Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

January 12, 2020

"A Full Jesus Focus"

8:00 ~ Service - Communion is for all Christians
9:30 ~ Fellowship & Adult Sunday school
10:30 ~ Service with the King's Kid's - Communion is for all Christians

NEWS

Sheeran Family Video Link: https://youtu.be/OMqfywXNxWU
Men's Wild Game Night – January 31 at 6:30
*New Schedule beginning **February 2**: 8:30 SS, Services at 9:15 and 10:45*

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Visit the website ~ **www.myaletheia.com** ~ Hear a sermon at aletheiachristianfellowship.podomatic.com
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Not only can we never do anything to _____ God's favor, but to try, is to _____ His favor… to detract from the value and scope of it.

Dinner example:

When we focus on Jesus as our complete salvation, we can become less concerned about our _____. When our performance is not salvific – it can matter _____.

Two ways we cheapen grace…

When a Christian says, "I'm just a saved sinner." That _____ show a level of _____ with sinful behavior.

Yet, the Bible is clear, sin is such a huge problem it _____ the Word of God made flesh, His life. Jesus saved us _____ sin, not _____ sin.

It seems like we need to strike a middle position, but when we do we diminish both extremes… What is necessary…

MATTHEW 15:19&20a ~ [19NASB]"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. [20a]"These are the things which defile the man."

A complete view of Christ is where we both focus on Him as Savior and simultaneously as…

John 20:28, Isaiah 9:6, etc.

Revelation 1:12-18…

Again, ἐγώ εἰμί, "I AM." As in the name of God, pure _____.
And the πρῶτος, first, in the sense of _____.
And the ἔσχατος, last, in the sense of _____. And the ζάω, the verb form of ζωή, in the sense of _____. As Jesus said, "I AM the Life" (John 11:25, 14:6).

Revelation 3:14…

Revelation 21:7&8…

He didn't die to allow us _____ sin, He died to save us _____ sin – not just _____, but in the here and now.

How can I live righteously? Is a question that usually starts us thinking in the wrong direction. The direction of _____.

The first question is what is sin?

At its core, it is a _____-centered worldview that inevitably results in a _____-driven failure to trust God and an arrogant effort to take _____.

Depending on which facet you're looking at you can call it…

Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom of Heaven here and now. We also learned that the Kingdom of Heaven is not a _____, but a _____.

The Kingdom of Heaven exists where a person completely, unreservedly wholeheartedly _____ to God's reign. Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26, Psalm 68:19, etc., Psalm 3:8, etc.

The most obvious way to demonstrate a willingness to trust is to actually _____ in the way trust is enabled?

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Once we truly do believe, we are _____ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That is an unchallengeable _____ that accomplishes an irreversible _____.

God isn't interested in saving _____ and letting them remain _____.

With a new heart and spirit within us we have a much different view than the _____.

We take sin seriously, because we care about our _____ and family that live there with us.

The first step is recognizing why we would care –
The next step is recognizing that caring is a change of perspective –

By "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). Actively yield to the work of the _____ placing your feet on Holy ground each moment of each day. Pray for your ration of Jesus that you need to get through today as an upstanding member of God's family because that's what you *WANT* to be.

