

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

April 19, 2020

“Life in Christ”

Sunrise Reflection Live at 6:45, Zoom Sunday school at 8:30, Sermon Online by 9:15

NEWS

Never fear - we know Who sits on the Throne. Please, continue to pray for each other - call, text, email, Zoom - stay connected. Love others enough to help them, and love others enough to allow them to help you.

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The Bible clearly reveals that a vast chasm exists between God and Us. Further, it clearly reveals that the rift was caused by us, because of _____.

That’s a _____ word, that many people don’t really understand.

Sin is a failure to fully _____ God.

When we fail to fully _____ God, we take matters into our own hands and rely on our own understanding, judgement, ability and resources.

It is trying to get your will accomplished, rather than _____, in complete trust, to God’s Will done.

It is impossible to fully trust God, unless and until, you _____ Him.

God has chosen to reveal Himself to us, but there's a catch... Instead of making Himself obvious to all, He reveals just enough to whet our appetite. Are we then interested enough to _____ further?

God reveals a bit of Himself through His _____. Yet, to the walking dead, it's all coincidence.

God reveals a bit more of Himself through the inspired _____ of His chosen Prophets, Kings, Apostles, and Men of Faith. Yet, to the walking dead, it's all contrived.

God reveals a bit more of Himself though _____ as the Son of Man. Yet, to the walking dead, it's all concocted.

God reveals a bit more of Himself through His Spirit released on earth in His _____. Yet, to the walking dead, it's all chicanery.

Only people _____ open to God, can meet Him. We must meet God in Christ. It isn't just put a little Jesus in your back pocket - it is I surrender my present life and my eternity to You Jesus, my Lord, my Savior. I'm wholeheartedly, unreservedly and permanently Yours.

Once God accepts you as His own child _____, because of your identity in Christ Jesus, He fills you with His Holy Spirit and you know God.

When we come to know God, we _____ Him. No one meets God and remains on their feet. "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God" (Isaiah 45:23, Romans 14:11 Philippians 2:10 Revelation 3:9).

The first part of the prayer we are to pray daily, starts with “Our Heavenly Father.” “Father,” is _____, “Heavenly,” makes it clear that it is God with whom we have a relationship - that means we’ve met. “Our,” means that we have siblings - it’s a family.

What’s next? “Hallowed be Your Name.” No one who has _____ God, can fail to honor His Holy Name. Worship, praise, adore and love.

Now, we _____ Him more than we trust our own understanding and our own judgement and our own ability and resources. That means we not only yield to His Will - we actively seek to have His “Will done on earth just as it is done in Heaven.”

What is that, where God’s Will is _____ in any way? It is the Kingdom of Heaven - “Your Kingdom come.”

The Jews, by and large, missed Elijah’s mission as conducted by John the Baptist because of pride. They were looking for the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, but their position was... “Come Lord and set everything right - make it a world fit for _____.”

Are we in the same danger? Our position should be... “Come Lord and fix me - make the world fit for _____.”

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!

That is called _____ and it is the only attitude fitting a Child of God. What can we see from that? We can see that we need help. We need today and each and every day, our daily allotment of Manna from Heaven. "Our daily Bread."

As Christians we readily recognize the tremendous grace that has been freely given to us. The less forgiveness I think I need, the less I'm willing to extend to others. The middle of the last half of the Lord's prayer isn't a petition for forgiveness, so much as, it's a plea to have God make our present forgiveness _____ to us.

It isn't that you must think more _____ of others, so much as it is that you must think less _____ of yourself. How?

That brings us to the last thing. "Lord, as You lead me through my life, which is now Your life, freely given... Come whatever may, let it be a test of You, in me, rather than a temptation of my flesh." That's how you're delivered from all _____ for all time.

sin, religious, trust, trust, surrendering, know, pursue, creation, writings, Himself, church, humbly, relationally, worship, relational, met, trust, unopposed, me, You, humble gratitude, real, highly, highly, evil.

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 17d ~ 041920

“Life in Christ”



Next Sunday is in limbo. We have no idea what our governor is going to do and so we don't know what next Sunday holds, but we have a plan.

If the stay-at-home order expires on Friday, April 24th we will have a Sunday school class at the church that will also be on Zoom. It will start at 9:30. Come if you feel good about it, stay home and connect with us via Zoom, if you don't. Following that, at 10:30, we will have a single church service that will also be live for Zoom users (we will connect in via Zoom for a live

feed). In addition, we will record the sermon and have it up on our website later that same day.

If the order is extended, we will do this one more time, but I have a plan for the future... We'll let you know.

Go to Zoom.us, on any phone, tablet or computer and get the Zoom app - it's free. We'll send a link to join, if you add your name to the list - if you've already done Zoom Sunday school, we'll automatically include you, unless you tell us to cancel. Call Stacey if you get stuck.

Please reach out to us if you need anything.



Over the last three weeks we've talked about the Transfiguration and then the Resurrection of Jesus. The first prefigured the second and the second is the most important event to ever take place - nothing else even comes close.

People might disagree, or at least think that I'm overstating it a bit... Sure Scott, maybe it's important to your theology, maybe even to Christianity, but certainly not to everyone. Well, they would be wrong.



