

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

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

**Chapter 11- Luke 11:24-28**

## 218- The Terrifying Danger of Human Morality- Part 1

---

September 8, 2013

### **Luke 11:24-28**

**24 "When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.'**

**25 "And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order.**

**26 "Then it goes and takes *along* seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."**

**27 While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed."**

**28 But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."**

To the Glory of God

Now over the last two weeks- I have told you that contrary to popular opinion- this Passage here in **Luke 11** is not about demons; and it is also not a formula of how we are to cast demons out of people. This Passage is about Jesus Christ and it is about the Essence of Christ's Nature and His Own defense of Himself against blasphemy.

Now when I was first saved- back in 1971- I was taught that verses 24- 26 was a formula concerning how to cast out demons or an explanation of how demons are cast out and I was never really sure as to why Jesus thought it necessary to respond to the woman in the crowd with His statement in verse 28.

But since I have been expositing the Word of God now for over a decade- I see that this entire passage- beginning with verse 14 is not about demons or casting our demons at all. It is all about Jesus and verses 24-28 are all about the terrible curse of human morality raising its arrogant head against God and it is about a very important issue that I call,

### **The Problem of God's Righteousness**

And we will see as we continue on into Luke- that God's Righteousness is a very serious problem with Man- in fact it is the single biggest issue with fallen Man because it is at the core of Man's rebellion and his continual effort to try to make himself acceptable in God's sight by what he does for himself.

So understand this- people trying to do something- *anything*- to earn God's Favor and thus work their way into Heaven based on elevating their own personal intrinsic righteousness and morality is not a noble thing- it is not an honorable thing- it is not something that we should respect and admire.

No, any effort to work your way into Heaven is a hideous evil and a wicked sin and is an insidious attack against the Grace of God and the finished Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In short- the notion that human beings can do anything to earn or deserve or to be entitled to enter into Heaven is heresy; it is apostasy- it is idolatry and is simply another manifestation of the arrogance and self-righteousness that is inherent in every single fallen human being- which is why Jesus responded so severely to this woman.

Now the effort to earn Salvation or to work your way into Heaven is called, "Legalism" and it is the very first heresy that confronted the Christian Church and genuine believers have been at war with this heresy from the very beginning.

Now because the modern Church has all but abandoned line upon line and precept upon precept studies of the Holy Bible- the term, "Legalism" has taken on all kinds of new and strange meanings. Many times today- Legalism has come to mean any effort by anyone to strive for obedience and Biblical Holiness. People are called, "Legalistic" who seeks to bring their flesh under subjection by the power of the Holy

Spirit and walk in humble and joyful submission to the authority of Holy Scripture.

But suffice it to say that those efforts are not examples of Legalism- but are examples of Biblical Christianity and to call obedience, "Legalism" only serves to reject Truth and marginalize the real threat of the heresy of Legalism. So Legalism is very narrowly defined as people engaging in activity for the purpose of making themselves acceptable to God by what they do for themselves.

And as deep and accurate Theology and Biblical Truth continues to fall by the way side in the modern Church- the problem of Legalism is getting worse- not better. We have all in one way or another been exposed to this current trend in the modern Church that not only applauds and admires human morality but seeks to emulate it as the key to Salvation.

The Roman Catholic Church has always upheld human morality. The Mormons and many other false religious groups- the various cults and sects all make an issue out of human morality as the primary issue in Salvation. Islam is based on it as well as Hinduism; Buddhism; and modern Judaism. But whatever it is called and in whatever form it takes- it is the effort to obtain eternal life by and through becoming a better person by human means and make no mistake about it- all of these efforts are the enemy of God's Grace; they are the enemy of Biblical Christianity; and they are the enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But what is amazing is that even though the heresy of Legalism has been confronted and exposed and rejected by the Christian Church as a great evil in several very powerful and well publicized battles- it has always remained as one of the most stubborn false teachings to defeat- precisely because it makes perfect sense to the fallen mind of lost and unsaved Man.

Several years ago- we saw this very same heresy raise its ugly head in the form of what was called, "The Moral Majority" which has now been redefined as "The Religious Right"- a political movement that is designed to "take America back" to its moral roots and thus open the door for a new age of godliness and prosperity.

