demand a word-for-word translation to keep the translators bias out of it. Be careful what you wish for...

We were talking about the deception of Ananias and Sapphira. How would Acts 5 start if we translated word-for-word? “Man / now / who Ananias name / with Sapphira the wife his / sold property and kept from proceeds / aware and the wife / and brought part this / at the feet the apostles placed.”

You get the point; we cannot possibly understand a single Greek word by only being given a single English word and yet that’s precisely what happens... We say Salvation in Christ comes by “Believing.”

Well, what does this single word entail? It is a word translated as trust, or faith, or belief depending on context. John 11:25, records Jesus declaring, “I am the resurrection and the life; the one who believes in Me will live, even if he dies.” Jesus, using the covenantal Name of Almighty God, the Great I AM, for Himself, declared that He eternally existed as “the resurrection and the life.”

We could easily spend the rest of the morning talking about those concepts, but today is for the word “believe.” The word is πιστεύων (pēs-tü-ōn), as I said a participle.

I've decided to spare you any further grammatical details and simply give you the truth. The word root is relatively new in Greek history, only dating back to the age of the philosophers 2,700 years ago. They developed new words for their new philosophical ideas.

Homer used it first to distinguish the type of belief that a person accepted as incontrovertible fact and so it corresponded with a level of trust that resulted in actual life conformity. What I mean is if I know without question that something is true, I fully trust that belief to the point of arranging my life in accordance with it. If I believe that gravity is real, I won't step out of a flying airplane without a parachute, as an example.

So first and foremost, πιστεύω means a fully believed belief. That reality implies the things that the formation of the word also demands. The word, as it is constructed, demands the same understanding that the philosopher's definition also requires, namely that the belief must be...





1) Individual – no one can believe for you... this must be your personal belief. Only you can believe something so much that it is absolutely true for you. When you are a small child, you can ride the coattails of your parents' faith. This isn't that. This is about what you believe to be and fully accept as 100 percent true.

2) Because of that it is an active reality to you rather than a mere mental agreement to a proposition or an idea, it has tangible certainty to you. It's not thinking the chair will hold your weight, it's plopping yourself down in the chair because you know that it will hold your weight. It's not thinking that you might die if you

jump out of a flying airplane without a chute, it's knowing that there's no future in that activity.

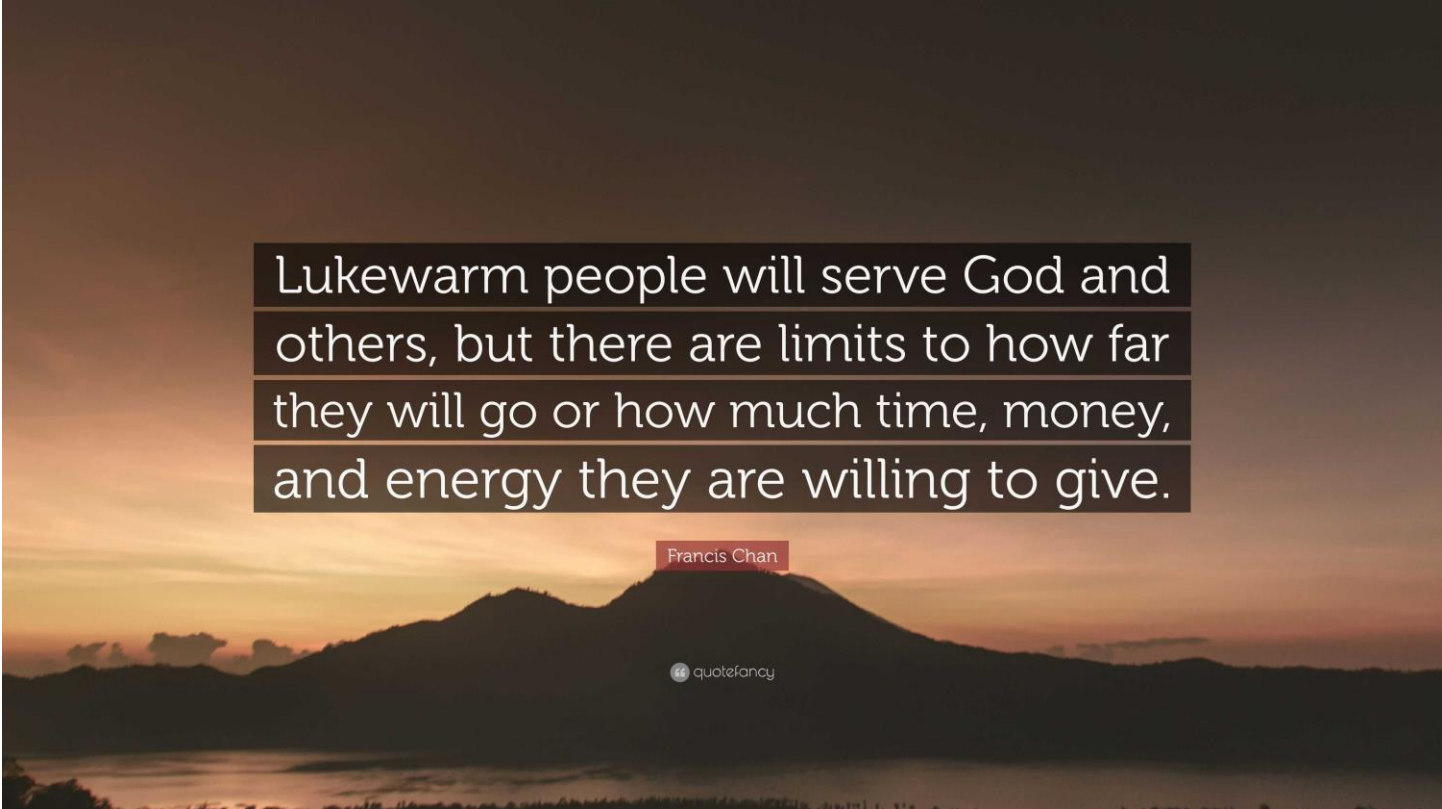
3) Naturally, such belief is continuous. It cannot be an on again, off again, roller coaster, but must be your normal default setting. It's about who you are deep down and so it's where you live life. It's not that you believe and so are a believer, but the reverse of that... You are a believer and so of course you believe... all the time.

