

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 9- Luke 9:23-26** 172- The Essence of the Biblical Gospel

August 5, 2012

Luke 9:23-26

23 And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

24 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

25 "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

26 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and *the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.*

To the Glory of God

Now we are continuing our Journey through the Gospel According to Dr. Luke and we are in the 9th Chapter and we are looking at verses 23 to 27. And the reason I have spent so much time in this Passage is because this is the very heart of the Biblical Gospel and since the Gospel is under such assault in our day- it is necessary for us to learn from the Lips of Jesus Himself just what the Gospel is and what the Gospel is not.

When you ask what Jesus actually preached as He was confronting lost people; when you want to look at a perfect example of Biblical Evangelism; when you want an absolutely pristine concept of just what the Gospel really is- and see how many in the modern Church have perverted the simplicity of the Gospel- you don't have to look anywhere else- but right here. This is the central part of Jesus' teaching that was so controversial; so radical; so completely unique.

This statement right here is what made the very people that Jesus healed and fed and blessed to cry out for His death. This is what made religious people despise God Incarnate. But these words in this Passage are what makes Christianity so amazingly pure and glorious and this is the part of Jesus' Teaching that was most central and significant. And Jesus was not just talking to the Jews and He was not just talking to people who were already saved- He was talking to every human on earth because He begins this amazing section of inspired Scripture with the words of verse 23:

If anyone wishes to come after Me...

And we can stop and say that this is absolutely essential to Jesus' Mission during His first Advent because Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. He came to call people to Himself. And so here Jesus tells everybody how they must come to Himself; how they are *required* to come to Him. So here Jesus is saying, "*If anyone wishes to come after Me- here's what he must do...*"

So the rest of verse 23 are the conditions that Jesus Himself established for the entering into Heaven. And every single one of these conditions are fought tooth and nail by the leaders of the modern Church.

So when we ask, "What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus?" or "What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?" or "What does it mean to come after Jesus?" or "What does it mean to become a Christian?" or "What does it mean to be saved?" this passage answers those questions.

And this is the very core of the Biblical Gospel and therefore anyone who teaches contrary to what Jesus says here is distorting the Gospel at best and may be even guilty of preaching and teaching another Gospel.

And remember, this isn't optional. This isn't in the Bible for *some* people to obey while others can choose not to obey. Jesus says this is for *everybody*. So you want to follow Christ? You want to come after Christ? You want to be His disciple? You want to be a "little Christ" which is what Christian means? You want to follow Him into His Kingdom, the Kingdom of God. You want His forgiveness, the forgiveness that He gives. You want the eternal life that He promises. Well if you want that- Jesus says:

... he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

Now we've already looked at the four Characteristics of Saving Faith- the kind of faith that saves:

1. Coming after Jesus
2. Denying self
3. Taking up our cross daily
4. Following Jesus

So I now want to look at these- not individually- but now as a whole and to try to give you a summary understanding of what Jesus is really saying here. And it's important to do this because what Jesus is saying is fundamentally opposite to what many preachers are preaching today. In fact, the fundamental Call to Salvation- the very Words of our Lord- being quoted right out of His Own Mouth are utterly opposite of how people think in much of the modern Church.

We live in a time where the leaders of the modern Church promote a culture of self-love- a culture that is consumed with ego-building and self-esteem and feeling good about yourself- thinking that we are important and valuable and thinking God exists for no other reason than to give you the lusts of your heart and do for you whatever your mind can conceive. The biggest draws; those who command the most money and draw the biggest crowds of professing believers all teach the same thing today- that God exists to do the bidding of Man and to make much of Man.

Parents today have been brainwashed into believing that boosting the egos of their children with every imaginable means is the key to their success and yet all that we have done is raise the most self-centered children in history. Truly modern America is in love with itself. Please turn with me to read what the Apostle Paul taught about this very subject in **2Timothy 3:1-5**:

1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:

2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,

**4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,
5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people
turn away!**

Here the apostle Paul classifies "*love of self*" as a sin and part of the "perilous" last days. This describes deceivers and unbelievers- those who live outside the Kingdom of God; those who do not know the Truth. So the concept of "self-love" is at the very top of the list in terms of what is normal and natural to fallen Man. Lost sinners are consumed with pride. They're consumed with themselves. And yet in spite of these dire warnings- many in the modern Church have made self- love into *the* prominent, dominant virtue in our entire society.

So here we are today working to restore Biblical precision to the Gospel and the fight is all uphill due to the fact that an entire generation of church people- who are not only proud themselves- but who have been taught that this self-righteous arrogance toward God and the things of God is actually a virtue and the Will of God and something to be desired.