The Bible clearly reveals that a vast chasm exists between the Creator of all things and the pinnacle of His creative efforts... Us. The Bible clearly reveals that the rift was caused by us because we are sinful. That's a religious word, that if we're honest about, doesn't really mean much, even to long-time Christians.

Sin is, at its core, a failure to fully trust God. It is really as simple as that. When we fail to fully trust God, we, by definition, take matters into our own hands and rely on our own understanding, judgement, ability and resources - to some extent.

ALL OF IT RESULTS FROM FAILING TO FULLY TRUST GOD.



It is, if you consider it for a moment, the very definition of witchcraft. Seeing the world through your perception, deciding what should happen, using the means available, supernatural, or otherwise, to mold the outcome to your will.



It is trying to get your will accomplished, rather than surrendering, in complete trust, to God's Will done.

That's the reason that there is no such thing as "Good witches." A witch, no matter how good, is at the end of the day using their own understanding, judging what should be done and then using whatever power they have to accomplish their will - God be hanged.



It is impossible to fully trust God, unless and until, you know Him. God cannot be known in any significant way unless He reveals Himself to you. The Bible tells us that He has chosen to do just that, but there's a catch... Instead of making Himself obvious to all, He reveals just enough to whet our appetite.

An aerial photograph showing a dense forest on the left and a body of water on the right. The text ";PURSUE" is overlaid in a white, serif font, centered horizontally across the image. The semicolon is positioned to the left of the word "PURSUE".

;PURSUE

Is a particular person interested in pursuing God?

Most Christians salute the sovereignty of God but believe in the sovereignty of man.

by R.C. Sproul



That is the question whether you're Reformed or not. In whatever way a person is enabled... Do they pursue further?



God reveals a bit of Himself through His creation. Through the mind-blowing order found in everything from the subatomic, to the cosmic. Yet, to the walking dead, it's all coincidence.



So, God reveals a bit more of Himself through His chosen Prophets, Kings, Apostles, and Men of Faith who have recorded their inspired testimony in the Bible. Yet, to the walking dead, it's all contrived.

A close-up photograph of a hand reaching out from the left side of the frame. The hand is silhouetted against a bright, warm sunset sky with soft orange and yellow light. The fingers are slightly curled, and the overall mood is one of reaching or offering.

GOD WITH US

So, God reveals a bit more of Himself though Himself - by taking on flesh and dwelling among us as one of us - as the Son of Man. Yet, to the walking dead, it's all concocted.



So, God reveals a bit more of Himself through an impulse of His Spirit released on earth in His church. Yet, to the walking dead, it's all chicanery.

Only to those who are humbly receptive is there a turning... As I alluded to earlier, we could debate the precise mechanics of that, but what every Christian theologian fully agrees with, is that only people who are humbly open to God, can meet Him.

That's what it takes. We must meet God in the form of His Christ. It's bigger than we first realize.



It isn't just put a little Jesus in your back pocket - it is I surrender my present life and my eternity to You Jesus - Son of God - I'm wholeheartedly, unreservedly and permanently Yours.

Once God accepts you as His own child relationally because of your identity in Christ Jesus, He fills you with His Holy Spirit and you know God.

THE GOD I KNOW

When we come to know God, we worship Him. It is not only the most natural response; it is the only possible reaction to meeting Him. No one meets God and remains on their feet. Both the Old and New Testaments declare “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God” (Isaiah 45:23, Romans 14:11 Philippians 2:10 Revelation 3:9). The person who says that they know God and does not worship, praise, adore, and love Him, is at a minimum, mistaken... That person has not met God, regardless of what they say, or think, about the matter.

The first part of the prayer we are to pray daily, starts with “Our Heavenly Father.” “Father,” is relational, “Heavenly,” makes it clear that it is God with whom we have a relationship - that means we’ve met. “Our,” means that we have siblings - it’s a family.

What’s next? “Hallowed be Your Name.” As we saw earlier, no one who has met God can fail to honor His Holy Name. Worship, praise, adore and love.

Now, trust. We trust Him, more than we trust our own understanding and our own judgement and our own ability and resources. That means we not only yield to His Will, we recognize that it is the highest, greatest good and so we actively seek to have His “Will done on earth just as it is done in Heaven” - we want to obey, because we fully trust that His Will, is best. We readily acknowledge that we don’t always see it, but humbly agree that we don’t see it, because we don’t have His view and we trust Him.

What is that, where God’s Will is unopposed in any way? As we’ve learned, that is where God reigns - where His sovereign rule is eagerly accepted, willingly obeyed and actively upheld - that is the “Kingdom come,” and that is the first half of the Lord’s Prayer.

OUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN,
HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME.
YOUR KINGDOM COME.
YOUR WILL BE DONE.
ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

As a side note, I mentioned a while back that the Jews, by and large, missed Elijah's mission as conducted by John the Baptist because of pride.

They were all looking for the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, but their position was... "Come Lord and set everything right - fix the world - punish the evil - lift up the weak - make it a world fit for me."

I asked the question then... Are we in the same danger? Are you praying that God will fix everyone and everything else?