Check all that apply – detach and place in the offering or the prayer box

_____ I want to talk with the pastor about _____

_____ I want prayer for _____

_____ I want to volunteer to _____

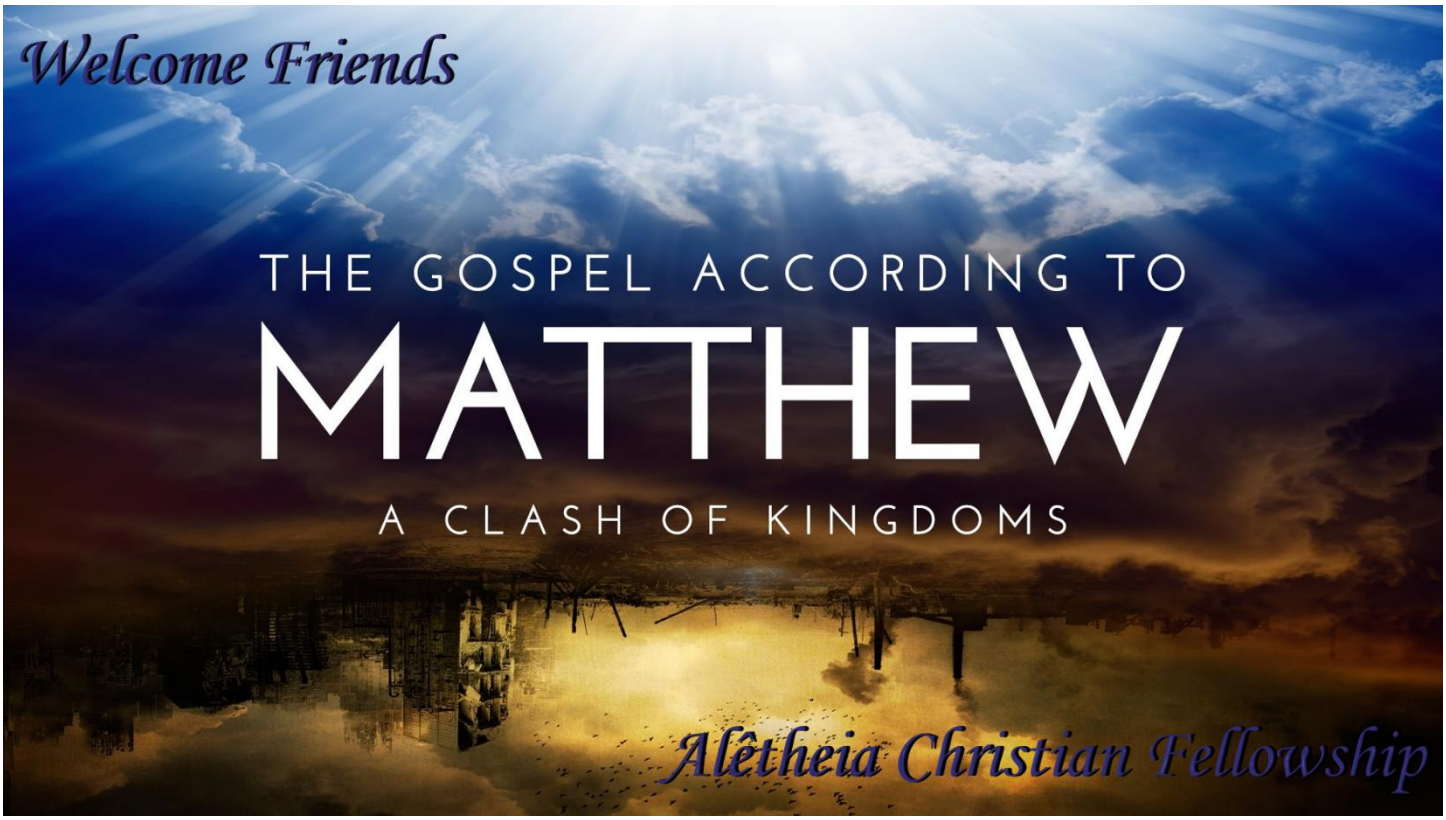
_____ I want more information about _____