And here the perfect Lamb of God confronts that sinful, self-absorbed culture with the true Biblical Gospel of death to self and death to personal gain and ambition and a full and complete surrender of everything that we own and everything we are to the Service and the Will of God.

Now I want to place a term in your heart and mind today that you will never forget. So I will borrow it from Martin Luther. Martin Luther- as you know was used by God to launch the Protestant Reformation. He was a Roman Catholic priest who came to understand the Truth of Salvation- that it was not through Communion or baptism and it was not acquired by doing good deeds and it was not purchased through the arrogant notion that God is obligated to save those who are trying so hard to earn their way into Heaven

Luther was blessed by God to see and understand the majesty of God's Grace- that Salvation cannot be won by our puny human efforts but it is given to us by the Sovereign Hand of God and we receive it by Grace and through Faith in the finished Work of Christ alone- all to the Glory of God alone.

And what God used with Martin Luther was the very same thing that He used with me- a deep; penetrating; verse by verse; line by line;

precept by precept Study of the Book of **Romans**. And through the careful study of that Book- the false teaching of Rome concerning Salvation became clear and Luther became so enamored by God's Grace that he was compelled to confront the Roman religious system with both their abuse and their corruption of Biblical Salvation. So he wrote down 95 different statements- ninety-five theses- 95 different "protests" against the error and abuse of Rome. And that's why we're called "Protestants" today- because we protest against Rome's twisting of the Biblical Gospel.

So Luther wrote down ninety-five different assertions that ran completely contrary to Catholicism as it was practiced at that time and he wrote them down and he nailed them on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany.

And the fourth of his protests- number 4 of his ninety-five assertions was concerning a "penitent heart"- a heart that has been Sovereignly conditioned by God to come to God absolutely broken over his own sins- a heart that is so devastated over his own sin that he cannot even look up into Heaven but simply beats his chest in agony- a heart that makes no demands on God; that offers no excuses; that seeks no special arrangement; a heart that joyfully and gratefully receives the Mercy and the Grace that God has given through Christ- that kind of heart is characterized by the term- and this is Luther's term, not mine- it is characterized by the term:

"Self-hate"

Quoting from Luther's fourth statement,

"... and so true penance remains only while self-hate remains."

Luther said that "self-hate"- not self- love; not self- esteem; not self- fulfillment; not self- satisfaction- but self-hate was the true interior penitence of a genuine believer.

"This," said Luther, "is essential to the gospel."

So whereas the Roman system- like every system of self-righteousness and earning Salvation by ceremonies and good deeds- is

awash in self-love- God moved upon Luther to confront that issue head on and while he was certainly not aware of all that God would later reveal to many others who came after him- God used this sacred little monk and he said to the highest places of power in Rome:

"Until the sinner comes to hate himself, he does not enter the Kingdom of God."

So you have in the very early birth pangs of Protestantism- the true heart and core of the Biblical Gospel that Luther pried out from under the bushel where it had been hidden for many years in Catholicism- that the Gospel that Jesus preached is founded upon the sinner's own self-hatred of himself and his sins.

So the first work of Grace that brings the lost Man to Christ for merciful Salvation is that the person literally hates himself over his rebellion and sin against God- because a person comes to see that there is in his own flesh no good thing- nothing to take any pride in at all- that there is nothing of value- nothing of worth. That our hearts are- as Jeremiah said- deceitful above all things, desperately wicked- every part of us is sick- as Isaiah put it- from the head to the toe. There's no good thing in lost Man anywhere. There's nothing about us that has any value. There's nothing about us that has any worth. There's nothing about lost Man that is deserving of any honor or any praise or any accolade.

So in order for anyone to be saved- God must Sovereignly bring that person to the place of the Beatitude-attitude- of understanding their own spiritual poverty and bankruptcy- of looking at the sum total of everything that's done in your life- whether it's religious or whether it's educational, or whether it's moral, or whatever it is- and honestly come to the assessment that it is all "skubalon" rotting human excrement. And talk like that just does not sell well in the Church of self-love.

And if you really stop and think about how utterly absurd it is to think that a wicked sinner who has done nothing but transgress against a holy and righteous God would bargain with God or try to negotiate with God about what he will and will not do after God has graciously and mercifully forgiven him of all his sins and rescued him from eternal damnation.