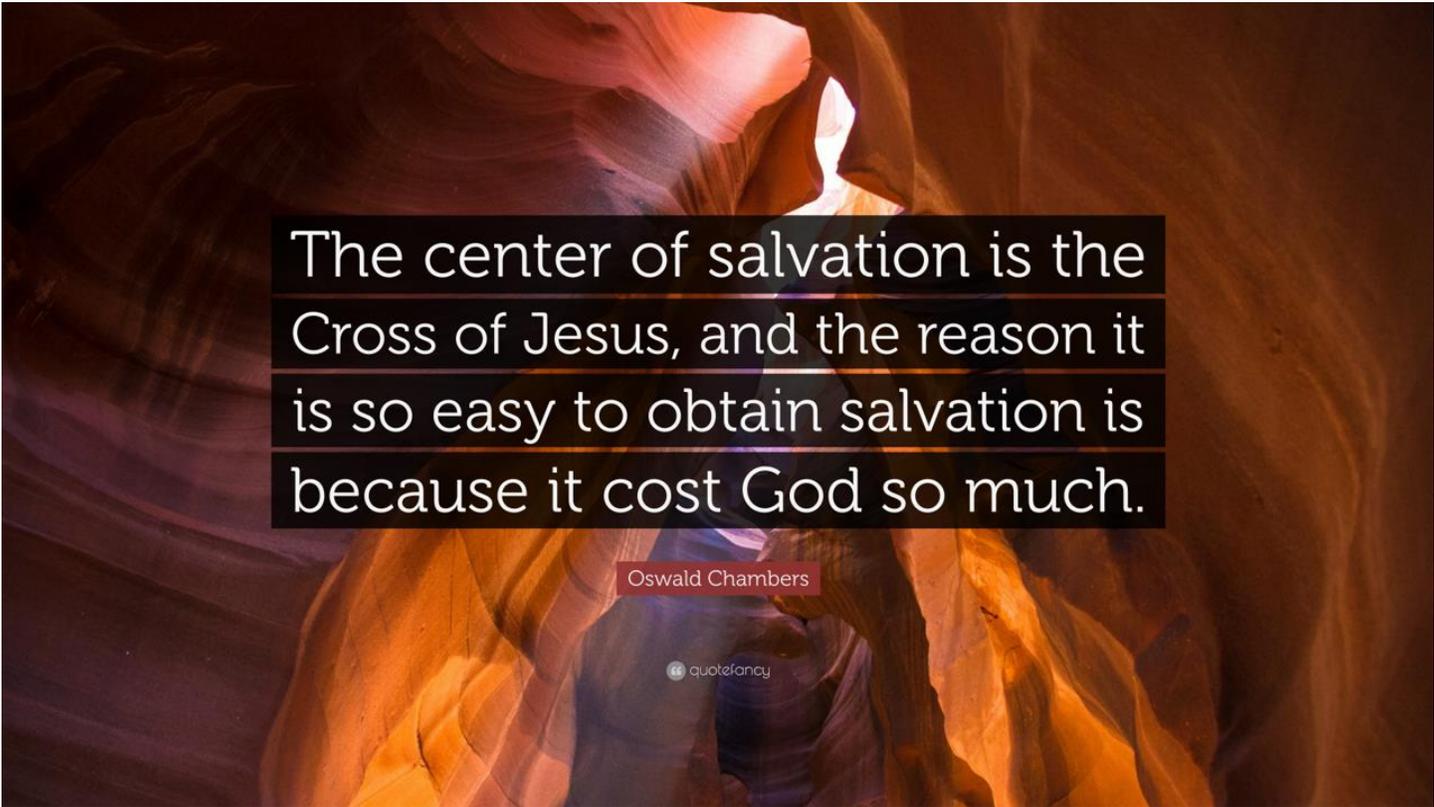
The Kingdom of Heaven must come and the only correct position a Christian can take is, let it fully come to me, now. In other words, Lord fix me. Lord thank You for Your grace to me and for giving me Your Spirit and I beg You, help me to be a person in complete accord with You - fix me and make the world fit for You.

That attitude is called HUMBLE GRATITUDE and it is the only attitude fitting a Child of God. What can we see from that? We can see that we need help. We need today and each and every day, our daily allotment of Manna from Heaven. "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word the proceeds from the mouth of God."

Jesus, the very Word of God, is the Bread that gives and sustains the Resurrected Life. As He Himself declared four times in John's Gospel, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst" (John 6:35).

Through our daily nourishment of divine bread, we can be moved by the Holy Spirit, obey the Father and be conformed to Jesus, just a little more.

As Christians with even the smallest amount of faith and maturity we readily recognize the tremendous grace that has been freely given to us.



The center of salvation is the Cross of Jesus, and the reason it is so easy to obtain salvation is because it cost God so much.

Oswald Chambers

quotefancy

We understand the cost of our Salvation and perhaps even more than that we understand the necessity of that full sacrifice to Save us personally.

I know that I need the full suffering and complete death of the Word of God made flesh to be forgiven... personally forgiven.

The less forgiveness I think I need, the less I'm willing to extend to others. That's a truism - it's just reality - Do

you think the Lord doesn't understand that phenomenon?

The middle of the last half of the Lord's prayer isn't a petition for forgiveness, so much as it's a plea to have God make our present forgiveness real to us...

When it is, it is demonstrated by our inclination to forgive others - our ability to recognize ourselves in them - to realize that their weakness, is no different than our weakness.