_____ Other _____

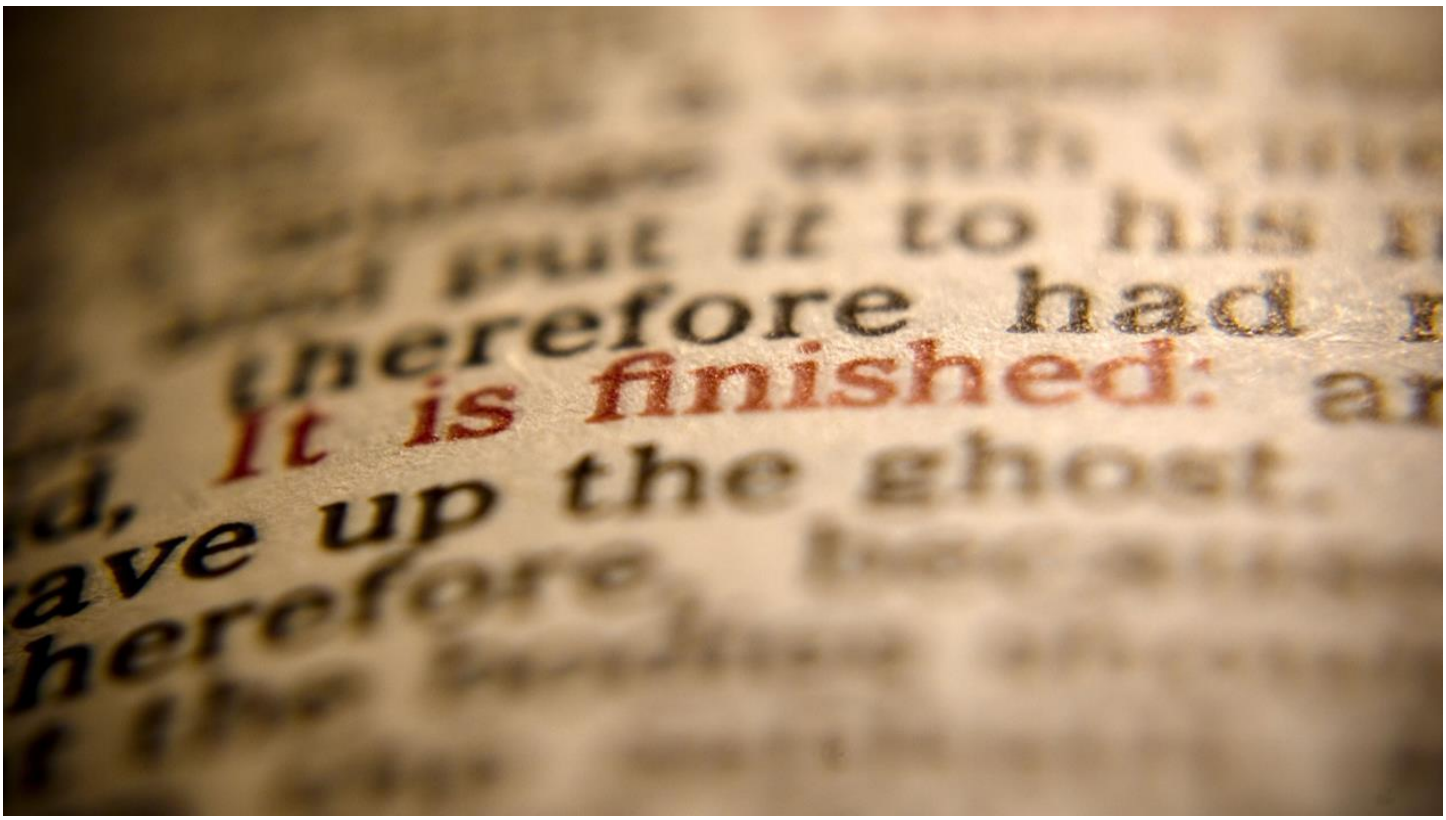
Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Alêtheia ~ Matthew 15c ~ 011220



Starting February 2: 8:30 SS, 9:15 & 10:45 Service.



Over the last two weeks, we used the first 20 verses of Matthew chapter 15 as a polemic against religious legalism, and in doing so, we focused on, focusing on, Jesus as our Savior… Entirely, 100% Jesus – 0% us, or anything else, entirely Jesus.

We saw that, not only can we never do anything to gain God's favor, but to try, is to diminish His favor already freely given… it is to detract from the value and scope of it. To add to what Jesus has completed, is to minimize His sacrifice… It is to marginalize the Father's mercy… It is to repudiate the Spirit's witness. It is to say, "God, You give a portion, and I'll do the rest myself." "You get me started, and I'll bring it home." I

hope you can see the folly and the arrogance of that thinking, but beyond that the cheapening of the gift.

You meet someone for dinner, the check comes, and they insist on treating you – they want to pay. You then plop down some money on the table and announce, “Well, okay, I’ll get the tip.” Your small contribution actually diminishes the other person’s kind gesture.

Let them do the whole, and you are grateful for their kindness – pay a little and you don’t think nearly as much of them and their generosity. “Wow, Fred bought you lunch?” Someone might say, “Well, I mean, sure, but I paid the tip.”

People say the cheapening of grace is when we don’t think it’s something we earn, but it’s cheapened even more when we do. Okay, I think we get that point. Now, when we focus on, focusing on, Jesus in this way – as our complete salvation – we can become less concerned about our behavior. When our performance is not salvific – it matters less. For the folks who think it’s possible to lose your salvation, this very thing is often used to bolster their position. Their argument is if you think your eternal destination is uncertain, you’ll

take sin a lot more seriously and work much harder to behave, to perform, in order to keep God's favor.

It's an incredibly flawed argument Theologically, but we do see it in practice. The reason it's a ridiculous argument and the reason we see it happen in real life is actually the same reason. It is a failure to fully appreciate Who Jesus is… It's embracing a partial Jesus only… I'll explain.

As the Apostle Paul discovered, embracing the Truth that Jesus paid it all – past, present and future – can lead us to have a more cavalier attitude about sin. In

other words, we can be less concerned about our lifestyle, our personal slips, missteps and failures.

When we rightly understand that it is Christ Who saves us and that it truly is not about us or our performance, it can make us less vigilant about the way we live. We can take our sin less seriously.

