

PERVERTING THE “FIRST PRINCIPLES”

Part One

*For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be **the first principles** of the oracles of God; and are become such as **have need of milk**, and not of strong meat. . . Therefore **leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection**; not laying again **the foundation of repentance** from dead works, and of **faith toward God**, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of **resurrection of the dead**, and of **eternal judgment**. And this will we do, if God permit.*

Hebrews 5:12 & 6:1-3

You’ve all heard me say that my burden is to see God’s people become spiritual warriors and overcomers. That’s why I try to share things in this chat room that will help the brethren advance in *that* direction. However, we will never become warriors and overcomers if our minds are filled with the errors so many ministers are preaching right now about faith and justification. Faith and justification are two of the foundational principles of Christianity. The other four are repentance, baptisms (plural), laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. Every single one of these first principles has been distorted beyond recognition by the very people we have been trusting to maintain the purity of the gospel. Just as the leaders of *God’s Israel* under the Old Covenant perverted His teachings and commandments, so the leaders of *God’s Israel* under the New Covenant have done the same exact thing.

These six areas of truth only deal with the fundamental concepts of redemption. Learning them is like learning the first principles of reading, writing and arithmetic in grade school. They are just the basics! They are *spiritual* grade school. Yet most Christians walk in total confusion regarding *all* of them. My Lord! We can’t even get the basics right! How on earth do we think we are ever going to move into the deeper things of the Spirit? Listen my friends, our understanding of the basic principles of Christianity is critical. You can’t build anything of (eternal) value on a *bad* foundation.

Why do Church leaders pervert the first principles of the faith? They do it because they know people are *spiritually lazy* and they are trying to make salvation as easy as possible. They *deliberately* twist the teaching of Scripture in these areas in order to make it easy to get to heaven. But these perversions have not made salvation easier—they’ve made salvation impossible! The only thing these leaders have done is deceive millions of people into thinking they are on their way to heaven, when in fact, they are on their way to eternal damnation. These perversions, which are supposed to make salvation as easy as “believing” historical facts with your brain, are *also* playing a central role in giving the spirit of Antichrist power over *true* Christians right now. The first principles of Christ may be basic Christian teaching, but they certainly aren’t minor academic issues or unimportant theological points that we should let the scholars and the theologians debate over. These are life and death issues and we’ve got to get them right!

When the writer of the book of Hebrews told the people in that congregation they were still babes and needed milk, it was because they were not committed enough to the truth which they had been given to become firmly grounded in it. Consequently, they were wavering. They were also starting to listen to strange ideas and teachings. That’s why he said:

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

Hebrews 13:9

The Hebrew Christians were not being established and grounded in the first principles of Christ. Instead, they were allowing themselves to be “carried about with divers and strange doctrines”. At that time, they should have been ready to go on to perfection, but they were “dull of hearing” (5:11). By that point they should have grown enough spiritually that they would be able to teach others the first principles of Christ. But they couldn’t. He says: “*For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat*” (5:12).

The point is, if our heads are filled with perverted versions of the first principles of Christ, that’s no different than being carried about with divers and strange doctrines. They will have the same affect on us as they did the Hebrew believers. They remained spiritually immature; they couldn’t teach others the basics of salvation, they couldn’t be given spiritual meat; and they were in danger of losing the salvation they had received been experiencing up to that point. That’s why the writer said things like:

*For it is impossible for those **who were once** enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, **If they shall fall away**, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*

Hebrews 6:4-6

*For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: **But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.***

Hebrews 6:7-8

***How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation;** which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;*

Hebrews 2:3

*See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, **much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:***

Hebrews 12:25

Being carried about with false doctrine does *more* than just keep us from moving *forward* in the faith. It causes us to go *backwards* in the faith. Whether these doctrines are extra-biblical teachings that are wrong

or just perversions of correct Biblical teaching, it makes no difference. They have the same affect and if we don't reject them, we may find ourselves in the same situation the Hebrew Christians were in. We may get to the point where we have to go back to *spiritual grade school* and learn the basics of salvation all over again. I'm not exaggerating when I say we are hearing a false gospel where ever we turn. The "gospel" that's being propagated all over this planet right now is a counterfeit. It's not the gospel Jesus and the apostles preached. It's a perversion of that gospel. It says all we have to do in order to be saved and be *kept* saved until we reach glory, is believe in Jesus and trust Him like a little child.

I'm going to be talking about justification tonight and next week because justification really encompasses the first two principles of the doctrine of Christ, which are "repentance from dead works" and "faith toward God". I'm not going to get into the technical, theological *definition* of justification tonight. I'll do that next week. What I want to do tonight is discuss some of the ramifications of accepting today's *twisted version* of justification because those ramifications are far-reaching.

The doctrine of justification has been *exalted* all out of proportion in the salvation process and this perversion is a key component in the false gospel that's being propagated everywhere. Religious leaders have made justification the whole ball of wax. *Sanctification* may be encouraged, but in real life it's not that important because we get everything that pertains to salvation by justification *alone*.