Of course, some would object and say, "Many people are far worse than I, far weaker than I can even comprehend." First, to such a person, you prove by your objection, that you have an overinflated sense of self-worth - you think more highly of yourself than is reasonable, or warranted (Romans 11:20). It's called pride, and it means that God is opposed to you (James 4:6, I Peter 5:5). Beyond that, it means that you have not been fully forgiven by God (Matthew 6:14&15), because you have not fully actualized your own forgiveness (Matthew 6:12, 18:23-35).

I'm not saying that you're not a Christian, I'm saying that, according to Jesus, you are still outside of where

He wants you to be. If it's due to immaturity, because you're new to the Faith, or because you're a young person in your teens, or early 20's, or because you have a clinical inability to reason, then you have, at least for the moment, an extenuating circumstance. If, however, you don't fall into one of those categories, I beg you to pay close attention.

The second thing to consider is that we have no idea what another human being is capable of, given the intricate complexities of the human psyche, and the unknowable amount of Grace God has chosen to bestow. Romans 12:3b, 3bNIV "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you." We are not to judge the heart condition, nor the eternal destination of others, because it's God's job, not ours... And also, because we have not walked a mile in anyone else's moccasins.

From that, we must see, that however well I function, however successful I am at being a model Christian... It is all due to God, not me. That sits poorly with most Americans. This idea that I did not make myself - I did not orchestrate the events that changed me - I did not

choose the amount of faith that I have. I am not responsible for the good I do.

In 2012, President Barack Obama said, referring to successful business owners, infamously said, “You didn’t build that.” He actually continued by saying, “Somebody else made that happen.” In context, there is tremendous merit in what he said. His point was that any successful person had a lot of help along the way. From parents to teachers, from the Founding Fathers to all those who served in uniform protecting American freedom, from the infrastructure to incentives, from their employees to their customers.

He took it far too far... It was the hyperbole of campaign rhetoric. The reason it worked was because his base likes to believe that there’s no difference between those who act and those who don’t.

What I’m driving at, is that Americans, especially conservative Americans, believe firmly in the idea that anyone can pull themselves up by their own bootstraps and succeed. Beyond that we have this deeply ingrained notion of fairness... If you work hard and risk much, you will be rewarded and when you are, you can be satisfied that you, not the lazy bum, deserve your

reward. That extends to the idea that the poor, are reaping what they sowed and therefore deserve to be poor.

Those well-established thought patterns hinder our ability to see that spiritually, all of us equally deserve the Lake that eternally burns with fire and brimstone. It is truly, “There, but for the grace of God, go I” John Bradford, paraphrasing I Corinthians 15:10.

It isn't that you must think more highly of others, so much as it is that you must think less highly of yourself. So, to help us see that even more let's recognize that in the Lord's Prayer when we ask for our forgiveness, it is to pardon our transgressions, not be forgiven as a person. Why?



Because we are already pardoned, but we acknowledge that still many of our thoughts, words and deeds, of commission and of omission, hurt God and His purposes... Forgive us for those things - those sins.



SIN IS AGAINST GOD SO ONLY HE CAN FORGIVE

Conversely, we are not told to forgive the sins of others, but to forgive them. Why? Sin is unpardonable by anyone other than God - it's against Him, as we'll see in a moment, and so only He can forgive it.

When we believe that the process of forgiving is easy - whether we're talking about the eradication of sin as a whole to Save a person, or especially the dismissing of individual sins committed by a Saved person... When we assume it to be a simple, easy process, we think of sin, as less... Far less than it is.



IS FAILURE FATAL?

Just because God can very easily forgive sin for those who are in Christ Jesus - that does not in any way mean that sin is a little thing. Sin caused death. Not just human death, not just death on planet earth, but the death of the entire universe and all contained therein. Further, to correct the problem it required God to become a man and die!

When we go to church, enter the Confessional, pour out your misdeeds to a priest who doesn't need to know you, doesn't need to see you, cannot tell anyone what he heard, but who will give you a few prayers to recite and voilà, you're as good as new to go out and sin some more.

Let's not pick on Catholics. Most protestants think the process is far simpler and far easier than that. Just pray and ask God to forgive you. Maybe, you just assume that you're forgiven and don't even need to ask. See, sin is not that big of a deal.

Because it was sin that caused death, death could not be defeated, until God destroyed the power of sin. Jesus paid with His life - that's how big a deal sin is in reality (I Corinthians 15:55-57).



What's the key to being forgiven as a person?
Accepting Christ as Lord and Savior. What's the key to

being forgiven of our continuing failures as a saved person? Forgiving other people for being just like you.

It is the recognition, ultimately, that sin is still huge and therefore it is a monumentally generous thing that a perfect God continues, day after day, to forgive us for our sins, especially considering that He has given us His Holy Spirit to aid us in not sinning.

The person who is not forgiving of others absolutely does not get this fact and so they themselves are not forgiven, because, get this, it proves that either they don't think they need much forgiving, or that they deserve more forgiveness than others. Either way, it is not the attitude of a penitent person... Which is a fancy way to say, it's not the proper attitude for a Christian.



That penitent, proper attitude is the same attitude which was present when you first became a Christian... One of humble gratitude. Again, not so much a petition for forgiveness, as it's a plea to have God make our present forgiveness real to us... And when it is, it is demonstrated by our inclination to forgive others.