4) The fickleness of the human heart requires that such belief be based upon an intellectual choice, rather than an emotional response. Emotional experience and connection play a big part in getting a person to the decision point; but the decision itself is a deliberate conscious intellectual choice to believe. You weigh the evidence and choose.

5) There is an intensity to the believing because accepting something as absolute will change your life and no one should change their life for unimportant things. This matters - it is serious, and it is significant. Pay attention because there might be a test.

6) Finally, it is concrete in the sense that it must be something that is definable. It can't be some loosely held nebulous idea. Technically, it is objective, not subjective. It is a belief in a particular object, not a belief in a theory, a concept, or a set of rules.

As it relates to Biblical faith, which is believing in Jesus the definition would be that this is “The most important<sup>5</sup>, individual<sup>1</sup>, active<sup>2</sup> and continuing<sup>3</sup> intellectual<sup>4</sup> choice that a person can possibly make, decided by what he or she is utterly convinced of, directed toward the person of<sup>6</sup> Jesus. Now in easier terms... According to God's Holy Word made flesh and His Holy Word in written form, to be a Saved Christian simply requires that you believe, πιστεύων, in Jesus, which means that you accept Him, as He is portrayed in the Bible, as being incontrovertibly, irrefutably, and undeniably real and true and so you order your life in accordance with that conviction.



Lukewarm people will serve God and others, but there are limits to how far they will go or how much time, money, and energy they are willing to give.

Francis Chan

quotefancy

That's the crux of what we're talking about. In the early days of the church there were many people who believed in Jesus so much that they were all in, no questions asked, whatever it took they could be counted on. But there were others who were creeping in who wanted to be part of the exciting new movement, but who didn't believe in Jesus enough to throw themselves at it completely. They wanted to leave themselves with a safety offramp in case it didn't work out for them.

Ananias and Sapphira were two such people and I dare say that in the last 20 centuries they have had plenty of company. Two examples were given.

Barnabas, who went on to be an Apostle establishing churches and a lukewarm couple who never got to enjoy the money that they kept back. Which example best describes you?

I want to make it clear that I am very pleased with the degree of commitment you have shown to the Lord through your service in this local church family. This isn't about specific things, what to do, what to avoid, or just doing more. You see, if I were able to make you feel guilty enough that you gave more, or did more, that's nothing but legalism. What this is about is the attitude that if Jesus asks you to give more, or do more, or give everything, and do everything, that you will without hesitation.

It's not about selling everything that you own and giving it to the poor and devoting yourself to full-time ministry, it's about your willingness to do that for Christ.

Biblical Salvific Belief requires that nothing would cause you to disobey Him because if you ever hold anything back from Him it is the proof that you believe in something else more than you believe in Him. Please let that sink in... If you ever hold anything back



from Jesus it is the proof that you believe in something else more than you believe in Him.

Fully believe and then check how fully you believe by examining what you would still withhold from Him.

I want to make one other thing clear, and I beg you not to use this as an excuse to try less. None of us lived, walked, talked, and ate with the physical Jesus – either pre, or post, Resurrection. None of us were called to be the nucleus of the original Christian church. All of us believe less than we should.