American politicians speak often about the importance of what they call, "Judeo Christian values" and how critical it is to teach morality to our children and to call America back to moral living and moral conduct. Many leaders in the modern Church have made a major

emphasis on this issue of human morality as the Church has become politically committed to effect a moral change in America through political lobbying and through the use of huge sums of money designed to buy political influence and by engaging in various boycotts and protests.

And if we did not have the Holy Bible and if the Lord God and Creator of Heaven and earth had not taken on flesh and become Man and lived a sinless life and died to secure our eternal salvation based on what He alone did and if God the Father had not raised God the Son from the dead three days after He died- then I would gladly participate in this effort to help us all become more moral.

But we *do* have the Bible and Jesus was born of a virgin and He did live a sinless life and He did die on the Cross and God imputed all of my sins on Jesus and Jesus died with all my sins on Himself and God did raise Jesus from the dead and so my Salvation is not secure because I pray a prayer or because I partake of communion or because I am baptized or because I speak in tongues or because I walk down an aisle or because I shake the preacher's hand or because I serve in a leper colony or because I fly airplanes through buildings or because I strive to be more moral.

No, my Salvation is eternally secure based on what God Sovereignly did for me and based on the fact that God gifted me with the gift of faith and God granted me with the gift of repentance and based on the fact that God sovereignly opened my blind eyes and that God sovereignly unstopped my deaf ears and because God sovereignly took out of my body a stony hard heart and God graciously and mercifully gave me a heart off flesh. God sovereignly gave me spiritual life for no other reason other than it pleased Him to do so- a life that I did not already possess and could not obtain by anything that I did or stopped doing and was not able to earn.

So I am saved by God's amazing Grace and I am saved through the glorious gift of faith- the ability to believe that was not already inherent in me until that moment and so Salvation is not *of* me; it is not *through* me; it is entirely *of and from* God and therefore I cannot take any credit for it precisely because I do not deserve any praise for it and so all the praise and all the glory and all the honor for me salvation goes to God and to God alone.

Legalism attacks all that. The elevation of human morality as a means of Salvation attacks every single bit of that until you finally come to one of three conclusions:

1. Salvation is entirely by Grace through faith and it is not of human works at all
2. Salvation is entirely of human works and is not of Grace through faith at all
3. Salvation is a combination of Grace through faith and human works

And every single false religion and human philosophy on earth now and all throughout human history teaches some variation of either #2 or #3 and Biblical Christianity alone teaches #1.

So from that standpoint- from the perspective of Salvation-

Human morality is more dangerous than immorality

... and that is what is at stake in these five verses. There is a very real and serious danger in some kind of moral reformation without sovereign regeneration. There's a very serious danger in endeavoring to live your life according to so-called Judea/Christian values without being truly born again. Any Reformation that exists or that thrives without spiritual transformation in genuine Salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ puts a person in the situation of taking great comfort in the morality that he has attained it becomes nothing more than a way to manifest that we are just fine without God and without God's Grace and without the life and death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ- and I will tell you straight up that those efforts are not good; they are not noble; they are not commendable- they are evil.

Now the greatest illustration of what I am talking about is the Pharisees- that group of Jews who ruled in the Church during Jesus' days on earth.

These were the most moral people on the face of the earth and yet they are the only group that Jesus never said anything good about. They strove to reach a level of human morality that would put obedient Mormons to shame and yet they fought against Jesus every step of the way and desired the sinless Lamb of God to die.

The Pharisees lived by a very complex ethical code. They demanded that life be controlled by moral standards. They demanded this ethical moral behavior be based upon the laws of their own tradition and yet Jesus condemned them and said this about them in **Matthew 23:33**

**You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?**

So their morality gained them nothing while it cost them everything. And make no mistake about it- it was their own human morality that caused them to reject Jesus Christ to His Face. That's why Jesus said to them in **Luke 5:32**

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

Because it is the righteous, it is the moral, it is the religious, it is the self-satisfied; the moral people- the people who uphold the traditional values who are the most resistant to the true diagnosis of their spiritual condition.

