

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

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

Chapter 11- Luke 11:33-36

224- These You Should Have Done Without Neglecting
the Others- Part 2

November 3, 2013

Luke 11:37-54

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.**

42 "**But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.**

43 "**Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places.**

44 "**Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it."**

45 One of the lawyers said to Him in reply, "Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too."

46 But He said, "**Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers.**

47 "**Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and *it was* your fathers *who* killed them.**

48 "**So you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build *their tombs*.**

49 "For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and *some* of them they will kill and *some* they will persecute,
50 so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation,
51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house *of God*; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.'
52 "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering."
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.

To the Glory of God

Now three weeks ago- we stopped at the very point of this entire Passage- and so I want to review that this morning. Look closely again at verses 37&38:

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.

So after Jesus had talked about the lamp of the entire human body being the eye- a Pharisee who had been standing there hearing Jesus rebuke his entire system of man-made religion invited Jesus to have lunch with him.

And at first- this seems to be a nice gesture- even a kind and godly gesture. I mean after all Jesus has just made some very serious and important points in condemning the religion of the Pharisees in particular and all false teaching in general and yet here is this leader of that same very false and man-made religion inviting Jesus to a meal.

So on the surface- it seems as though this man is trying to make amends by inviting the Lord to see that at least he is not like the other religious leaders. And yet as we will see- the single most scathing rebuke of the false teaching of the Pharisees is reserved for this man at

this luncheon on that day. Over the next 16 verses- Jesus issues out the single most startling and breathtaking rebuke made against any group of people by God anywhere in the entire Bible. God never condemned the Ninivites in Jonah's day or the Amalakites in Joshua's day or the Egyptians in Moses' day like he does here to these Pharisees. And when you consider that the Pharisees were the single most religious people in all of Israel during that time- this Divine Rebuke is even more frightening and something that we cannot take for granted.

So from that we can rightly conclude that this Pharisee was really not a nice guy at all, he was not a true believer, he was not sincere in his pursuit of Truth, he was not a genuinely saved man who was simply a little of base in his thinking and in his theology. And we can also rightly conclude that his invitation to Jesus to join him for lunch was not a sincere effort to learn the right way of the Lord either- but was simply another means to trap the Lord and another way by which to extract information out of Jesus that could be used later to denounce and reject Him.

And Jesus knew all this because He knew the heart of all men just like He knows the heart of all men today- just like he knows your heart this morning and He knows my heart and Jesus will gaze into our very souls today to discern the Truth about each one of us as we are confronted by this Word this morning. So I beg you to take heed to yourself.

This man was a religious phony, an ecclesiastical fraud. A church liar, a false follower of God, a deceived man who thought that trinkets and ceremonies and rituals and form and fashion and following rules and living by a moral code and cleaning up the outside was the same thing as being born again and being regenerate and of being saved.

This man wore ecclesiastical robes- but he did not love God; he had memorized a good portion of the 39 Books of the OT- but he was not a child of God; he was in the Church but he was not on the straight and narrow path. He knew *about* God but he was not following *after* God. He belonged to the most steadfast, fastidious, meticulous religious group the world had ever seen- and yet he was not going to heaven.

This man had memorized and had prayed long, very detailed prayers and yet God didn't hear him. He had become associated with the right group of men who lived in right country, who physically possessed the Word of the one true living God- yet he was as distant

from God as the one who had never heard and the one who had never known. How could this be?

And when God took on human flesh and came down to rescue His people from their sins- this man right here in this Passage along with his religious brothers- fought Jesus every step of the way. They argued with and fought against and categorically rejected Divine Truth. They sought with every fiber of their being to discredit God Almighty in human flesh. On their tombstone we might could read this inscription-

“I fought against God”

And the reason why I pause with this subject and say so much about it and use every description I can think of- is because I want to emphasize to you and to myself that the entire time that this man and his other Pharisees fought against and rejected and condemned and tried to kill Jesus- they thought they were right; they thought what they were doing and what they said about Jesus and what they thought about what Jesus said was right. These men bet their eternal souls on what they were doing; they were convinced that they were right and that God was wrong.