Do not take your lack of belief and your resultant lack of faithfulness as a failure or a defeat, instead get up, brush yourself off, pray, “Lord I do believe, help my unbelief,” and move forward allowing your faith to grow by allowing Jesus to stretch you.

What does that mean? It means your degree of belief only grows when you allow your belief to be tested. Many Christians have their belief tested and they fail because they are trying to believe by their own power. When the flesh is tested the flesh fails.

That's what the final stanza of the Lord's Prayer is all about... Pray that as the Father leads you through life that you will rely on the Holy Spirit, that in essence it will be God tested in you as you go through the trials and tribulations of life. That's how you are delivered from evil.

Many Christians fall away from the Lord as they fall away from the church. You might think that the two are not the same, but they are because the Lord has commanded us to love one another in the context of His church. When people are dismissive of the church, they are dismissive of the Body of Christ, dismissive of the wish, will and desire of Jesus their so-called Lord.

Obviously, being an involved member of a church family doesn't necessarily make you a Christ following Christian, but not being an involved member of a church family does make you disobedient to the Lord and no one can continue to be willfully disobedient to Jesus and remain in right relationship with Him. I'm not saying such a person would lose their Salvation assuming that they were Saved in the first place and I'm not saying that disobedience isn't correctable and forgivable, I'm simply saying that it is open defiance

against God and that state blocks right relationship with Him.

Then someone will give me all the reasons that they cannot be bothered to integrate into the church. I won't even give you examples because I wouldn't know where to begin and once started, we'd be here all day. Bottom line, every reason is merely a rationalization of selfish interest over God's interest.

All of the excuses could be boiled down to the church isn't worth my time, my money, my effort, my discomfort, my, my, my... Wherever you are mentally, physically, spiritually, there is a way for you to be an integral part of a church family. Just like your own family, it might not be what you want, but that's actually the point. Any fool can stand alone at a magnificent vista and praise God, try doing it when you're surrounded by people who cause you discomfort and distress.

My dear friends, life isn't about you having the best time possible, life is about living your life for the Lord. When you do that, you will be tested constantly by the people God puts in your life and on your path. Rely on

the Holy Spirit within and humbly, gratefully, love them. That's what defines a person who is all-in for Jesus.

Please do not be content to follow in the footsteps of Ananias and Sapphira. God killed them on the spot to show us how He feels about lukewarm people. His attitude is unchanged; He's simply waiting for Judgment to deal with others of their kind. Please believe enough to not hold back anything from the Lord. Please plead with Jesus to "help your unbelief."

Acts 5:12–16, 12At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all together in Solomon's portico. 13But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. 14And increasingly believers in the Lord, large numbers of men and women, were being added to their number, 15to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any of them. 16The people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together as well, bringing people who were sick or tormented with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.

The main point here is that the church continued to grow, but it grew with people far more committed to Jesus than our deceased couple. Verse 13 means that because of Ananias and Sapphira no one was willing to take the Apostles or Christianity lightly. The people respected them and the church and especially the Lord, with the effect that those willing to join were thoughtfully serious about the matter. The church grew with hot, not lukewarm Christians.



This is something that we've lost in our effort to just get people Saved - to just get them to come down to the altar and say the right words one time in their life. It's nonsense. I have always said that Christianity should



come with a disclaimer. People should know beforehand what it is to be a Christian.

As we've seen today, Christianity is an all or nothing proposition where you surrender your life, your personal hopes, and dreams, to become the slave of God devoted entirely to His use of you for His eternal purposes. How could someone commit to that? It's called trust. Trust in Him no matter how things seem, no matter how they feel, no matter how they turn out because you believe with every fiber of your being that He is God, that He is in control, and that He knows what He's doing.

There were all kinds of supernatural miracles taking place through the hands of the Apostles. Why? They were signs or proof that the testimony, the teaching, and the preaching of the Apostles about Jesus was true, that people could reasonably abandon much of their Jewish learning and believe in Jesus.

It was to get the church off the ground and once it was established, we will see far fewer miracles except where Apostles were expanding the church into new territories. The Holy Spirit does what He chooses through His human agents in order to advance Christ.

What was done 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem is not what must be done in Kalispell now. That does not mean that the Holy Spirit isn't working just as hard, but it does mean that He uses different gifts to get the job of advancing Christ accomplished.