And that was the case with the Jews of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century and it is the case of every single human being on earth today who is lost until God mercifully gives them eyes to see and ears to hear and an heart to believe.

The whole of the Jewish population of Israel had been so influenced by the false doctrine of the Pharisees that they hated the truth of their own spiritual condition as diagnosed by Jesus. And the Pharisees, of course, hated the fact that Jesus identified them in the way that He did. Look down for a preview to **Luke 11:37** and read five verses with me:

**Luke 11:37-41**

**37** Now when He had spoken, a Pharisee asked Him to have lunch with him; and He went in, and reclined *at the table*.

**38** When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal.

**39** But the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness.

**40** You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also?

**41 But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you.**

And then from verses 42 to 52- Jesus issued out a scathing indictment against these religious hypocrites who were the single most moral people in all Israel and to prove that everything that Jesus just said about them was correct- look at their response in verse 53:

**Luke 11:53&54**

**53 When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects,**

**54 plotting against Him to catch *Him* in something He might say.**

So instead of being smitten in their hearts and falling on their face and repenting for all their self-righteousness and begging Jesus to save them- these people hardened their hearts even more and planned to try to trap Jesus.

So this exchange in our Passage this morning is really deep and really powerful and really important and so to tie all this in together requires that we take each part separate and then put them back together. And so I want to begin with the heart of the matter and that is the attempt by lost and fallen man to replace human morality with God's Righteousness. And we find that attempt in verses 27&28 where the exchanged between Jesus and one of the women in this crowd- so let's examine these two verses again together:

**27 While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed."**

**28 But He said, "*On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.*"**

Now many people will read this exchange and come away with nothing more than that this women in the crowd was simply trying to honor Mary- the mother of Jesus and that Jesus was simply pointing her to the Truth about eternal Salvation.

But in reality- this woman was doing what every single lost person does until the Spirit of God overrides their natural inclination to

trust in their own human righteousness and look to Jesus for forgiveness and Salvation- she was elevating human morality to be equal or even superior to God's Righteousness.

And Jesus would have none of it and He attacked the notion that human morality could in any way justify the ungodly and cause them to be blessed by God. And that leads us to a very important question that we need to ask and answer:

Is it possible to not worship Jesus and still be moral?

In other words- if we don't value God for Who He really is- then our behavior- which is nothing but an outgrowth of our valuing of God- is going to reflect that skewed understanding of God.

We need to understand that the very essence of true morality is not the deed we're doing- for example, not stealing, or helping somebody change a tire on a bitter cold winter night. No, the essence of true morality is the mindset out of which that deed flows. So it is the deed that is based on the mindset. And so if the mindset has roots in a flawed perception of God- then the "god" that is being reflected through the deed is going to be a flawed "god". He is going to be a wrong and flawed reflection.

Now the reason we tend to think that morality is not affected by a flawed view of God is because we really don't understand the true essence of morality as being the mindset and the motive and the display of God and His Glory.

And again- that is why I will tell you all the time that if you want to correctly understand any subject at all- if you seek to learn about any subject under the sun- the very first thing you need to study is not that subject- but God. Please turn with me to read just two verses of Holy Scripture that I hope will help you to understand this better. The first one is **Romans 11:36**

**For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.**

Everything that exists- exists for God's Glory and everything that exists- comes from God and it exists through God and it eventually goes back to God and God will be glorified by it or it would not exist in the

first place. And that means all knowledge and all abilities and all talents and all possessions and all of creation- including your mind and your breath and your ambitions and your very life is from God and is through God and is to God and His Glory.

Therefore- if you seek to learn about the human mind or how to build a bridge or how to balance your check book or how to cook or how to understand your wife or husband or how to comprehend any issue that exists in all of Creation- you should start with God and the particularities of His Character and His Nature and His Essence and how that thing relates to God and how God can be or is glorified by it.

The second verse is found in **1Peter 4:11** that says

**Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

And that involves everything that we do on planet earth as small and seemingly insignificant as eating oatmeal in the mornings to more important things such as who we are to marry to massive issues like nuclear disarmament or human morality. So if we are to rightly understand morality- we must first understand God and the connection between morality and God so that we may assure that any morality that we embrace will be solely "of God" and will be solely "through God" and will be solely "to God" and that it brings glory to God and to God alone and does not feed our own fleshly desire to be made much of.