That brings us to the last thing. As You lead me through my life, which is now Your life, freely given... Come whatever may, let it be to me a test of You in me, rather than a temptation of my flesh.

God only ever asks us to be His, trusting fully in Him, regardless of the circumstances. From everything being fantastic, to the Zombie Apocalypse and everything in-between, nothing has changed for the Christian. Be His, fully trusting in Him, regardless of the circumstances. That's how you're delivered from all evil for all time.

We closed last week with Matthew 17:19-21 19Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" 20And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. 21"But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

As I mentioned previously, this historical event is also recorded in Mark and Luke. With all the extra information those accounts provide, we can discern an underlying problem that I alluded to last time.

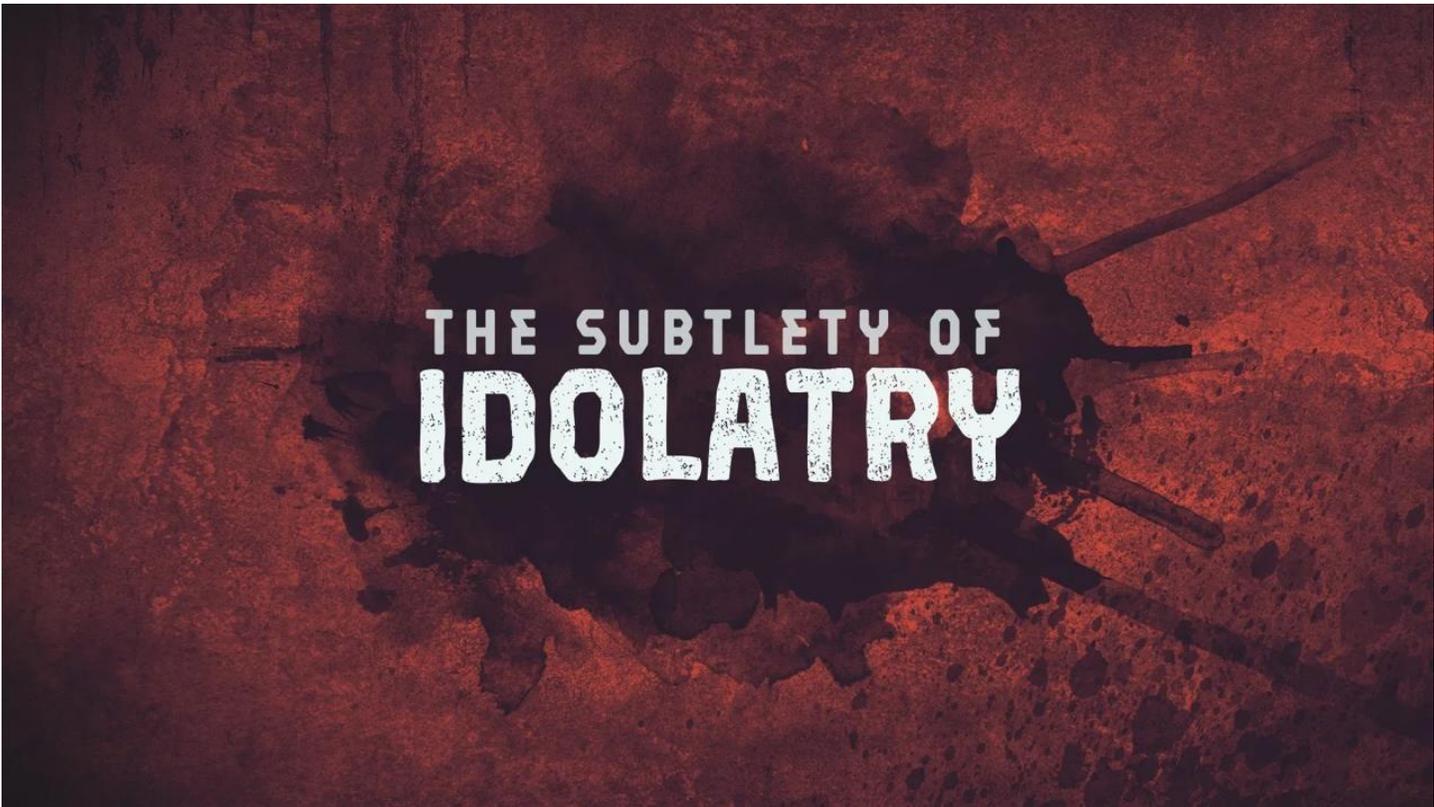
It's quite clear that the 9 Apostles and other disciples that may have been present, did what their ancestors

did so many generations before when their leader Moses was away talking to God on a similar mountain.

What the disciples did, wasn't nearly as obvious, or dramatic, as what Aaron did, but the underlying sin was the same - hence Jesus' reaction; 17bNASB "You unbelieving (faithless), and perverted (twisted, rebellious, perverse, crooked) generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you?"

That compared with Moses speaking of the people regarding God, 5NASB "They have acted corruptly toward Him, They are not His children, because of their defect; But are a perverse and crooked generation" (Deuteronomy 32:5).