Acts 5:17–33, 17But the high priest stood up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy. 18They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public prison. 19But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and leading them out, he said, 20“Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple area the whole message of this Life.” 21Upon hearing this, they entered into the temple area about

daybreak and began to teach. Now when the high priest and his associates came, they called the Council together, that is, all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent orders to the prison for them to be brought. 22But the officers who came did not find them in the prison; and they returned and reported, 23saying, "We found the prison locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside." 24Now when the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this. 25But someone came and reported to them, "The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple area and teaching the people!" 26Then the captain went along with the officers and proceeded to bring them back without violence (for they were afraid of the people, that they might be stoned). 27When they had brought them, they had them stand before the Council. The high priest interrogated them, 28saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this Man's blood upon us." 29But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. 30The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you put to death by hanging Him on a cross. 31He is the one

whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.” 33But when they heard this, they became infuriated and nearly decided to execute them.

This part of the narrative is fairly straightforward, and the overall gist is that the conflict between the Apostles and the Jewish Council is escalating. Why? Because God is actively directing the Apostles to proclaim Jesus in direct contravention of the order from the Council. The Council, for their part, are too afraid of losing their power, position, prestige, and wealth, to even consider the Apostle’s message. They are “Jealous” and will do anything to eliminate the competition.



Remember back in Exodus when God led the people out of Egyptian bondage? After the tenth plague the Egyptians were thrilled to see the Jews leave and gladly helped them on their way. “Here’s your hat, what’s your hurry.” The people travelled a short distance and camped between a mountain and a city with their backs to the sea. That’s an indefensible and inescapable position.

Sure enough, Pharoah exchanged his shock and despair for anger and revenge. As he and his army were bearing down on the Jewish people their situation was completely hopeless.



Who put them in that untenable position? It wasn't poor leadership from Moses, he was following a physical manifestation of Almighty God. A pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night went before them leading the way. This was God's doing and it was to accomplish His divine and perfect purpose.

The same applies in the Book of Acts. The Angel of the Lord who is the very Word of God physically manifested supernaturally released the Apostles from prison without the knowledge of the guards and told them quickly, leave the city, run far away, the authorities will destroy you and the church if you don't go.

No, God, through the angel, specifically said, get back to work publicly proclaiming the name of Jesus, which is precisely what they did. They entered the Temple at about daybreak when the gates were opened, and they explained the Gospel which is the whole message of the life in Christ as both His servant and as His friend.



Imagine the surprise of all those expecting a particular outcome that morning. Once they figured out where their escaped prisoners were, the captain and his guys were confronted with a new problem. A large crowd of people were enthusiastically enjoying the teaching of the Apostles.

Go in there, guns blazing, and there could be a riot. We can imagine anything from the captain quietly threatening them, to him promising them gentle treatment, in order to get them to leave the relative safety of the public arena, but I'm certain that the reason they went with the captain without incident was because God told them to go with him.



Why? Because they would have another opportunity to preach the Gospel Message to the religious leaders of Judaism. It was another opportunity for the leaders to repent and lead the nation back to God through His appointed Messiah Jesus Whom they had unwittingly murdered.

The high priest demanded to know why they disobeyed their explicit order not to proclaim Jesus and in formulating the question he revealed two inescapable facts. First, Jerusalem was filled with their teaching. No one in the city or its environs was unaware of the Gospel at this point.

Second, the Truth cannot be told apart from the Truth and Truth about Jesus as the Messiah was that, as required by Scripture, He was betrayed and executed by His Own. The blood of Jesus was upon them because they had specifically asked God to put Jesus' blood on their hands. Matthew 27:25, And all the people shouted, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!"

His question gave Peter the opening he needed and without hesitation or fear he answered the High Priest with the only legal defense possible. God must be obeyed above all else. He then laid out the Gospel for the Council.



Notice that Peter didn't mince words. He confirmed that the Council had put Jesus to death by hanging Him on a tree. It is a reference to the Old Testament that would have cut them deeply. Even so though, in verse 31, Peter declares that there is still repentance and full forgiveness in Christ for them.

The Gospel Message must start with the fact that we desperately need forgiveness. Nothing could be worse than intentionally conspiring to brutally execute the Anointed Word of God. Yet, because Jesus allowed their plan to go forward and He did indeed die with the sin of the world upon Him, there was now in Him complete forgiveness and restoration for those very men. All they had to do was "Believe."

Peter went on to say that it was the Apostles who were filled with the Holy Spirit and were obeying God, not the High Priest of Israel and his fellow priests, princes, scribes, and teachers of the Law, as they would have supposed. So again, repent and be Saved!

We frequently see people faced with a clear choice. Humble yourself enough to say that you have been wrong, repent of that wrong and embrace the right –



embrace Jesus. Or continue to fight for the life you want to live.

They chose the latter and were so incensed that they nearly murdered the Apostles on the spot. What is God going to do now? It's exciting to find out where we go from here and we can apply that same sense of awe and wonder about what God has for us here and now. What is God going to do with this local church? What's He got in store for you personally and how does that fit in the future of the church?