And that is why, by the way, I have a problem talking about this thing called, "Judeo-Christian values" or ""Judeo-Christian ethics" or "Judeo-Christian morality". Because if you say "Judeo" you are referring to the religion of the Jews who not only do not believe in Jesus Christ as being God in human flesh but who believed and taught that Salvation was earned through keeping the Ten Commandments while the term, "Christian" means those who absolutely confess that Jesus was God in human flesh and who believe and teach that Salvation cannot be earned by Jews or anybody else and that Salvation is entirely by Grace and through faith in the finished Work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. So the term, "Judeo-Christian" is a strange term to me.

The New Testament was written to say that those who do not fully honor the Son by worshipping Him as God do not honor the Father at all. So the concept of a Judeo-Christian ethic as the goal to which we're aiming is profoundly mistaken.

True ethics must flow out of a true view of God, and to reject Jesus Christ is to have an absolutely wrong view of God. Therefore any ethic that flows from that- and called, "*morality*"- is going to be fatally flawed.

And that is true- even if some of the behavior between those who have a wrong view of God and those who do not is the same. Because the point of ethics is not merely the kernel or the shell of the behavior- but the inner convictions of the mind, the disposition of the heart, and the goal of what we're displaying that causes the behavior.

And so if Jesus Christ and Salvation through Him alone is omitted or marginalized or skewed or hidden from that effort- if there is any attempt at all of obtaining morality without God and His Glory at the very core- then we must understand that we do not have ethics or morality but what we do have is a substitute for godly morality and something that is deceptive and that will lead people to eternal damnation. About 150 years ago the "prince of preachers", Charles Spurgeon said,

"Holiness deals with the thoughts and intents, the purposes, the aims, the objects, the motives of men. Morality does but skim the surface, holiness goes into the very caverns of the great deep; holiness requires that the heart shall be set on God, and that it shall beat with love to Him. The moral man may be complete in his morality without that. Methinks I might draw such a parallel as this. Morality is a sweet, fair corpse, well washed and robed, and even embalmed with spices; but holiness is the living man, as fair and as lovely as the other, but having life. Morality lies there, of the earth, earthy, soon to be food for corruption and worms; holiness waits and pants with heavenly aspirations, prepared to mount and dwell in immortality beyond the stars. These twain are of opposite nature: the one belongs to this world, the other belongs to that world beyond the skies.

It is not said in heaven, 'Moral, moral, moral art thou, O God!' but 'Holy, holy. holy art thou. O Lord!' You note the difference between the two words at once. The one, how icy cold; the other, oh, how animated! Such is mere morality, and such is holiness! Moralist! — I know I speak to many such —

remember that your best morality will not save you; you must have more than this, for without holiness — and that not of yourself, it must be given you of the Spirit of God — without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.”

I commend to you Doug Wilson’s book, *Five Cities that Ruled the World* (Thomas Nelson, 2009). The cities he highlights are:

- ✓ Jerusalem
- ✓ Athens
- ✓ Rome
- ✓ London
- ✓ New York

... each leaving the world a legacy.

For example- Jerusalem has left us a legacy of the spirit; Athens, a legacy of reason and the mind; Rome, law; London, literature; and New York, industry and commerce.

But in developing the literary legacy of London- Wilson unearthed this nugget from C. S. Lewis about William Tyndale and the Protestant Reformation:

“Tyndale was willing to endure great trials because of what he believed about the Gospel. C. S. Lewis explained that the ‘whole purpose of the ‘gospel,’ for Tyndale, was to deliver us from the great curse of human morality. Thus, paradoxically, the ‘puritan’ of modern imagination—the cold, gloomy heart, doing as duty what happier and richer souls do without thinking of it—is precisely the enemy which historical Protestantism arose and smote.”<sup>1</sup>

So if CS Lewis and William Tyndale were right- and if our worst imaginations of what the outpouring of the Wrath of an infinite Creator might be like are but a shadow of its real horror- then there is nothing more important for any person in this building today or in the greater world around us- than to completely despise his own human morality and quickly recognize his own inherent sinfulness and to get as fast as

---

<sup>1</sup> (128–129, quoting Lewis from his *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954], 187)

he can to that place of utter desperation where God may grant that he cry out to God for undeserved Mercy and unearned Grace.