And that scares me to death. I do not fear death and I do fear the coming persecution of the Church in America- but this subject literally terrifies me. Because we have only two things that separate us from these men. There are only two things that divide between them and us and that makes what we are doing different from what they were doing:

- A. The undeserved and unearned and unobligated Mercy of God
- B. The undeserved, unearned and unobligated Grace of God

And the difference between Grace and Mercy is that God's Grace empowers and enables us to know and to do and to be something that we would not and could not normally “know” and “do” and “be”- without it. So Grace is that which allows us to know God and that allows us to love God and that allows us to enjoy God forever. Grace is that Divine gift that is granted to us at God's own free and sole Prerogative that forcefully and violently overrides our natural and normal tendency to rebel against God and to run and hide from God and to be blind and deaf and disinterested in God and the things of God. And that is why

the Apostle Paul says in **Ephesians 2:8** that we are saved “by” Grace. We are saved because of Grace and we are saved through Faith- or in other words- we are saved “through” the means of the gift of faith that God graciously gives us.

But the catalyst, the origination, the beginning, the starting point of our Salvation is Grace- that God chose to set His Love upon us- before we were ever born, before we did anything good or evil. So before God ever made the world- He determined to save us by giving us what we do not deserve, what we cannot work to earn, and what He Himself is not obligated to give- and not by or through anything that we do for ourselves. So Grace gives to us or allows us to have- what we do not already have and cannot earn.

Mercy however is that which keeps away what we *have* earned and what we *do* deserve away from us. You see, because we sin- we should be punished for those sins. So because of our sin- we have earned God’s Justice against those sins. And the only reason why God doesn’t instantly annihilate every single human being on earth right now- is not because we are not guilty- because we are all guilty; it is not because God wouldn’t be correct to judge us- because He would be correct to judge us, and it is not because we have done something to avoid God’s Judgment- because we have not.

Don’t think for a second that “God sees your heart” and sees that you love Him and that is why God doesn’t judge you right now. Don’t think so much of yourself to be deceived that because you obeyed God last Thursday for about thirteen seconds that that is why God doesn’t judge you.

No, the only reason why God doesn’t destroy us all right now is His Mercy. But we need to know that Mercy is not leniency. It isn’t that God is a sap that loves you so much that He is going to let you slide or that sin no longer matters to God or that God doesn’t care what you do now that you are saved. None of that is true.

No, the only reason why the entire human race is not screaming in hell right now is that God chose to set all of the sins of all of His elect – those people that God chose to save from before the foundation of the world on Jesus. And God chose to pour out the full Fury of His Righteous Wrath against sin on the one Man and Jesus died with the entirety of the Judgment of God against Sin that should have been poured out on us.

And God raised Jesus from the dead three days later in the same Body in which He died – but without any sin. And at that moment Heaven itself was opened for unworthy and sinful people to enter in by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone.

So Mercy is not something that allows our sin to go unnoticed or that compels God not to act against our sin. But Mercy is that gift of God that allows God to be forgiven of our sin because they have been paid for by Jesus.

So anytime you- as an unworthy sinner- can read a verse of inspired Scripture and understand it- it should literally amaze you- because that is nothing short of a miracle. The concept that a fallen human mind can correctly comprehend Divine Truth to the point where we can be convicted and where we can change because of knowing that Truth is something that should break us and humble us and make us so thankful and so very grateful.

To think that any of us can actually know God and understand Him to the degree that we can- is absolutely amazing. And this is the science called, “Epistemology” which is the “science of knowing”- and it truly is a wonder. God has graciously given us a body of Teaching in His Word and through the illumination of the Holy Spirit in our minds- we can read those words about the Character and Nature of the Owner and the Creator of the Universe and we can read words that tell us what sin is and what Righteousness is and what Truth is and we can understand those words and we can understand them to the degree that we can then go out and make decisions based on that Truth and make very specific changes in the way we live our lives based on that Truth and we can then form opinions based on that Truth.

Many people today are attacking the idea that human beings can ever truly know anything. There is this intellectual pseudo- humility that says it is arrogant for us to think that we know anything for sure. But peppered all throughout the Bible are words like these from the Apostle John in **1John 5:13**:

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

So it is God’s Will that we know, that we understand, that we comprehend what God has said. So God has chosen to grace us with the

Knowledge of Himself and to grace us with the ability to read these inspired Words and reason them and God has given us the ability to formulate thoughts that alter the course of our own lives, the lives of our families, the life of the Church, and the course of nations. All of this is a gracious gift of God to unworthy people.