Exalting justification beyond it's proper role has produced many unscriptural ideas. One of them is that it cleanses us from our present and future sins. Another one is that it makes us *worthy* of the kingdom. Supposedly, we are not counted worthy of the kingdom based on anything we do or fail to do. We are not counted worthy of the kingdom based on anything we feel or experience. We are counted worthy based on justification *alone*—or to be more precise, on *imputed* righteousness alone. The problem is, the Scripture says we have to be made worthy of the kingdom AFTER we have been justified. We have to be made worthy of the kingdom after we repent, after we have our sins forgiven by the blood of the Lamb, and after we receive imputed righteousness.

*So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in **all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:***

II. Thessalonians 1:4-5

The problem with the idea that imputed righteousness makes us worthy of the kingdom is that it's not true. Paul didn't say faith makes us worthy of the kingdom, or that belief makes us worthy of the kingdom, or that trusting in Jesus makes us worthy of the kingdom. He didn't say imputed righteousness or having the righteousness of Christ makes us worthy of the kingdom. What he said was, *the judgement of God* makes us worthy of the kingdom! Of course, if you are like most of today's Christians, that fact won't phase you. You'll continue to believe the imputed righteousness makes you worthy of the kingdom.

How does God's judgment make us worthy of the kingdom? Judgment actually *delivers* us from the sin we have not yet been delivered from. Justification cleanses us from the guilt and the penalty of sins "that are past" said Paul (*Rom. 3:25*). It doesn't instantly turn us into a *righteous* creature in reality. Justification

enables God to impute His own righteousness to our accounts. This is a *legal* procedure. We are legally declared innocent of all past sins and legally declared righteous because we are now covered legally by another person's righteousness. But the fact is, we *ourselves* have not yet become righteous and *that's* the whole point of salvation! Justification does not cleanse us from present or future sins. It covers (legally) the sins we are presently committing, which we are *not* aware of, as long as we are walking in the light and confessing and repenting of the sins we *are* aware of.

The thing that actually delivers us from sin (not just legally covers our sin) is sanctification. One of the ways we are sanctified is by persecution and tribulation, which is God's judgment upon us. These help to actually deliver us from our selfishness, our spiritual laziness, our passivity, and all the other things in our lives that make us *unworthy* of the kingdom! The idea that imputed righteousness (justification) cleanses us from our present and future sins and makes us worthy of the kingdom is a giant religious delusion. What justification does, is give us the opportunity to be delivered and made worthy. We are actually cleansed (delivered) from sin and made worthy by the judgment of God, which comes upon us *after* we have been justified, after we have received imputed righteousness.

*For he that eateth and drinketh [the Lord's supper] unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. **For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.***

1. Corinthians 11:29-32

Here's another passage that doesn't fit the today's false gospel. Christians all over this planet are being assured that justification releases them from all judgment and condemnation. Well, if that's the case, then what in the world is Paul talking about in this passage? He said if *we* (Christians) would *judge* ourselves, we would not have to be judged by God. But if we refuse to judge ourselves, God will have to judge us, or else He will have to *condemn* us along with the rest of the world.

Notice what the issue is here. Paul isn't talking about losing our five-story mansion in Paradise and getting a one-story ranch house instead, if we're not judged *after* we've been justified. He's not talking about losing a few jewels in our crown, if we're not judged *after* we've been justified. Nor is he talking about being made ruler over two cities instead of ten cities in the kingdom, if we're not judged *after* we've been justified. He's talking about being CONDEMNED WITH THE WORLD! If we refuse to judge ourselves and also refuse to submit to the judgment of God after we have been received imputed righteousness—guess what? We will be condemned with sinners, *as* sinners.

Did Paul actually mean that? Would God really condemn us along with the unsaved if we refuse to judge ourselves or allow Him to judge us? Can God do that? Can He condemn us like sinners after we have been justified? I thought Jesus took all our judgement on the Cross? And what about that imputed righteousness? How does God *take back* imputed righteousness? All I can say is, you'll have to decide for yourselves whether you are going to believe Paul or today's deluded ministers. If Jesus took all our judgement at the Cross and we can't ever be condemned with the world again, Paul was preaching another gospel.

Justification is not a permanent, irrevocable “state of grace”. It’s a temporary legal position which places us under God’s grace and gives us time to start producing fruit. It gives us time to actually be made righteous. Unfortunately, the most of today’s religious leaders don’t like this truth. They think it’s too hard. That would mean salvation isn’t a once-and-done deal. It would mean we aren’t eternally secure. It would mean we have to do more than “simply believe”. It would mean redemption is a process that can be terminated. It would also mean that we bear certain responsibilities in that process (*they really HATE that one!*). Since they hate the truth, they have chosen to deliberately tamper with the Biblical teaching of justification in order to make salvation simple. But there’s just one little problem—many of the issues of salvation are not simple. One example can be seen in the Lord’s teaching of the vine and the branches. Listen very carefully to what He says:

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

John 15:1-6

Notice that Jesus said a person can be in Him and be unfruitful for a season—though admittedly, it’s very dangerous to remain in this kind of condition too long. He said: “Every branch **in me** that beareth not fruit, he [the Father] taketh away”. Every branch **IN ME!** The *unfruitful* branch is clearly said to be in Christ *until* it’s cut out of Christ by the Father.