When a Christian says, “I’m just a saved sinner.” That sentiment can show a level of comfort with sinful behavior. The meaning can be, “I’m never going to be perfect in this life,” so, “Why try.” If not “Why try,” it can at least be, “Why worry.”

Yet, the Bible is clear, sin is such a huge problem it cost the Word of God made flesh, His life. Jesus saved us from sin, not to sin.

It seems like we need to strike a middle position, but like so many things in Christianity, it only seems that way. This isn’t a tension between two extremes – when we make it that we diminish both extremes… What is necessary, is keeping the extremes, extreme by grasping a fuller picture of Christ.

You might wonder, why we're talking about it today? I don't know if anyone noticed, but there was a verse and a half in the first half of Matthew chapter 15, that I did not cover…

MATTHEW 15:19&20a ~ 19NASB"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. 20a"These are the things which defile the man."

Twice now, I've alluded to a more complete view of Christ. What I mean is that when we focus of Jesus as our Savior, we can lose sight of simultaneously

focusing on Jesus as our King, our Master, our Lord… our God (John 20:28).

We need to remember Who Jesus is… Fully. Not just a loving Savior, which He truly is, but also as the “Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” of Isaiah 9:6, as well. As I already mentioned, it is wrong to navigate a middle ground between the two things because it diminishes both. What we must do is hold both, seemingly different things, equally true.

The Apostle John, who was so comfortable with Jesus, that he would casually lean against Him without a second thought, reported this in Revelation 1:12-16,

12NIVI turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man (That is Jesus), dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

The risen Christ said in the next two verses of that Revelation passage, “I AM the First and the Last and the Living One” (Revelation 1:17&18). Again, ἐγώ εἰμί, “I AM.” As in the name of God, pure existence. And the πρῶτος, first, in the sense of, before all else – before anything became, “I AM.” And the ἔσχατος, last as in nothing exists beyond or past Him – so not as an ending, but as an eternity. And the ζάω, the verb form of ζωή, which in this case is the participle, so it is the life force. It means “I AM.” the One Who is, not living, but alive. This is another way of pointing to pure existence. It speaks of the essence of being alive and

so the immortality of the Life giving and sustaining force. As Jesus said elsewhere “I AM the Life” (John 11:25, 14:6).

In Revelation 3:14, Jesus called Himself the “Amen, the faithful and true,” “The ruler of God’s creation.”

At the end of the Bible, God once again made clear what He had revealed from the very beginning… Sinners will not be in Heaven – ever… Revelation 21:7&8, God speaking, 7“He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. 8“But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

In focusing on Jesus to save us, we need to remember Who He is. The perfectly Holy Word of Almighty God Who became flesh and allowed that flesh to be destroyed so we could live righteously forever.

He didn’t die to allow us to sin, He died to save us from sin – not just eternally, but in the here and now.

Yet, how do we do that in the here and now?

How can I live righteously? Is a question that usually starts us thinking in the wrong direction. My friends, see how easy it is to fall into legalism? How easy it is to take responsibility for your own salvation as you take responsibility for your conduct? It will never work and the effort itself is an affront to the Salvation God freely provided in Jesus. So then, how do we proceed?

The first question is what is sin? Sin is rebellion against God. Always has been, and always will be. It is always the combination of self-centeredness, fear and arrogance, that causes us to distrust and then rebel

against God's program. God has a way of doing things and humans say, no thanks, I'll do it my way – that is rebellion.

At its core, it is a self-centered worldview that inevitably results in a fear-driven failure to trust God and an arrogant effort to take control.

God says blank, but I see it differently… and so, I choose to do it my way. The hubris, the monumental ego. As the Grinch said, "The impudence! The audacity! The unmitigated gall!" It is simply insane. I know what God says, but… I have a better idea.

Now, you may say, not everyone believes that the Bible is God's Word, delivering His instruction – laying out His way. People aren't rebelling, they just don't believe.

Yes, they do. At some fundamental level, people know and therefore are without excuse, as the Bible declares in Romans 1:20. We pretend we don't believe God really said, in order to ignore what we don't want to hear.

It is precisely the tack Satan took with Eve in the Garden of Eden. "Did God really say?" "Are you sure this is what God really wants? Doesn't it make sense that God loves you and wants you to be happy? Isn't that the greatest thing? Personal instant gratification and happiness?" Isn't that the highest good? Psychologists tell us, you can't take care of others, until you take care of yourself.

The avowed, public, antagonistic atheist Richard Dawkins was debating a Theologian and got cornered. He finally blurted out what is true – whether he got it or not. He said, “I just can’t live in a world where there’s a God looking over my shoulder judging me.” It isn’t that he doesn’t believe – he doesn’t want to believe.