And it is equally absurd to suggest that a person could encounter a holy and righteous God and enter into His Kingdom without wanting to be delivered from his filthy sin and without wanting to be delivered from understanding sin as sin really has to be understood, that it is pervasive and dominant.

So those who meet God on God's terms- those who come to God and enter in to His Kingdom- invariably have an overwhelming sense of their own sinfulness.

For example- Job- who was the best of men alive at that time, according to the first Chapter- when you get over to the 42nd chapter- Job said this about Himself:

Job 42:5&6

**5 I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you;
6 therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."**

The Hebrew actually reads:

"I loathe myself" or "I despise myself" or "I hate myself". No self-righteousness here. No self- esteem; no bragging; no arrogance; no pride- only humility and brokenness. One glimpse of the Majesty and the Glory of God and the horror of Job's own inherent sinfulness caused him to hate himself and repent. And keep in mind- this happens to *everybody* who is truly saved.

As the Apostle Paul was *beginning* his ministry- he made the statement in **2Corinthians 11:5:**

For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles.

But toward the end of his ministry he said in **1Timothy 1:15:**

It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of all*.

How did Paul go from being the very best to the very worst? The longer Paul was in the Presence of God; the longer Paul gazed into the Face of God; the more Paul beheld God's Glory- the more sinful he saw himself to be. And the more magnificent Grace was.

There was nothing about Paul that commended Paul to Paul. There was nothing about Paul, therefore, that commended him to anybody else. People today brag unabashedly about how great they are, how good they are, how many things they've achieved, how desirable they are, how accomplished they are, how valuable they are. It was Isaiah in **Isaiah 6:5** who right after he saw God's Glory said:

Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

Isaiah said, *"I'm literally disintegrating before my very eyes. My whole self-image is disintegrating, it's going to pieces."* Because in the Presence of God- this golden tongued prophet saw himself only as a wretched sinner and pronounced damnation on himself because he said he was a man of unclean lips. That's what we're talking about. That's what self-denial is. It's not saying, "I'm the man of God" and have all kinds of people running around waiting on him- treating him like a prima donna. It's not about prancing around like a peacock- crowing about all your own accomplishments. It is saying, *"I deny that there is in me anything of value; anything of worth; anything good; anything that ought to be awarded anything; anything that ought to be paraded as exemplary; anything that ought to be exalted."* It is this overwhelming sense of drowning in your own utter sinfulness.

When Peter was in the Presence of Christ he said in **Luke 5:8**:

Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!

When he was aware of the fact that Jesus was God because He was controlling the fish that day- Peter had nothing but loathing for himself. He said, *"Go away, You shouldn't even be around me. You shouldn't even be near me."* Same attitude is found in **Luke 18** as the publican drops his head and won't even look up to heaven because he doesn't even think he has a right to look up, lest God should look into the face of such a wretch, says, *"God, be merciful to me, a sinner."* And he beats on his breast but he won't even look up. He doesn't even want to get into eye contact, as it were, with God. He's that unworthy.

And there are many other examples in the Scriptures of those men and women who when they really saw God were literally crushed under

the weight of their own nothingness, their own sinfulness. And frankly, this is absolutely alien to the culture that we live in. It's foreign and alien to the culture based on self-love and self-fulfillment and having every whimsical desire legitimized. Anything and everything you want- you should have. Any way you want to act- you should have that right. You can be whatever you can be. You can dream your dream and live your dream. These people teach that the whole goal of life is for us to desire whatever we want to desire and then see it all fulfilled- insisting on rights; insisting on privileges; making demands- even on God; insisting on respect; insisting on reward and honor, and affirmation.

That is what characterizes the modern Church- but the people who enter God's Kingdom don't insist on any of that. They feel themselves unworthy of any of it. People who enter into God's Kingdom are literally overwhelmed with hatred for what they are. I hate what I am, I hate what I am, I hate what I...what I am because all that I am is sin. And what springs out of that is true humility and gratefulness.

And this self- loathing produces genuine repentance and a hatred of sin and it produces an embarrassment and a blushing over sin and a turning from sin and a longing to be delivered and rescued from what you know offends God and a longing to be made into the Image and Likeness of Jesus.

That is why Jesus said in **Luke 5:32**:

I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Jesus cannot and He will not do *anything* for people who think they're already righteous. Jesus cannot and will not do *anything* with people who are impressed with themselves, or impressed with their own religiosity or impressed with their own morality or impressed with their own money and education and achievements. Jesus can't do anything for those people. He didn't come for them. He came for wicked sinners who are ashamed and devastated by their own sin- not people who insist that they are already good people. They don't hear Jesus' Message and they do not repent and they are not saved.