And just to make sure we get the point, the Lord repeated it a second time: “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch.” Every branch that abides not **IN ME!** The *non-abiding* branch is clearly said to be in Christ *until* it’s taken away and burned.

The message Jesus is giving us is very clear. From the time a person is connected to the Vine, until the time he is cut out of the Vine, he is considered by Jesus to be in Him. He is under the grace of God. He is in Christ. He is part of Christ. He is a child of God. He has been translated out of the kingdom of Satan, into the kingdom of Christ. He has been forgiven. He has been regenerated. He has been given the Spirit of God. He has received the imputed righteousness of Christ and he has been justified. He *is* saved.

The Lord wasn’t referring to unregenerated “religious” people when He talked about the branches. When He said every branch “in me”—he wasn’t talking about unsaved “professing” Christians. The branches are believers. They are connected to Jesus; they are part of Jesus; and they have the choice to abide or not abide in Jesus. Moreover, the Father *expects them* to bear fruit. Do you really think God would expect “professing” Christians to bear fruit? Please! Regardless of how much a fake Christian may look or talk like a real Christian, he’s not really a Christian. He has never actually been connected to the Vine. He has

never actually become part of Christ. He has never actually been saved. He has *no choice* as to whether or not he will “abide in the Vine” because he’s not really connected to the Vine to begin with—he just *seems* to be connected!

Listen, if it’s possible for a branch to be part of the vine and yet *not* bear fruit—at least for a season—then it’s possible for a *Christian* to be saved (made part of Christ) and not bear fruit for a season. If it’s possible for a branch that was once part of the vine to be cut out of the vine, then it’s possible for a Christian who was once saved (made part of Christ) to be cut out of Christ.

Are we all on the same page, so far?

Okay. My question then, is this: *Can you be truly connected to the Vine without being justified?* Of course, the answer is, *No*. You can’t be connected to the Vine without being justified any more than you can be regenerated or born again without being justified. Yet John chapter 15 teaches very clearly that it’s possible for a person who has been regenerated and justified to be cut out of Christ.

The issue isn’t whether or not we “believe” in Jesus. The issue is whether or not that belief is *producing fruit* in our lives. If our belief doesn’t eventually produce some degree of fruit, then our belief is in vain. The same is true of forgiveness and imputed righteousness. If we never produce any fruit, then in the end, these legal provisions will be in vain. They’re not in vain as long as we remain connected to the Vine. But if we end up cut out of the Vine, they will certainly be in vain, won’t they?

The teaching on the vine and the branches is probably the most comprehensive picture of salvation in the entire Bible. It exposes today’s Calvinistic gospel for what it really is—incompetent and counterfeit. It shows very clearly that salvation is a relationship and a process, not an irreversible legal state we enter based on our belief in Jesus or our adherence to orthodox doctrine. Both the relationship and the process can be terminated if the branch does not bring forth fruit.

Let me interject something right here. You may have noticed that I keep saying *the branch* must produce fruit. The vast majority of today’s (Calvinistic) preachers and teachers—both inside and outside the Religious System—would say that’s heresy because in their minds, only Christ can produce fruit. Once again we are back to the same question I’ve been raising for the past two or three months. Is it *all of the vine and none of the branch* in the fruit bearing process; or is it *some of the vine and some of the branch*? Does the branch have any responsibility in bearing fruit; or can it just hang there and do nothing while the vine does all the producing?

What did Jesus say? He said: “abide in me”.

Abiding in the Vine is the responsibility of the branch, not the Vine. Can we abide in the Vine *without* the Vine’s help? Absolutely not! Can the Vine abide *in itself* on behalf of the branch? Absolutely not! The branch is responsible to exercise it’s own will and choose to abide in the Vine (instead of abiding in it’s own life); and it has to put forth it’s own effort to abide in the Vine. The Vine’s responsibility is to strengthen and enable the branch so it can successfully do what it has freely chosen to do. Paul said: “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*” (Phil. 4:13). He didn’t say: “Christ can do all things through Christ which strengthens Christ in me”.

Even though the Vine is doing most of the work and carrying the biggest part of the burden, the branch must still do its small part or there will be no fruit. A vine cannot produce fruit *without* the branch, anymore than the branch can produce fruit *without* the vine. Fruit bearing is a process that requires co-operation and co-labor. So in the long run, it's just as correct to say *the branch* must produce fruit as it is to say *the Vine* must produce fruit—even though it's true, the Vine is carrying the biggest share of the burden. But since the majority of today's Christians are walking under the influence John Calvin's heresies, I like to say the branch must produce fruit because when I say it *that way*, I know I'm irritating them!