Again, don’t miss the linkage. All humans are hardwired to naturally be self-centered. From that position we fear – fundamentally we fear not getting what we think we want, sometimes we humans get low enough, that we fear not getting what we think we need.

Fear leads us to a lack of trust in God and His way. I don’t think God is going to meet my want, or need – His way is counter to my want, or need… So, I take matters into my own hands, because I arrogantly think I know better than He knows.

Depending on which facet you’re looking at you can call it pride, selfishness, rebellion, sin, disobedience, irreverence, unrighteousness – it is all unbelief and all unbelievers will have their part “In the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Fine, but what do we do? We have seen from our Matthew study that Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom of Heaven here and now. We also learned that the Kingdom of Heaven is not a realm, but a reign.

The Kingdom of Heaven exists where a person completely, unreservedly wholeheartedly submits to God's reign. how? Well we've been highlighting that very thing… A change of heart is what is needed. We have inherited a heart of stone, but God promised the ancients that He would give us a heart of flesh – a new heart and a new spirit within us (Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26). He would save people Himself (Psalm 68:19, etc.).

That's why Biblically, "Salvation belongs to the Lord" (Psalm 3:8, etc.). Only God can save us into His eternal presence. Only He can say how that will happen, what is required, what the parameters will be. We don't get to tell God how to save us!

God has created a way for people like you and me who are full of self, full of fear, full of pride and full of rebellion to be saved from that state. The most obvious thing in human history is the painfully obvious requirement to be saved. Please see it. God isn't going to save self-serving, fearful, arrogant, rebels into His eternal presence… so that they can continue to be self-serving, fearful, arrogant, rebels in His presence. He's going to save those people who will allow His Goodness to drive self-centeredness from them. People who allow His Love to drive fear from them. People who allow His Truth to drive arrogance from them. People who allow His Faith to drive rebellion from them.

Can you see that the most obvious way to demonstrate a willingness to trust is to actually trust in the way trust is enabled? In other words, belief, the opposite of unbelief is having enough faith to trust God – that has

to start with trusting the salvation He offers as He offers it.

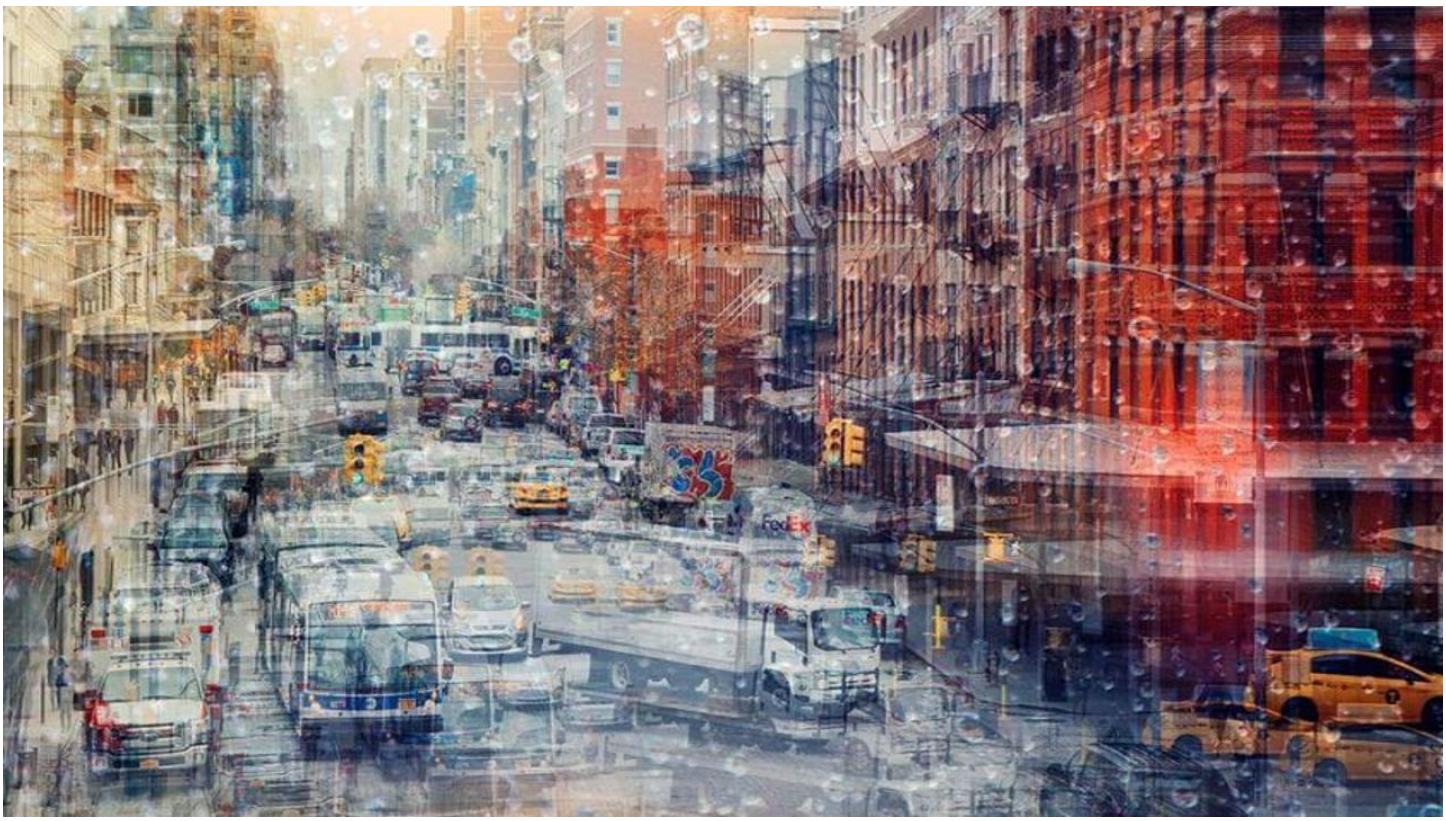
Trust in the salvation the Lord has provided in the way He has provided it. Can you see, that to want salvation to be on our terms is the very tendency that prevents us from humbly accepting the salvation God has actually provided?