But we need to remember that one of the most insidious characteristics of sin is that it is horribly deceptive. **Hebrews 3:12&13** says,

**12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.**

**13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**

So at the heart of all sin is a lie. The foundation of all evil thinking and all evil doing is a false premise- a lie- that says to all of us in our sin,

"The act you are now doing- the desire or the attitude you are now feeling- is not really bad or wrong because there are much worse things. They are not very bad at all because everyone else experiences the same things. They are not bad because you really can't help it. They are not wrong because there is no God, or, if that won't work- God knows you are but frail and weak and He understands your frailty and He will tolerate and pity your sin."

My dear friends- there are a thousand distortions of the Truth which sin brings with it into the human heart. And this is so true that the Prophet Jeremiah was moved on by God the Holy Spirit to say,

**Jeremiah 17:9**

**The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?**

Many times I go into utter despair at the subtlety of the sin in my life- how it manages to distort reality and blind me to truth and spark foolish and evil inclinations. And when I look at the very small world of my own neighborhood with all its thievery and drunkenness and sexual promiscuity- or the larger world of horrible torture stories from Bolivia or wicked men slaying their wives and then trying to blow their own brains out with a shotgun only to leave themselves alive with no face- when I look at the subtlety of sin in my own life and its iron clad grip of deception on the world at large- I sometimes ask what hope there is of

opening anybody's eyes to the ugliness of sin and to the awful peril of condemnation if we fail to repent and be forgiven.

But then I remember the Promise concerning the Power of God's Word in **Hebrews 4:12&13**:

**12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**

**13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.**

Nothing exposes our sinfulness like the Word of God. It blows away the thick fog of deception and lets us see sin for what it really is. Not that we might wallow in it- but that we might flee from it.

Therefore, my goal today is to let the Word show us what sin is, and why it is sin- especially in light of Jesus' Condemnation here in **Luke 11** of what is one of the most deceptive sins and that is the elevation of human morality over the Grace of God- the heresy of Legalism when He said that the truly blessed person is not the one who bore and nursed the Christ but rather the one who has been graced by God to hear the Word of God and observe it.

You know there is very rarely a cure to any disease without a diagnosis being made first. And what is what Jesus offers us today- His Own Diagnosis of our human disease called sin in the form of human morality. Because if we don't see this for what it is- it will continue to have power over us. But if we are graced by God to see- then we will be able to avail ourselves of the Great Physician- who can save us to the uttermost. So at the heart of this issue is this question:

What Is Sin?

And the most penetrating and devastating definition of sin that I am aware of in Scripture is the last part of **Romans 14:23**:

**... whatever is not from faith is sin."**

And the reason it is penetrating is because it goes to the root of all human morality- which is the utter failure to trust God and be

completely dependent on Him. And the reason it is devastating is that it sweeps away all the lists of dos and don'ts and makes anything, from preaching to house-painting- a candidate for horrific sin.

In the original Greek language- this is stressed more than in our English versions. In the Greek it literally says,

"Everything which is not from faith is sin."

So anything- absolutely any act or attitude which is owing to a lack of trust in God and is based on the self-righteousness that flows from the elevation of human morality is sin- no matter how outwardly acceptable it may appear to men. Beloved- God looks on the heart and the heart that God is moving on will believe the Word of God and seek to observe it.

For example- in **Romans 14**- Paul addresses a situation in which some believers in the Church thought it was wrong to eat meat while others thought that all foods are pure. Some were teetotalers while others drank wine. The Apostle Paul agreed with those who saw all things as being pure in themselves but something was more infinitely important to Paul than making all the Roman believers into meat-eaters or wine-drinkers.