The Lord's teaching on the vine and the branches also shows that the "gift" of salvation is not a gift in the ordinary sense at all. Rather, it's the gift of an opportunity. When we are saved (connected to the Vine), we are given a *grace period* in which to bring forth fruit, or actually become righteous. If we do not bring forth righteousness, we will not be connected to the Vine when the dust settles. But there's more—much more. Not only must we produce fruit, we must also *guard* that fruit so that it's not destroyed. Just because we have borne some fruit, that doesn't mean it can't possibly be destroyed.

People don't think about the concept of *destroyed* fruit very much, but they should! What do we think was happening to the Galatian believers? Paul said they did "run well" (*Gal. 5:7*). He said they not only knew God, but that God knew them (*4:9*). He said they had suffered many things for the faith (*3:4*). He also described the "love" they had for him (*4:14-15*), which was so strong, they would have *plucked out their own eyes* and given them to him if it were possible. That's not human love—that's spiritual fruit. Yet, after they had been seduced and were going back under the Law, that fruit began to be destroyed and Paul said they were in danger of having Christ "*become of no affect*" to them (*5:4*). Brother, sister; if you ever get to the place where Christ has become of no affect to you—you're in big trouble because that means you have been cut out of the Vine. You are no longer part of Christ. In the parable of the sower, Jesus talked about four different types of ground.

The first type of ground was "wayside" ground. This kind of person doesn't even understand the gospel when he hears it. Jesus said he: "*...heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart*" (*Matt. 13:19*).

The second type of ground was "stony" ground. These kinds of people hear the word, and accept it, and believe it for a while. The Lord said when they hear the gospel, they: "*...receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe and in time of temptation fall away*". In other words, they believed the gospel. They believed in Jesus. But something was wrong with their ground—it was never broken up. Their hearts remained full of stones. They were unrepentant (*Matt. 13:20-21*).

The third kind of ground was "thorny" ground. Jesus said these kinds of people: "*...when they have heard, go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit to perfection*". Please notice that He didn't say they produced no fruit at all. He said they brought "no fruit to perfection". That means, fruit began to grow but it was destroyed by the choking action of the cares, riches and pleasures of this life (*Matt. 13:22*).

The fourth kind of ground was "good" ground. Jesus said these kinds of people: "*...heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty*" (*Matt. 13:23*). In other words, these people brought forth fruit "to perfection". They didn't

start bearing fruit and then let that fruit be destroyed by legalism, or the flesh, or demon spirits, or the cares, riches and pleasures of this world, or anything else. They brought that fruit forth to completion or maturity. It's not good enough to just start producing fruit. We have guard that fruit so it's not destroyed.

This is a very sobering parable. Yet, because of all the error we have been taught, particularly with regards to justification, the impact of it is usually lost. When most people read this they automatically assume the second and third types of ground represent fake Christians. They assume these kinds of people were religious, but unregenerate. Most of today's Christians only view the forth type of ground as true believers. But that's not true. The *whole reason* Jesus taught this parable was to warn those who had believed on Him about the dangers of not bringing forth fruit!

The "stony" ground person was a believer! He received the gospel with joy, but he never got rooted in the truth. When persecution came, he fell away. The term "fall away" lets us know that he was a believer. Fake Christians can't fall away. You have to be a real Christian before you can fall away.

But why did he fall away? Jesus said he "had no root" and he was "offended" (*Matt. 12:21*). Remember what Paul said—the persecutions we endure are: "*...a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom*"? The "stony" ground believer had not root. His orientation to the faith was upside down, like so many of today's Christians. He didn't realize he had to be judged in order to bear fruit. He didn't realize he had to be judged in order to be made righteous in truth. He didn't realize he had to be judged in order to be made worthy of the kingdom.

Somebody probably came along after he had believed the true gospel and presented a false gospel to him. They probably assured him that "believing" the message of salvation released him from all judgment and his belief was automatically procured for him everything the Christian faith has to offer. So when God's judgment came on him—as it must come upon all of us—He got offended and fell away.

The "thorny" ground person *was* a believer too. He started to bear fruit. Only a truly regenerated person can *begin* to bear fruit. But the problem was, he let his fruit be destroyed by the cares, riches and pleasures of this world—and the same thing can happen to you and me if we are not careful. We can *begin* to bear fruit and then let the cares, riches and pleasures of this life destroy it!

*For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, **turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness**, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.... Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; **trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots**; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.*

Jude 1:4,11-13

Notice what the apostle Jude said about the people who were turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, which basically means sin. Most of us just assume these men were never saved to begin with; that they were wolves from the start, but they weren't. They were believers at one time. How do we know? Because of the description Jude gives of them. He says they are: "*trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots*". Once again, unregenerated people will never produce any fruit at any time, under any circumstances, ever. They may acquire morality and religious principles; they may join a church and do religious works; but they will never even begin to produce spiritual fruit. Only a truly *regenerated* person can start to bear fruit.

These men were trees who's fruit had *withered*. It wasn't that they had produced absolutely no fruit. It was that they let the fruit they had started to produce be destroyed. Destroyed by what? Destroyed by *false worship*—which Jude calls "the way of Cain". Destroyed by *covetousnes*—which he calls "the error of Balaam". Destroyed by *rebellion*—which he calls "the gainsaying of Core". These men were believers who got entangled in things which had the power to destroy their fruit.