What God asks, is what we saw recently in John 6:29, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.” That’s the work we must do – believe. Demonstrate trust in God by obeying His way of salvation – fully embrace Jesus as Savior. Don’t miss, or minimize that part. Hold firm there, fully embrace that extreme, but now add this…

Once we truly do believe, we are reborn and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That is an unchallengeable fact that accomplishes an irreversible change. Forensically–legally – technically, we are fully saved into the Kingdom of Heaven at that point, because we are in Christ. His perfect Trust proven by His perfect obedience is ours, as we are in Him. We are saved, never doubt that, because when you do, you’re not doubting yourself, you’re doubting Jesus.

Further, we are forensically – legally – technically people who are no longer driven by self and so no longer full of fear. We never again presume to know better than God, we do not obstruct His Will in any way and so we exist within His reign and therefore within the realm where His reign is unopposed… We exist as citizens of the full Kingdom of Heaven…

That is why the Bible never once calls Christians sinners. We currently dwell as saints in the Kingdom of Heaven… We just haven't caught up to that reality in our timeline.



The problem we have is physically, temporally, spatially, we simultaneously dwell in a fallen and depraved world. We are on a timeline short of the fullness of time.

When we allow ourselves to be distracted by the physical and fall back to our human selfishness, fear, hubris and rebellion, we by definition, taint the Kingdom within which we live. To some we exit the Kingdom when that happens, but that's not true…

It's more like filling up a garbage bag with all sorts of refuse. Banana peels, apple cores, moldy bread, leftover mashed potatoes, used tissue, old gravy and

grits – I don't know… I'm trying to paint a disgusting picture without saying offensive things in church – you fill in the rest. The bag is overloaded and heavy. You pick it up and the bottom bursts and it goes all over your home. Are you happy? Imagine doing it intentionally. First of all, why would you do that? I mean it does happen, people do it, metaphorically, all the time, but really – why? Why dump that in your bed? In your living room, on the T.V.; the couch; the coffee table? Why dump it in your kitchen, on the counters and the cooktop and the table?