The Apostle wanted both groups to walk in godly love and not do anything that would injure the faith of another- even if it was okay to do so. Notice verses 2 and 3:

### **Romans 14:2&3**

**2 One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables *only*.**

**3 The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.**

Now look at verses 14 and 15:

### **Romans 14:14&15**

**14 I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.**

**15 For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking**

**according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.**

Then verse 21:

**Romans 14:21**

**It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or *to do anything* by which your brother stumbles.**

And then he takes this concept to the ultimate height and depth when he said in **1Corinthians 8:12&13**

**12 ... by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.**

**13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.**

So what Paul is doing in this chapter is redefining sin for these people. Sin cannot properly be defined in terms of mere acts like eating and drinking- it must be defined by its root. So an act of eating meat may or may not be sinful according to whether it springs from genuine love or not.

But there is yet a deeper root than love or lack of love and that comes out in **Romans 14: 22&23**:

**Romans 14:22&23**

**22 The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.**

**23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *his eating is* not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.**

Paul means here that if your faith frees you from feeling guilty about eating meat, for example, don't think you have to flaunt your freedom at the expense of injuring others. Then he goes on, "

**Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.**

... in other words, it is a joy to have a clear conscience and not to feel guilty for what we choose to do or not do. Then he concludes,

**he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.***

So what Paul is saying here is that if you are not sure whether eating meat is wrong and you think it might be wrong but you go ahead and eat it anyway instead of denying yourself to avoid what you think might be sin- then you are condemned- that is- you are guilty of sinning. And the reason he gives is that such eating is not from faith and whatever is not from faith is *sin*.

Now the assumption here is that to go ahead and eat meat when you think it may be wrong is an eating which does not come from faith. But why is that? Why can't such eating be from faith?

And if we can answer this question- we can know more precisely what Paul means by faith in verse 23 and in turn what the nature of sin really is. And that will help us to understand why Jesus was so adamant about responding to that woman the way He did in **Luke 11** and why this was such an important issue to Him when all it seemed was that the woman was just giving Jesus' mother a compliment.

So why is it that we are not acting from faith when we go ahead and do something we think may be wrong? And the answer to this jumps out at us when we ask another question:

Why do we go ahead and do something we think may be wrong or harmful to others?

Isn't the answer that we feel that if we don't do it we won't be as happy? Aren't we willing to risk hurting someone or doing what we feel may be wrong simply because that course of action seems to hold out the most happiness to us? So we do what we do because we think doing it will make life more pleasant or at least more bearable.

But if that is so- then it is easy to see how our behavior is not from faith. Faith would see the possible wrong or injury which our action may cause and would not feel the need to risk it in order to make our own future happier- because faith trusts God to construct a future for us which is vastly to be preferred over the one we could make for ourselves.

Therefore, it is obvious that when we try to make our own future happy at the risk of doing wrong or harm- we are certainly not acting

from faith because faith rests in God to shape the best future for us.

So here we get a glimpse into what Paul means by saving faith and why it is that genuine faith always changes lives. What comes out of verse 23 is that faith is strong confidence in God that He will work in the affairs of our lives so that only what is best for us happens to us.

What a power would be unleashed in our lives and minds if we really believed that the Almighty God- Whose Counsel cannot be frustrated- is at this very minute- busy at work making sure that what happens to us this morning at Church and tomorrow afternoon at home and Wednesday morning at work is only what is best for us! But we must take heed, dear friends- because trusting God like this is the enemy of human morality.

Now there is a grave error in the modern church which says that saving faith focuses mainly on what God will not do to us- like hold our sins against us. And this is a grave error because in both the Old and New Testaments an essential element of faith focuses on what God will do for us now and in the age to come- and not what He will *not* do.

Saving faith is confident not only in the Truth that God has forgiven our sins through the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ- but also in the Truth that God is now busy at work in the everyday affairs of our lives to do us good.