Jude also said they were "twice dead". The usual interpretation of this statement is that they were dead once because they were born in sin, and dead again (twice) because at some point they *seemed* to be born again, but then turned back to their evil life. This is such a mindless view, yet brilliant scholars and theologians propagate it continually.

Anyone with half a brain should know such a thing's not even possible. People who only *seem* to be born again aren't really born again—they only *seem* to be. Since they are not really born again (but only *seem* to be), it's not possible for them to receive a new (second) life. You must actually be regenerated before you receive a second life. But since they never really got a second life to begin with (it just *seemed* they did), it's not possible for them to *lose* that second life or die a second death!

Another explanation OSAS people use to avoid accepting the truth this passage clearly presents is that they were dead once because they were born in sin, and they *would be* dead again (twice), in the future, when they are finally thrown into the Lake of Fire, which is called the "second death" (*Rev. 20:14*). But this is just more stupidity and intentional blindness because Jude didn't say they *would be* twice dead (in the future); he said they were already twice dead while alive in the flesh.

Sorry all you OSAS folks; there's only *one* way a person can be twice dead *while* physically alive. They must be spiritually dead once (born in sin), then receive a second life (be born again), then have that second life slain—and that's exactly what happened. These men found Jesus, not in appearance only, but in truth. However, they got involved in deceptions and fleshly desires which had the power to kill every bit of spiritual fruit they had started to produce—and the same thing is happening to believers today!

What all this means is that forgiveness and imputed righteousness (justification) are not permanent legal states which God sovereignly keeps us in by His own will and power, regardless of what we do. They are *temporary* provisions which put us under His grace and gives us time to produce fruit. However, if we fail to produce any fruit, or if we allow the fruit we have begun to produce to be destroyed, we *will* end up cut out of Christ. Contrary to what the vast majority of today's preachers and Bible teachers are telling people, being justified does not remove us from the danger of becoming involved in things that have the power to destroy the fruit we have begun to produce. Justification is not the whole ball of wax!

As I said, the gospel of Antichrist tells us all we have to do to be saved, to be kept saved in this life, and end up with all the rewards laid out in Scripture, is believe in Jesus and trust Him like a little child. “*Don’t worry*” they say, *God is faithful! The Bible is full of examples of His faithfulness to His people*”. True. But the Bible also has quite a few examples—2,000,000 of them in fact—who didn’t profit from God’s faithfulness because they perished in the Wilderness.

OSAS folks always try to use the faithfulness of God towards *the nation* of Israel to prove that we as *individuals* can’t possibly be destroyed. This is really a stupid argument because the fact that God has been faithful to the nation doesn’t change the fact that millions of individuals who are part of that nation have perished. It doesn’t change the fact that at the Second Resurrection, millions of individual Hebrews and Jews will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

Why will they be cast into eternal torment? Will it be because God wasn’t faithful to them; or will it be because they weren’t faithful to God? The fact is, for multitudes of people who were once in a covenant relationship with God, His faithfulness didn’t help them one bit because they kept making the *wrong* choices. If there’s one thing today’s Christians need to be told, it’s that they are no different than the unsaved when it comes to choosing life or death. Anybody—including you and me—can keep making the wrong choices until we end up in Hell!

One of the problems with this counterfeit gospel, aside from all the idiotic arguments people come up with to support it, is the fact that many of the theological terms we are all familiar with have been redefined. For instance, the term *believe*—which initially included the concepts of trusting, obeying, and relying upon Jesus—is now defined as mental assent to the truth, or becoming fully persuaded of something.

The term *trust*—which initially meant having confidence that God will take care of us as long as we follow and obey Him—is now defined as being convinced that God will take care of us regardless of whether we follow and obey Him. It has also been redefined to mean that God will do all things for us (without any effort on our part), instead of God to enabling us to do all things. So when someone says:

“You don’t need any more doctrine. **You only need to trust that God will finish the work that he began in you.** Don’t let anyone rob you of the joy of your salvation. Our God is a big God. **He’s bigger than our wills.** . . . Come to him with child-like faith. Jesus said that you must become as children. It’s simple child-like faith. **That’s what He wants from us.**”

You have to find out exactly what those words mean to *them*. You can’t just assume that because you are both “Christians”, the words they are speaking mean the same thing to them as they do to you. There are two radically different gospels being preached in Church World right now and the same theological terms are being used to propagate both of them. Those terms have completely different meanings, depending on which gospel you are talking about.

When a person says: “*You only need to trust that God will finish the work that he began in you*”—what does that statement really mean? If the person is walking in the true gospel, it will mean we can trust that God will finish the work he has begun in, as long as we are doing our part; as long as we are striving against sin, seeking first the kingdom of God, walking in the Spirit, denying our self, etc.