In **Luke 13:3** Jesus tells us just how important this repentance is when he said:

I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

... and He's talking about death and hell. And then down in verse 5 He repeats it. **"I tell you, no, unless you repent you will all likewise perish."** So twice in one Chapter Jesus tells us we are going to die and go to hell if we don't repent. And the only people who even think they need to repent are people who know they are wicked sinners- people who are self-aware of their own inherent wretchedness. That's why the Sovereign Work of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of sin.

So what Jesus is saying here is that if you want to enter into My Kingdom; if you want to follow Me; if you want to be forgiven of sin; if you want eternal life- you have to start by hating everything you are apart from Me and recognizing that the very best about yourself is a filthy rag and despising everything about yourself.

So the real message of the Gospel that Jesus preached is that everybody who wants to go to heaven needs to start by hating everything that they are. And that just doesn't sell well in our society.

And when do you ever hear a preacher preach like that today? That's not seeker-friendly. That's not meeting the popular culture at its own level- which is the new kind of pragmatism. Try that in the churches where unbelievers are made to feel comfortable in their lost condition.

When did you last hear anybody on the Hay, Wood and Stubble Television Network preach on hating yourself and loathing yourself and abhorring yourself and despising yourself, and seeing in yourself nothing of value? There's nothing in you, in your mind, in your emotions, or in your volition, there's nothing in your achievement that's really good. There's nothing worthy of honor, nothing worthy to be established as an example, nothing. At its best- all human good- which is devoid of the Power and Grace of God and the glory of God is really nothing more than another manifestation of self-righteous arrogance against God.

I just heard yesterday- I was listening to an evangelist on the radio and he said, *"Are you unfulfilled? Do you feel your dreams are not being realized? Do you feel an emptiness in your heart? Come to Jesus and He'll fill up your heart and He'll fulfill your dreams"* And all that valuable air time on the radio spent on telling people that Jesus came and screamed in agony on the Cross so that He would give them whatever they want in this life. Dear friends- that is not the Gospel.

And the people who preach that garbage are not men of God- they

are hirelings- they are Judas goats who are lading the sheep to slaughter.

In **Luke 24:47** Jesus said that two things constitute the Biblical Gospel:

- ✓ Repentance
- ✓ Forgiveness of Sin

Not just forgiveness *of* sin- but also repentance *from* sin- both of those are required for true Salvation and that kind of repentance only comes through a heart that is broken over its own inherent wickedness.

And you know what He said? He said, don't start saying that when you get out of town- start saying that right here in Jerusalem. So there is not one message for Jerusalem and then another message for some other place. No. You start here in Jerusalem and call people to repent and believe the Gospel and you start right now- right here in Jerusalem- among all the self- righteous Jews where it's not popular and then out from here- you cross the globe. And in every nation on the planet and to every people- no matter how poor or how wealthy; no matter how educated or how ignorant; no matter what the culture or what the circumstances- you preach the same two things: Repentance and Forgiveness.

You preach that in the Name of Jesus- people will be forgiven of their sins- but only if they repent. And repentance is the product of self-hate. It's the product of that Beatitude attitude. People repent when they look at themselves and they're ashamed of what they see. When they look at themselves and they're brokenhearted over what they see. So this repentance is a complete redirection of their whole self-assessment that says, *"I'm nothing- I'm less than nothing. I am sinful and wretched and I don't deserve anything from God but eternal damnation."*

And you can't work up that kind of self-hate. This ability to see yourself as God sees you is a Sovereign gift from God. It is part of Saving Faith. This is not a human work. This is not something a dead, blind, deaf, hard-hearted sinner is going to come up with on his own. The only way the lost sinner will ever come to realize this- is when the sinner is exposed to the Word of God and the Spirit of God- where

the Spirit of God takes the Word of God and awakens the sinner to his true condition.

But how can the Holy Spirit awaken the sinner to his true condition unless the Truth is preached? He *cannot* and he *will not*. And so preaching like a whole lot of people do today may make them very popular and it may draw huge crowds- but God is not glorified; Jesus is not exalted; people are not convicted of their sins; and nobody gets saved.

And that is why Paul said in **Romans**:

How shall they hear without a preacher?

Somebody has got to say this. Somebody has to love God enough and love people enough to tell them the Truth and not be ashamed of the Gospel and preach exactly what Jesus and the Apostles preached without any hesitation and without any apology.