It is the sin of idolatry. which is very easy to see in the original wilderness account. When asked about his actions Aaron blamed the people, 23NASB "They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.' 24 So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!" (Exodus 32:23&24).



THE SUBTLETY OF IDOLATRY

Idolatry is sin, not because it's idolatry per se, but because, as we've just discussed, it's a lack of faith in a God Who is often invisible to us. Idolatry is a failure to fully trust God.

It is just what the disciples did. A need was presented for Jesus to address, He wasn't there, and no one could say when He'd be back. The disciples thought they could step in for Him and the people egged them on with both positive, "Of course you can do it," as well as negative, "No way can these guys help," comments.

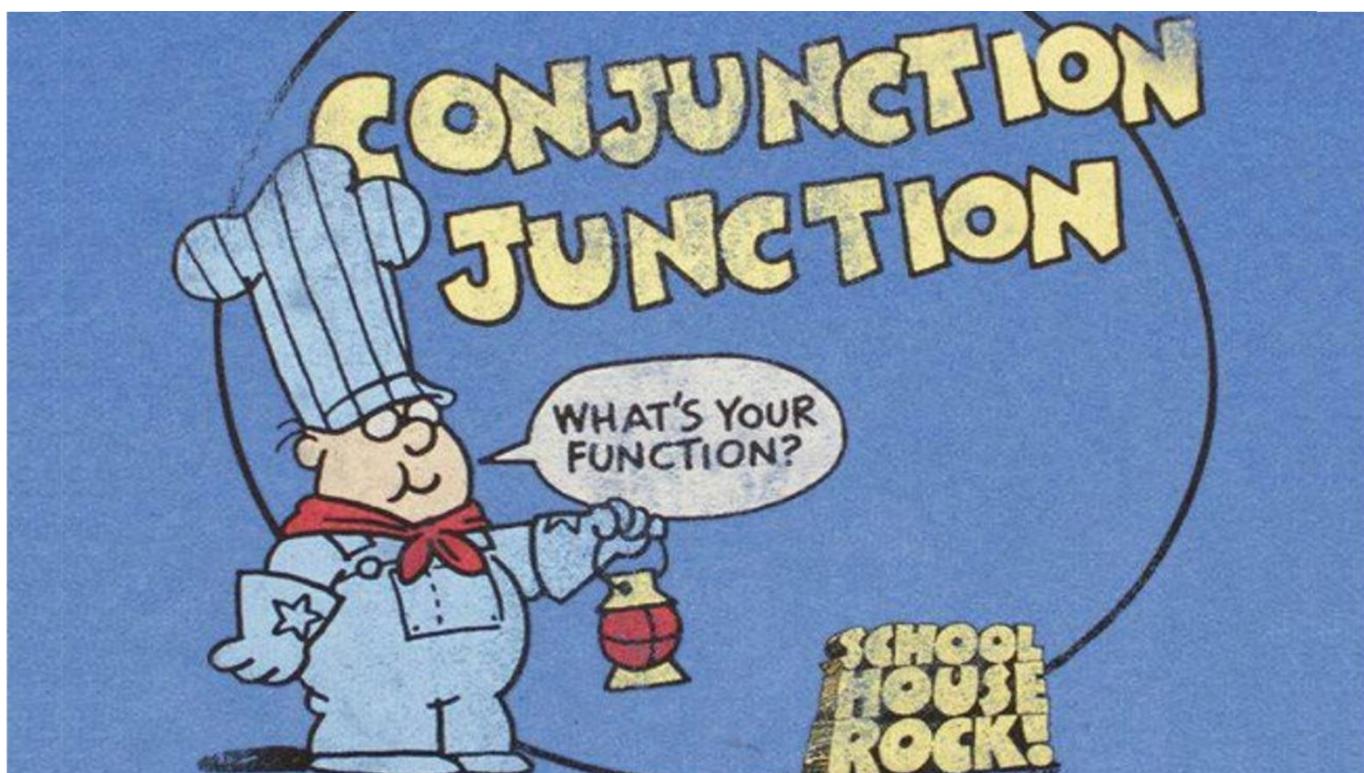
They got caught up in the moment and did the same thing Aaron did and the same thing that we continue to

do - they relied on their own understanding and their own judgement and their own ability and resources. The reason they could not drive the demon out was because their motivation and power were wrong.