However, if the person is walking under today's false gospel, it will mean something entirely different. It will mean that we should believe God will finish the work He has begun in us, regardless of what we *think* we are doing or failing to do, or what we *actually are* doing or failing to do. It will mean that we should believe God will finish the work He has begun in us without us doing our part because doing our part, which is now viewed as legalism and self justification. This is what makes this whole thing so confusing. People don't realize the terms we all use to describe our beliefs have different meanings.

When a person says: "*Come to [Jesus] with child-like faith. Jesus said that you must become as children. It's simple child-like faith. That's what He wants from us*"—what does that statement mean? This is very interesting because the phrase, "childlike faith" is used by virtually all preachers and teachers but it's not found anywhere in the New Testament.

*And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and **become as little children**, ye shall not **enter** into the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 18:3

*Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God **as a little child**, he shall not enter therein.*

Mark 10:15

Ministers will often quote these kinds of passages and then give a great sermon on what it means to *have* childlike faith, or come to Christ *with* childlike faith, or walk with Him *in* childlike faith. But the fact is, the term, "childlike faith" is just one of those phrases that have been invented by religious leaders to present a certain kind of *theological concept* which in fact is not at all Scriptural. As we will see shortly, the Lord wasn't talking about faith in these passages. He was talking about humility.

Childlike faith is often defined as having the simplicity, or the trustfulness (ie: blind faith), or the naivete of a child. But anyone who reads the *whole* New Testament would have a problem with these kinds of concepts. Take for instance, the concept of *simplicity*. It's true that little children pretty much believe and accept anything grown-ups (not just their parents) tell them. This is why parents have to warn their children, especially in these evil days, not to talk to strangers. The idea conveyed by childlike faith in this sense is that walking this way will cause us to blindly trust and obey anything God tells us. We won't sit around like grown-ups do and *analyze* what we are told. We won't try to figure out the *outcome* of that obedience in advance. We will be like a little child and just do what we are told.

That sounds good, but it's not really true; or should I say it's only *half* true. The problem is, God's not the *only one* who tries to talk to us throughout the day. Our flesh tries to talk to us and so do demon spirits, both directly and through other people. Obeying the voice of God in simplicity, without analyzing His instructions or trying to figure things out in advance, is all well and good—but only if you *know the difference* between the voices you are hearing throughout the day. And that is not a simple task. Learning to discern which voice is talking to you is precisely the opposite of simplicity! Anyone who blindly follows the thoughts, impulses and desires that arise within them during the day, without discerning where they are coming from, will be walking in religious delusion very quickly, I can assure you.

You've all probably heard the saying: "A verse without a context is a pretext". Well, that's exactly what ministers do with the above passages all the time. If you read the context, you'll see that the primary meaning of what Jesus said is a *contrast* between religious pride and humility. The passages themselves make this clear, as does the context in which the statements were made. For example, immediately after saying people must become as little children, Jesus said: "*Whosoever therefore shall **humble himself** as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. 18:4). In addition, the context in which this statement was made shows very clearly why Jesus made such a statement.

*At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, **Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?** And Jesus called a **little child** unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and **become as little children**, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. **Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child**, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.*

Matthew 18:1-5

The context was the pride of the disciples, which was manifested by the question they asked—who *is* the greatest? They weren't asking who *will be* greatest when the kingdom comes. They wanted to know who the greatest was at that moment. We know the disciples had a problem with this kind of pride because it's mentioned several places in the Gospels. The reason for that was because they had not yet been broken. They were learning all kinds of new truths; they were experiencing many new and wonderful things; and they were living and walking with the most extraordinary and powerful man they had ever known; but they themselves had not yet been broken. The result of not being broken was that their pride caused them to be in *competition* with each other. Every once in a while that pride and unbrokenness manifested itself so strongly, Jesus had to confront it. The same is true of the context of His statement in Mark.

*And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and **his disciples rebuked those that brought them**. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, **Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein**. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.*

Mark 10:13-16

Did you notice *who* rebuked the people who brought the children to Jesus? It was His own disciples. Now why do you think the disciples rebuked the people who brought those children to Jesus? I think they did it because they assumed that Jesus was just like them—and *they* had no time for children. Children weren't important enough in *their* eyes to warrant the attention of this great man who was sent by God to fulfill such an important mission! They wouldn't have wasted any of *their* time talking to children or blessing children because children weren't of any real value to the cause. They just assumed Jesus felt the same way. So he rebuked them *with* the very children they were looking down their noses at.

The whole point of becoming like a child is to become broken and humbled. The point Jesus was trying to convey by the words He spoke was that we must come to the place where we are walking in *humility*. Nobody who is walking in religious pride will either receive the kingdom or enter that kingdom—that’s how much God *hates* pride. Unfortunately, this is not what the majority of today’s ministers teach regarding those statements. Instead, they *impose* religious ideas and concepts on the words of Jesus which He never intended to say—concepts and ideas that are part of this counterfeit gospel. An example of this can be seen in the following statement, which has been used by a person who teaches this counterfeit gospel to describe childlike faith. This person says:

“If we belong to Jesus, then **we have to believe that no matter what happens or comes our way, it is for our good and according to His purpose in us.** We must believe that **He is sovereign in every part of our lives.** As Roman 8:28 says—And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose.”