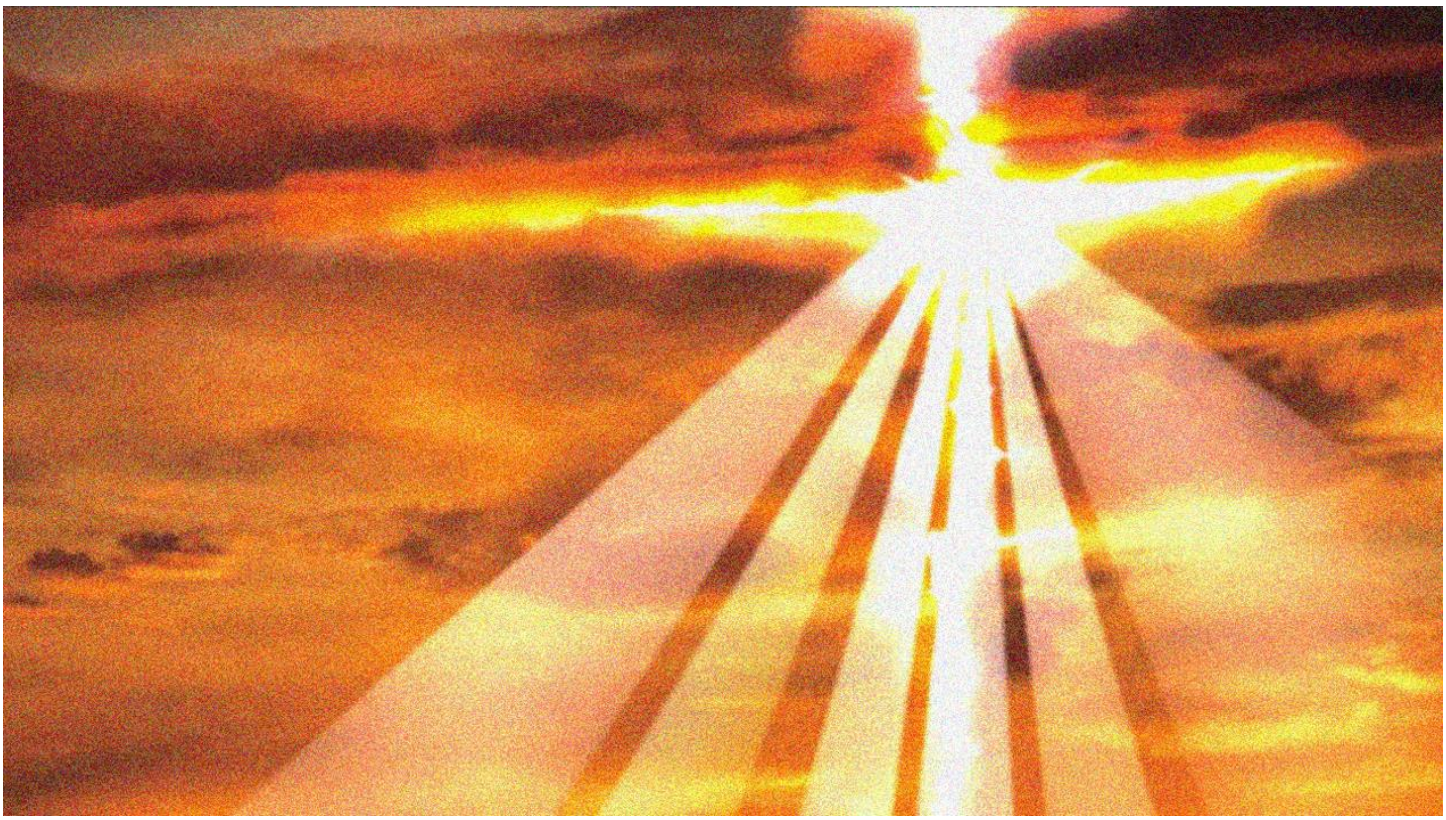
If you're a pig, not only wouldn't you be upset, you'd be

happy. That's why God isn't interested in saving pigs and letting them remain pigs.

With a new heart and spirit within us we have a much different view than the pig. Now, when we think about what sin is and how offensive it is to our Heavenly Father, to the Lord, to the Holy Spirit, to our home and the rest of our family living there… We would come to see it as something that is disgusting, unhealthy, undesirable and to be avoided at all costs. I don't want to pour refuse all over the home I share with Jesus and the rest of our family.

I don't feel that way because I need to be tidy to gain admittance to the home – it's already my home. It's not because I'm afraid, that I'll be evicted from my home – God's given me a place in that home forever.

Unconditional love freaks people out because we humans, being humans automatically think of people taking advantage of it. I'm sure humans being humans would, but when a Spirit-filled person is unconditionally loved, the only thing it produces in them is an even greater desire not to take advantage.



We take sin seriously, because we care about our home and family that live there with us, we care about the Holy Spirit and our Lord and the Father. We care because we dwell in the Kingdom and the Kingdom dwells within us.

To live righteously means to be the person you've been reborn to be – be the one who has already eternally been made right with God through Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit… Be that person.

The first step is recognizing why we would care – we are new creations in Christ. The next step is then recognizing that caring is a huge change of perspective

– we would embrace the change. Trading Places has a poor guy given a mansion and tremendous wealth. Initially, he abused the home, until he realized that it was his home.