According to **Romans 8:32**: "He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?" Yes, He will, and saving faith is confident of this. Of course, "all things" means all things that are best for us- including all sorts of tribulation which is why Paul said in **Romans 5:3&4**:

**3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;**

**4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;**

So saving faith is primarily future oriented. And I don't mean merely heaven-oriented. I mean it is oriented to tomorrow morning and is confident that God is going to work that worrisome situation out. Abraham was justified by his faith. He stood clean before God. But what was his faith? **Romans 4:20b&21** tells us,

**20 ...he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,**

**21 and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.**

So unlike human morality which trust in the outward acts it is able to produce- saving faith means resting in the Promises of God. What Promises? All the Promises- including, God works everything together for good for those who love him (**Romans 8:28**); and He will follow you with goodness and mercy all your days (**Psalms 135:2**); He will not leave you or forsake you (**Hebrews 13:5**).

So saving faith is confident in the Promises and Power of God. Therefore, it is not anxious about tomorrow but has joy and peace, taking God at his word. So Paul says in **Romans 15:13**,

**Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Trusting in human morality always produces self-righteousness while trusting the God of Hope always produces joy and peace. And the reason it does is because our confident hope is that God is at work right now and tomorrow in the everyday affairs of our lives so that only what is best for us happens to us.

And this is what lies behind **Romans 14:23**. Sin is anything, any act or any emotion or attitude, that does not sprout from the soil of such confidence in the God of Hope. **"Whatever is not from faith is sin."**

So there are three implications of this definition of sin which I want to try to drive home:

## **1. The All-Pervasive Fault in Every Sin is its Character of Unbelief**

And by unbelief I do not mean simply a refusal to accept the Truths of the Bible. We are not saved by giving mental assent to the Promises of God. We are saved by whether we hope with our hearts in the Promise that God will save us through Jesus Christ. Legalism diffuses this hope and places it on human morality and achievement. So the failure of the heart to be confident in the Promises of God and to rejoice and find pleasure in His Provision for the future is the root and

essence of all sin. So unbelief is what mainly displeases God in every sinful act.

## **2. We Cannot View Sin as Simply Transgressing a List of Dos and Don'ts**

"Everything that is not from faith is sin." One of Satan's most successful lies is that sin can be limited to a manageable list of dos and don'ts and therefore- human morality rises up to say that because I have not broken this law or this commandment therefore I am saved. This lie causes thousands of churchgoers to think that things are OK between them and God because they avoid one list of don'ts and practice another list of dos- while in fact they may be sinning all day long and incurring the Wrath of God- because their attitudes and actions do not come from joyful trust in the Promises of God. Legalism minimizes the magnificence of the New Covenant because it simply trades the list of Commandments from the Old that we couldn't keep with another list from the New that we will not be able to keep either.

And please don't think that this cannot happen to people in this church. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians,

### **1Thessalonians 3:5**

**For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.**

So in the modern Church- satan is primarily in the business of replacing glad and enduring trust in God and what God has said with mere human morality. He loves to take a life flowing from happy confidence in God and turn it into a religious duty. So I beg you not to allow him to do this- because whatever is not from faith is sin- and that includes religion.

## **3. A Warning to Those Who Have not Sought Christ for Forgiveness or Placed Their Hope in Him.**

If you are not trusting Christ for forgiveness and are not resting in

His daily Work on your behalf- then according to **Romans 14:23**- not a single one of your moral actions comes from faith- but every single one of them is sinful and an insult to the infinitely trustworthy God. And I hope, if you have not received Christ with all his forgiveness and all his hope, that this week you will not be able to shake loose the thought that everything you do is sinful in God's eyes, for whatever does not come from faith is sin.

Beloved- Jesus reacted so strongly and so quickly to the comment made by this woman from the crowd in Luke 11 that it almost borders on rudeness. And yet because our Lord did re-act and because He did re-act the way He did- we cannot afford to ignore it and we must ponder the issue of the danger of human morality deceiving us and overtaking genuine true Salvation.

So my effort here today with this sermon is not to finish the discussion about the hideous heresy of Legalism- but to initiate it and to encourage you to continue in your glad confidence in the God Who cannot lie.

Amen. Let's pray.

© 2008-2013 by The Covenant of Peace Church. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America

The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729 [www.covenantofpeace.net](http://www.covenantofpeace.net)

Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1995 by The Lockmann Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of teachings taken from a verse by verse study of **The Gospel According to Luke**. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete copyright statement be at the end of all copies.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.