Whenever you hear people talking like this, realize that your hearing a false gospel. Yes, it’s true that God is sovereign over the lives of His people. But it’s *also* true that His sovereignty hasn’t prevented Satan from deceiving many of the people He’s sovereign over! It’s *also* true that His sovereignty hasn’t kept some of the people He’s sovereign over from being seduced and destroyed! What Paul said in Romans chapter eight must not be *isolated* from what he said elsewhere in the New Testament. Nor can it be isolated from what the prophets said in the Old Testament.

That kind of attitude isn’t childlike faith—it’s *childishness*. It’s spiritual irresponsibility and passivity. It’s also a religious deception that many people have been ensnared in today because they want God to do everything *for* them. Also, they are too frightened of Satan to deal with him—all their bravado about having “no fear” notwithstanding. They can’t handle the realities that go with adult spiritual life, so they choose to remain babies and cling to false doctrines that encourage such foolishness.

The fact that God is sovereign over the lives of believers doesn’t mean everything that comes our way is for our good. Many of the things that come our way come from Satan, and they are intended to destroy us, and they *will* destroy us if we don’t resist them and overcome them, regardless of how sovereign God is. The same is true of our own flesh. If we follow the dictates and desires of our flesh, we will die spiritually, regardless of the fact that God is sovereign. Isn’t that what Paul said—“*For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die...*” (Rom. 8:13)?

The fact that God is allowing something to happen to us, or that He allows us to do stupid and destructive things to ourselves, doesn’t necessarily mean it will all turn out for our good. It could just as easily destroy us. Whether it destroys us or turns out for our good depends on how we respond to it. The outcome does not rest in God’s sovereignty, or grace, or love, or faithfulness *alone*.

Most of the people who talk about childlike faith are really talking about *counterfeit* faith. It has nothing to do with the teaching of Jesus. It’s easy to take the words, “become like a little child” and impose a foreign meaning on them. Jesus told us what He *meant* when He said we must become like a little child. But people have gone far beyond His intended meaning and have invented a whole list of metaphors

regarding the characteristics of children. Children are simple; children are trusting; children have no responsibility (*people really like THAT one*). Children believe anything you tell them; children will obey you blindly; children have no fear because they trust their father to protect them, etc.

Well, children are also very selfish. Should we include *that* metaphor in our view of childlike faith? Children are just as likely to disobey what they are told as they are to obey. Should we include *that* metaphor in our view of childlike faith? Children also have a tendency to break anything that's breakable. Should we include *that* metaphor in our view of child like faith? The curiosity of children often gets them into trouble or gets them hurt. Should we include *that* metaphor in our view of child like faith?

The fact is, Jesus never talked about childlike *faith*. He only talked about childlike *humility*. And in any case, He certainly did not mean spiritual *childishness*—as in, having no responsibilities. That goes against everything that's taught in the New Testament. Look at the passages where Jesus talks about becoming like a child and you won't ever find the word "faith" being used. The only attribute Jesus ever refers to when He uses little children as an example, is humility. Humility is the attribute that is naturally lost in grown-ups. All Jesus was saying when He told us to become as little children is that we must come to the place where we are broken and humble; where we are walking every day in a spirit of repentance; and where we see ourselves as being of little account. He's telling us that we must come to the place where we *regard ourselves* as unimportant.

What we believe about justification is extremely important. If we believe justification *alone* makes us worthy of the kingdom, and that it *alone* cleanses us from present and future sin, then *the reality* that we must be judged—and sometimes very severely—in order to be made worthy of the kingdom, and be cleansed *after* we have been justified, will not be part of our Christian world view. And as we have seen, not understanding that we *must* either judge ourselves or allow God to judge us can produce dangerous consequences when that judgment comes. We can become offended and fall away; or we can refuse to accept that judgment and end up condemned with the world.

Do you think Satan might be aware of all this too? Do you think Satan might realize that people who end up thinking justification is the whole ball of wax are *very likely* to eventually fall away from the faith or end up condemned with the world because of they have accepted that lie? Do you think it might be possible that Satan is the one who's really *behind* all these perversions in the first place, and that the human religious leaders we see and hear all the time are doing his bidding without realizing it? I do! I think the current teaching on justification came straight from the mind of this brilliant, fallen cherub, and it was designed to cause *precisely* the affects we are talking about.

Another affect this false doctrine of justification has on people is that it prevents them from actually becoming an overcomer, which means they will not be *made worthy* to rule with Christ, which means they won't rule with Him. If *imputed* righteousness is the whole ball of wax, then there's really nothing more that **MUST** be done in our lives to qualify to rule with Jesus in the coming kingdom. If imputed righteousness is what qualifies us, then whatever else happens after we have been justified is basically irrelevant. As long as we have that imputed righteousness, we are qualified to rule. People can TALK about being conformed to the image of Christ, or becoming holy, or overcoming sin all day long. The fact is, if we *really* believe imputed righteousness qualifies us to rule with Jesus, then deep down in our hearts, all that talk won't mean a thing. Deep down in our hearts, we won't believe we have to actually *be* an overcomer to rule.