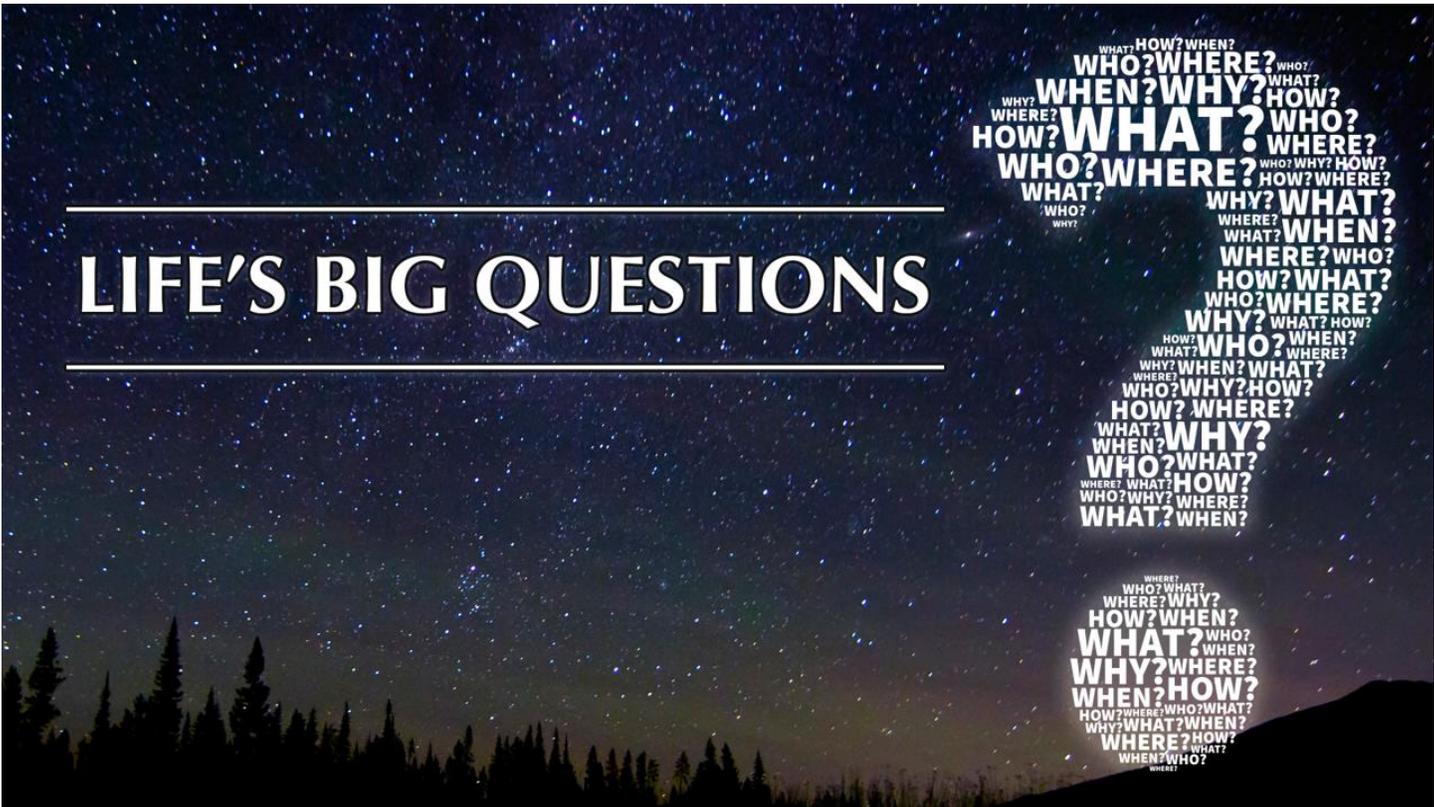


“But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.” What does that mean? It gets confusing because the statement begins with the word “But,” as though this is some detached, even countering idea. to the “Mustard-seed faith.” It was added from Mark’s account, where the word, “But,” does not appear (Mark 9:28-29).

It exists in Matthew, because he's giving us this other reason in addition to the reason he was focused on, which was their faith problem. The word is not actually "But," of course, and it should not be translated that way in this place. It is $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ (dě). A very weak conjunction in Greek, tying two ideas together.