So the Call to repent and be saved is not a call for you to go out and do something to make your life right before you come to Christ. It's a total reversal of the way you view yourself and it encompasses every part of your being.

Three different Greek words are used in the New Testament to refer to repentance and they illustrate the three sort of elements of true repentance.

- ✓ *Metanoeo*
- ✓ *Metamelomai*
- ✓ *Epistrephomi*

Metanoeo is used in **Luke 11:32** and in **Luke 15:7&10**. And this word, *metanoeo* basically means: *a reversal of your thinking; or a change in mental attitude*. So with this word- you change your mind. So that kind of repentance deals with the human mind. And you have to change your mind about how you view yourself, to see yourself the way you really are; to see yourself the way Scripture says you are; to see yourself the way God says you are- to see yourself as utterly fallen and completely depraved and absolutely corrupt from the top of your head to the tip of your toe.

The second word, *metamelomai* also means: *repentance*. And it's used in **Matthew 21:29-32**- only it emphasizes deep regret and sorrow. So once the mind has grasped the new definition of who I really am, there is a consequent motion that goes from the mind to the feelings and emotion kicks in and there is sorrow and there is shame and that is this word.

And finally there's a third word, *epistrephomi* which is also the word for repentance. And it's used in **Luke 17:4** and **Luke 22:32**. And it actually means: *a change in direction in life and this refers to your will*.

So true Biblical repentance starts in your mind and moves to your emotions and it activates your will and that produces measurable action.

And those are the three elements that are involved in true repentance. You change the way you view yourself, you feel remorse and sadness about that and so you turn around and you head in the direction of change. And that's going to put you in the direction of God. And you're going to be like the publican in **Luke 18**, you're going to be saying, "God, God, my mind understands my wretchedness, my emotions feel it so I can't even lift up my eyes and I'm pounding on my breast and then my will kicks in and cries to You and says, 'I want You to be merciful to me, a sinner.'"

So, intellectually repentance begins in the mind with a recognition of sin and an understanding of the profound depth and breadth of that sinfulness. It then moves to the emotions which produces an overwhelming sense of sorrow and brokenness and remorse. This is the godly sorrow that Paul talked about which leads to repentance. And then volitionally true repentance always and in all cases involves a change of direction away from that sin toward God and toward Christ-crying out for Mercy. So we cannot stop at the first one or even the second one. True repentance is not just a change of mind- it's a change of mind, emotion and will and it always produces measurable action which makes concrete changes towards God and away from sin.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote,

"Repentance means that you realize you are a guilty, vile sinner in the presence of God, that you deserve the wrath and punishment of God, that you are hell bound. It means that you begin to realize that this thing called sin is in you, that you long to get rid of it, that you turn your back on it in

every shape and form. You renounce the world whatever the cost, the world and its mind and outlook as well as its practice. You deny yourself, you take up the cross, you go after Christ. Your nearest and dearest and the whole world may call you a fool, or say you have religious mania. You may have to suffer financially, it makes no difference. That is repentance,"

And that's why Jesus said, *"You have to love Me and Me only so much- that every other kind of love – like the love for your mother or father or children or wife or husband or even your own life- is nothing but hate by comparison."* That is the mark of every true believer.

Now what is crystal clear about this is that in all His Preaching- Jesus always sought to bring sinners to this point. And the people who resisted this Message the most- were the people who felt the best about themselves. And who were the people who felt the best about themselves? The self- righteous religious Jews, the Pharisees, and the scribes, and the chief priests, and the religious elite- the religious establishment.

In their minds- they were very, very accomplished people. They were free, they had never been in bondage to any man, they said. They were sighted, as it were, they could see things true and spiritual. They were healthy. They were righteous. They were good. And, of course, Jesus just obliterated that. He told them they were blind. He told them they were corrupt. He told them on the outside they were painted white, on the inside they were full of stinking dead-men's bones, corpses.

Jesus never said, *"You know- you guys are trying so hard and I am really impressed with all your effort and you're real close- but you're just a little bit off in your theology- but you're all basically good people and I came down from Heaven to give you a few pointers about how you can get this thing right in your minds."*

No- Jesus Christ- the perfect sinless Son of God Who was Love Personified- literally attacked their self-righteousness and you have to do that in preaching because that is the damning dominant sin of all of mankind. It is what makes people to be lost. And Jesus constantly sought to bring sinners to this point of self-hate. But because they were so engulfed in self-love and self-righteousness- they despised Jesus' Message and this hatred for the true Biblical Gospel moved them to murder the only sinless Man Who ever lived.