The more convinced people are that today's perverted view of justification is true, the more they mock and scorn the whole idea of having to *qualify* to rule with Christ. But it goes even deeper than that. It's almost like the whole idea of *desiring* to rule with the Lord becomes evil in their minds. They end up accusing those of us who desire to be made worthy to rule with Jesus of being proud and self righteous. They call us elitists. They say we just want to be lords over other believers. They say we think we are better than everyone else and they say we walk in a spirit that is contrary to Christianity.

A certain minister you are all familiar with does this. He claims that anyone who desires to rule over the nations in the next age—not rule over other Christians in *this* age, but over the nations in the *next* age—is a self righteous elitist who thinks he is better than everyone else. In order to prove his point, he does what he always does. He twists the Scripture. He points to passages where the disciples argued over who was the greatest (*See: Luke 9:46 & 33:24*); or where the mother of James and John asked Jesus to set them on His right and left hand (*Matt. 20:20*); or verses which forbid us to be masters over each other, and he *equates* all that with wanting to rule and reign with Christ during the kingdom age.

But the fact is, the disciples weren't arguing over who would rule the nations in the next age. They were arguing who was the most important *disciple* in *this* age. Also, the story about the mother of James and John was intended to show how selfish the human love of a mother can be. She wasn't asking the Lord to exalt all the disciples over the nations in the coming kingdom. She was asking to have her two sons exalted above *the rest* of the disciples in the coming kingdom. Big difference, folks!

The false humility that's displayed in that kind of twisted comparison is nauseating. Frankly, I have no time for the attitude that says—“*Oh, I'm not worthy to rule over anybody and I never will be*”—because that attitude comes from Satan, not from the Holy Spirit. It's a demonstration of religious pride. God wants to make us worthy to rule with Jesus in the coming kingdom, my friends; and He want's us to desire to be made worthy to rule.

The Holy Spirit spoke through the prophet Isaiah thousands of years ago and said: “*Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment*” (*Isa. 32:1*). That King is Jesus; the princes are the overcomers; the time is the kingdom. Notice that Isaiah said these princes will rule in judgment. That means with a “rod of iron”. Ruling over the nations in judgment during the kingdom age is our destiny, people. It's part of our inheritance. . .if we will allow God to make us worthy of such an honor. I'm not sure what planet these kinds of people are living on or what kind of Bible they are reading—but my Bible says Jesus held ruling the nations with a rod of iron out as a *prize* for faithful believers.

But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

Revelation 2:25-27

We're certainly not trying to rule over anyone here in *this* life. But you better believe we want to be accounted worthy to not only *be* in God's kingdom when the dust settles, but also be *doing* what Jesus is doing, which is ruling the nations with a rod of iron. Those who walk in this of false humility and are

propagating this twisted view of justification better get delivered from it or they will end up with precisely what they are confessing—they will *never be worthy* to rule with Jesus. If they don't get delivered from this garbage, they won't rule with Jesus because will won't be made worthy to rule.

It's true, we will never be worthy to rule the nations without Christ and without being purged of our *own* sin and rebellion. It's also true that we may not be ready to rule the nations at this point. But only Satan would tell us we can never be made worthy to rule. Only Satan would tell us we will never be righteous, when that's the whole purpose of salvation! Only Satan would tell us the desire to rule the nations is unchristian and comes from self-righteousness. Only Satan would call us elitists and accuse us of thinking we are better than everyone else because we want to be made worthy to rule. And I'll tell you something else only Satan would do—only *Satan* would equate the desire of the disciples to be exalted over each other in *this* life, with the desire of believers to win the prize Jesus offers the overcomer.

Let me say in closing that I believe the folks who come into this chat room are committed Christians. So my concern isn't that we aren't bearing any fruit. I believe we are. My concern is that our fruit *remains*. My concern is that our fruit is not *destroyed* by the things that have the power to destroy it. My burden is that we bring that fruit forth to completion or perfection.

I don't want us to settle for just “making it” into the kingdom. Salvation isn't a “package deal” and justification doesn't automatically get you all the rewards in Scripture. There are certain things that every true Christian will receive and experience in the kingdom but there other things—extraordinary spiritual prizes—that must be attained, that must be won. God is making those prizes available to anyone who will pay the necessary price to attain them. Moreover, they will be gained or lost in *this* life, not after we are in the kingdom, and they will be gained or lost by *the choices* we make day in and day out.

So don't let all these deluded ministers deceive you with their false humility. There's nothing wrong with wanting the best God has to offer when He's offering you the best! It's only wrong to desire things or to reach for things that He is *not* offering you or making available to you.

I can assure brethren, your Lord is offering each one of you the very best of His kingdom. But it's going to take *more* than being justified to attain those prizes. You are going to have to be *made worthy* of them—and the only way that will ever happen is through sanctification.

More next week. . .