Herodotus reported the defeat of the Lydians by the Persians. The Persian Cyrus pointed out to the Lydian Croesus, “Look, my men are sacking your city and plundering your riches.” “Not so,” Croesus replied, “They are neither sacking my city, nor plundering my riches, for they are no longer mine; they are ravaging your city.” When we realize it’s our home, we are ready to be Christians. How, exactly? The same way we started… By “Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2). Focus on Jesus doesn’t just mean to trust Him as your Savior – entirely, it means to also trust Him as your Completer – entirely. That’s what Perfecter means – the One Who finishes what He started – it is Jesus and Jesus alone Who can and will complete you.

That is precisely why, when He taught us to pray, that we would beseech the Father for our Daily Manna from Heaven. “Give us today and each day our daily bread,” has nothing to do with bread that molds. “Man does not live ζάω, on bread alone, but on every Word that

proceeds from the mouth of God” (Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4, Luke 4:4). Jesus is the Word of God made flesh (John 1:14). He is the Manna from Heaven, He Himself repeatedly said, “I AM the Bread of Life.”

Actively yield to the work of the Holy Spirit placing your feet on Holy ground each moment of each day. Pray for your ration of Jesus that you need to get through today as an upstanding member of God’s family because that’s what you want to be.

If you’ll recall, Jesus used an example from the 10 Commandments to make His point.

The first few Commandments are about man's relationship to God and the rest are about man's relationship to man, starting with honoring your parents.

That's the Commandment Jesus used in condemning the legalistic religion of the Pharisees and then he gave the list of sinful behaviors that we're talking about today. See how Jesus condemns legalism and simultaneously condemns license. Because what He was doing was condemning sin, whether the sin of working to gain God's favor or the sin of taking advantage of God's favor.

What's on the list? MURDER… the very next Commandment. ADULTERY… next Commandment, along with its associated SEXUAL IMMORALITY. THEFT… comes right after adultery in the Commandments. FALSE TESTIMONY… Well that's next, along with its associated SLANDER.

Coveting is a summarizing vice – it is the root of all sin. Paul rightly said that "Money is a root of evil," and I hope you see that love of money is really a form of covetousness.

Jesus used an argument in Matthew chapter 15 that proved a wrong way of relating to God by demonstrating a wrong way of relating to man.

My dear friends, how we treat people is not just a microcosm, or an indicator of how we treat God – how we treat people is a direct barometer, or gauge of how we treat God.

You know that famous verse – I used it just the other day - I John 4:19? 19NIVWe love because he first loved us. As I said before, it isn't that we love God, because we are reciprocating His love – oh He loves me – how sweet, I'll love Him back. It isn't that we love

Him because He showed us a better way. It is quite literally, that we are able to love only because His love fills us. Only then can a person truly love in the way God loves, and our love is first for Him and then for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Now what does the Bible go on to say in that place?

I John 4:20&21, 20NIVWhoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. 21And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

If you have been filled with the love of God, you will love Him, but you will just as assuredly love His children, your siblings in Christ – it is unavoidable.

Therefore, if you do not love others – if you have no love for the church, for the Body of Believers on earth, for your brothers and sisters in Christ – you do not love God either and the reason is plain… It is because you do not have the love of God in you.

Jesus commanded us to “Love one another” and He would never give us that command if we couldn’t do it. I

promise you we can, but I also promise you there is only one way that we can and that is with the love of God filling our heart – it is only with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Yield to that Spirit. Be one with that Spirit. Dwell in that Spirit. When you do, your mind is not going to be thinking about “Murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander,” or any other covetous thing.

At its simplest level, one tiny example, the Pastor and the Elders of the church spend hours and hours in prayer, thought and discussion, coming up with all

kinds of variations, seeing the pluses and minuses of each idea, debating the value and considering the outcome, desperately trying to do what is Christ's Will, what is God honoring and what is best for all of you. We decide and we publish the new temporary schedule for the next 6-8 months.

Some folks look at the schedule and immediately complain… Or worse. No one is completely innocent – if not this thing, something else. I know I've been guilty before.

Why? Isn't it because of how it impacts us? Honestly, how many people see the new schedule, or something else, and instantly think about Christ's Will, the Glory of God, the good of the church as a whole? I mean, I'm just asking. How many folks think of the time, effort, worry and prayer the leadership has poured into the decision?

We complain because we don't like it for one reason or another and we voice our displeasure to others and it creates negativity – negative thinking, negative talk, negative actions that hurt Christ and His Bride.

When we allow the Holy Spirit to bring us back around and we set our minds on the things of God, we are able to recognize the folly of our actions – we can refocus on God – we can embrace His love for us and return it to Him and share it with others and in so doing, my friends, the Body is built.