And it wasn't that they didn't want a Messiah- it wasn't even that they didn't necessarily think He might be the Messiah- they did want a Messiah desperately. They wanted, as we've already learned, free food. They wanted the most incredible medical plan ever devised, healing for everybody all the time and resurrection if you die, free with no premiums and no process to go through. You just went to Jesus and He took care of it, no paper work. Of course they wanted that. And they would have embraced it- but Jesus intruded into their thinking with this offensive and insulting Gospel that they were going to have to hate themselves instead of love themselves. They were going to have to see themselves as the poor prisoners, blind and oppressed. They were going to have to come to a beatitude-attitude of poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, recognizing they were destitute of righteousness and demonstrating a hunger and thirst for it. They were going to have to be willing to be persecuted and not acclaimed or they would die in their sins.

And they hated that Message for only one reason- because they loved themselves. And that is exactly the way it is today. If you love yourself terminally- then you damn yourself. If you love yourself- you hate the Gospel. And that is why Jesus told them in **Matthew 21:31**:

Tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the Kingdom of God before you.

Now the tax collectors were the most despised and hated people in all of Israel because they had betrayed their own people for money. Tax collectors bought a Roman franchise- a taxation franchise- and then extorted money from their own brethren and enforced the collection of these taxes with a bunch of thugs and thieves and strong-armed people who did whatever they needed to do to get the money.

Now Jesus wasn't saying that being a tax collector was okay- He was saying that because they were so despised- God had given them eyes to see themselves correctly and they knew that they were evil and wicked and made no pretense about how lost they were and as long as a person sees their own inherent sinfulness- there is hope for them to be saved.

Can you just imagine if you were a religious leader in Israel in the first Century and Jesus saying that to you? Tax collectors? Why you'd spit on a tax collector and prostitutes will get into the Kingdom of God

before you? Why? Because these people are more likely to loathe themselves than you are. Becoming more moral by your own strength and power may actually move you further away from the Kingdom of God- because it will become a source for your boasting and add to your pride and arrogance- and then the Bible says God resists the proud. Jesus said that there is something beneficial about wallowing in the consequences of gross iniquity- not because Jesus approves of their sin- but only because it has its own capability of awakening you to the reality of who you really are.

I've said this through the years. People become Christians when they get desperate enough over who they are; when they are at the point of total desperation about wanting to be rescued; when they know they're literally going down for the third time in the sea of their own sin.

The wicked riff-raff of Israel were far more likely to recognize their sin than the self-righteous. And there never is any Salvation for anybody apart from repentance.

The simple but profound Message here in this Passage is that nobody ever gets saved apart from the Gospel of Jesus Christ- that is believing in the One Who died and rose again for you- the Lord Jesus Christ and all of the Truths about Him. And you can't become saved by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ unless there is true genuine repentance.

And yet here we've got people writing Christian books and going on national television saying that people in the world who have never heard about God; never heard about Jesus; never heard the Bible; never had the Gospel preached to them can be saved by simply looking up and saying, *"Because I believe You're a Creator up there, and I believe in You as Creator."* In other words- one writer says, “

“God would be unjust if He didn't take these people to Heaven.”

So in their Theology- not only do people not have to confess in Jesus as Lord- they don't even have to believe in Jesus. They don't even have to know there is a Jesus. But what about repentance? Where's that? What do we do, just eliminate that? That's a convenient thing.

No, my friends- Jesus said, "You want to come into the Kingdom? It's going to take more than simply believing that some generic god lives

up there.” There must be genuine shame over your sins. There must be a true remorse and brokenness. Not because I am making more of this than I should- but because this is what Jesus said here. There must be a true overwhelming conviction of our sin or there is no Salvation.

So one last time- before we move on. We’ve gone over this in great detail and we may never be able to revisit this again- so write this upon your heart. The Lord Jesus Christ’s Own Words here says that for anyone to come after Him- they must hate themselves- hate their own sinfulness. The utter disavowing of oneself as having any value in unredeemed condition, and even in redeemed condition our only value is as a tool picked up by the sovereign Lord. So in all true Salvation- there is always self-denial, and then there is a daily cross bearing, and then following that is a joyful and humble obedience as we struggle against the lusts of our flesh by the Power of the Holy Spirit to follow and obey Jesus Christ- all to the Glory of God- for the rest of our days here on this earth and then we will spend eternity in Glory with Jesus in Heaven.

Next week, Lord willing- we will look at the great Paradox of true Salvation from the very lips of Jesus where the only way we can save our lives is to lose them.

Let’s pray.