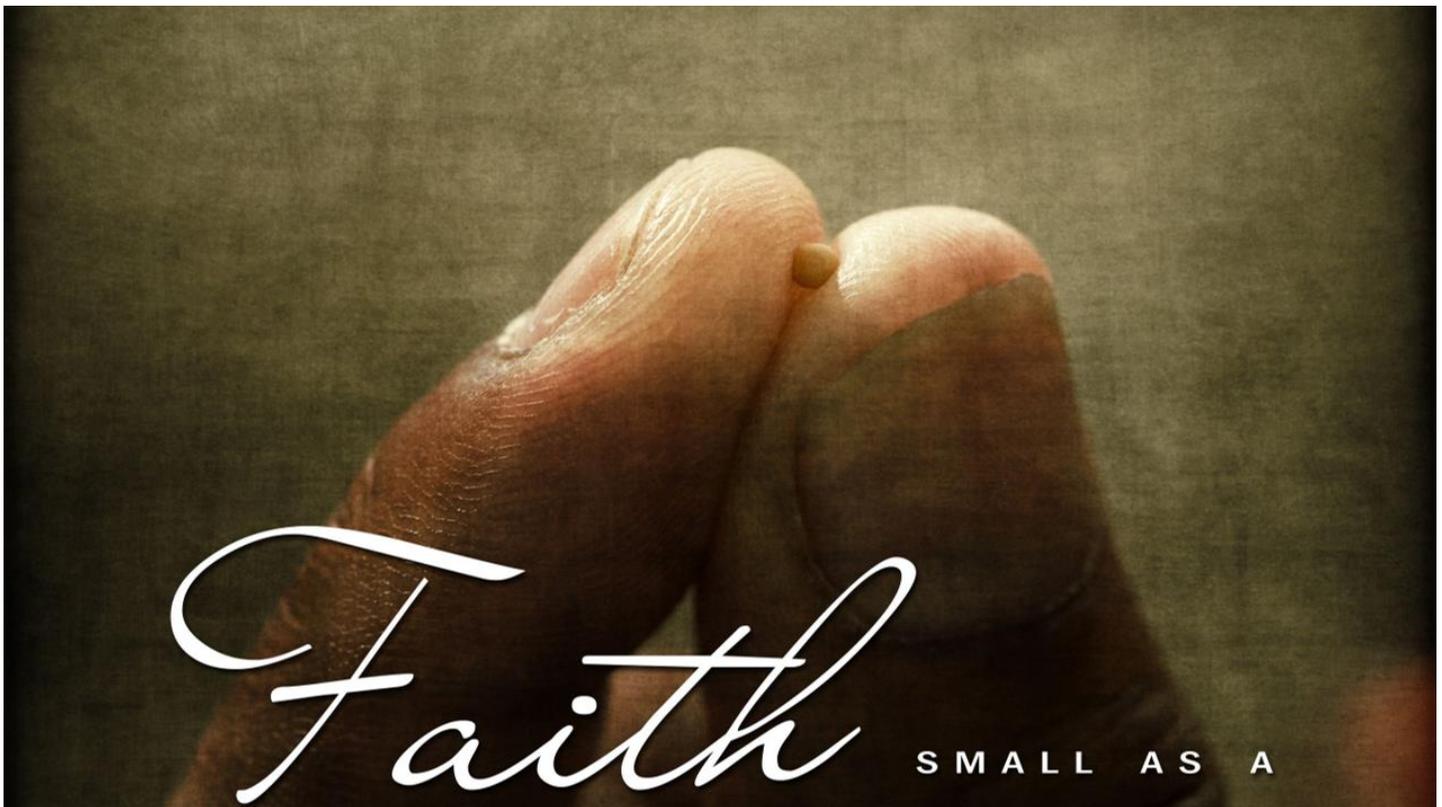


Why use a weak conjunction? Because the ideas are weakly connected, and here, not in an adversative way at all. In this instance, it should be left untranslated in English, or translated as, "And," or "Additionally," but somehow with less emphasis.



What does it mean here and in Mark, how does it tie in with the faith issue preceding it in Matthew, and how does all that fit with the sin of idolatry?

This is a time when it is all of the little things that add up. You cannot come to a correct understanding by taking only the “Prayer and fasting” bit. You must get the overall context as well as the linkage back to Moses and Aaron.



What Jesus was explaining to them is that their faith wasn't too small - all you need is a mustard seed's worth - it was their faith was in the wrong thing.

Their "No faith" in verse 17 was the "Faithlessness" of not relying entirely on God alone to help the boy.

In other words, Jesus would never say that the reason a person was not helped was because of the level of faith and the quality of the prayers and fasting of the exorcist. It is God alone Who drives out the demons and restores the person, not the human instrument He chooses to work through.

God has performed His most astonishing and magnificent miracles without any human intermediary at all - He doesn't need an amazing person in order to work.

Your ability to cast out a demon and heal the formerly possessed person will never be because you're so wonderful!

You can make a short prayer before responding to a call for help - I guess, depending on when you last ate, you could do a tiny bit of fasting as well, but we can readily discern that what Jesus is talking about is preparation of an ongoing, continuous nature beforehand.

A lifestyle of community with God - a true relational relationship. As the old timers would say, a person who is all prayed up, or a person who stands on holy ground, or a person who's face shines with the glory of God.

What we're talking about is a Christian so in-tune with the Holy Spirit, they know the Will of God and know when they have, they required anointing for the task at hand. We saw back in Matthew 13:58, That Jesus, "Did

not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.” Jesus knew when it was time to act and when it was time to walk away, because He was fully in tune with the Spirit of God.

Such a prayerful, fasting person is a person who knows God, and has more than enough faith, because all of the faith they have is in Him, and none of it is in themselves. That’s what’s required. A tiny bit of faith in the right place and zero faith in an idol.

What’s an idol? Certainly, a calf made from molten gold, but really anything at all, that you place some faith in, including yourself, or me, or the church, or humanity, or science, anything at all.

Why? Because whatever degree you have faith in something, or someone else, is precisely the degree to which you do not fully trust God. And one more time, “What is the basic definition of all sin?” A failure to fully trust God.

Now, you can see that both lines of thinking - both ways to describe the disciples’ failure, boils down to the one thing.

Our mandate is to fully trust God the Creator of all things. First, we must fully trust Him with our Salvation. That means we totally rely upon His means of Salvation, which is the Word of God made flesh paying the debt we can never pay.

As we talked about last week, just as God imputed your sin to Christ Jesus, He likewise imputes the righteousness of Christ Jesus to you.

We are not only sinless in God's sight because of Jesus, we are perfectly righteous in God's sight, because of Jesus... Do you fully trust God for that?

Or are you trying to help things along by having some bit of faith in yourself, in your works, in your goodness, in your faith?

Then, as Christians we must fully trust God for our Sanctification, we know we are fully accepted by Him as evidenced by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

That Holy Spirit causes our trust to grow as we yield to His conforming work making our new interior evident on our old exterior - we are transformed, and we are in

the process of being transfigured on our way to being resurrected.

And that's the final piece, we must fully trust God for our future glorification... The Resurrected life here and now, made complete and perfect forevermore... Do you fully trust God?