And God has gone to great lengths to allow all this to happen. God moved on 40 men who lived on three different continents over a 1400 year time span- most of whom never even met each other- and God moved on them in a very mysterious process called, "Inspiration" which is similar to the way that the invisible wind moves into the sail of a vessel and carries it over the water and God breathed inerrant and infallible Words into these men and allowed them to write these words down- using their *own* language and their *own* terminology and their *own* reasoning and their *own* grammatical style- and yet superintending them to the point that these words are free from any error in part or in whole.

And then God set about to move upon men- some of whom were lost and ungodly men to copy these words down and then re-copy them and then re-copy them hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of times in over 100 languages to preserve them till this day through wars and disasters and the rise and fall of nations and peoples and civilizations to the point where there are only about 16 "translations difficulties" from the very earliest manuscripts that we have uncovered and the copy of the Bible that you hold in your hand. And of those 16- we know where every single one of them is and none of them involves any issue of Doctrine.

And God has graciously and mercifully allowed you and me the honor and the privilege to sit down and open up our copy of the 66 individual Books that make up our Bibles and to read them and to understand them to the point where we are able through our Bibles to rightly and fully know God- the greatest Treasure in all the Universe- and to read His Word and to actually comprehend it and God allows us to think about the deep and profound and eternal issues that His Word talks about and then to formulate our reasoning around those things in connection to His Divine Truth which allows us to know and understand and see and that allows us to change and to mold us and to transform the way we look at life and sin and holiness and money and children and all of the things that we deal with in this life from a

Biblical and godly perspective! Again I say- that ought to take your breath away.

But don't think for a minute that we don't possess the very same capacity to be deceived as these men did. It is nothing short of shocking; it is actually breathtaking to see how easy it is for human beings to believe things that are simply not true, to take comfort in lies, to trust in things that are passing away, to lean on things that are not there, and to place our hope in things that don't exist. And yet you and I know Him and we know Truth. How could that be?

The capacity that saved people have to see false teaching and resist deception has absolutely nothing to do with how smart we are or how strong we are or how educated we are or how much money we have or any human quality that we might be blessed to have. God Sovereignly graces us with the gift of being able to know. And God *mercifully* doesn't hold our sin against us to stop us.

And that could have been it. God could have just stopped there and said- *"Okay they know Me because I have caused them to know Me"*. But He didn't. God created "means" or a way or a "method" by which we know God and "means" and a way and a "method" by which we know Truth. And that is to spend time laboring and struggling to read and to carefully analyze and to research and to question and to ask and to study these inspired Words so that we will appreciate what God has said and value it and hold them in their proper esteem.

But because we are frail humans- even after we do all of that- we still will not know Truth or we will not know Truth in its proper context unless and until God graces us with the blessing of knowing and loving and understanding Truth.

And so we must pray. We must beg God to reveal Truth to us and we must beg God to keep us from being deceived and to forgive us when we find out that we have been deceived. And as we grow in Grace- our capacity to know and understand Truth grows as well. And as our capacity to know and understand Truth grows- our ability to know and understand God grows and as our capacity to know and understand God grows- our admiration of God, our respect for God and our being in awe of God grows- and those three things are the base or the foundation of Love.

You see, we cannot truly love someone unless we admire them and unless we respect them and unless we are in awe of them. That is why

God created Marriage to be entered into mostly by youthful silly young people who really don't know much of anything.

But as they grow together- they learn each other. And as they live their lives in such a way to the Glory of God- the other one will begin to admire that and the other one will respect that and the other one will hold that person in awe. And so the longer a marriage goes on in that kind of condition- with those three things constantly growing- the more love grows between them.

It is a tragedy that so many in the modern Church have bought into the patently pagan notion that people who are married for a long time- somehow "fall out of love" over time. That is simply false. People fall out of love when they sin and when they cease to "do" and to "be" what the Bible requires them to "do" and "be" and as they live selfishly to the benefit of *themselves* and not *selflessly* to the benefit of the other. So what happens when we rebel against the Scriptures is that over time- the admiration of the other goes down and they lose respect for each other and they no longer are in awe of the other and the result of these three things being hindered is that their love diminishes. And this is one of the greatest causes of the divorce rate being so high among believers in our day- because iniquity abounds the love of many is waxing cold.

But the solution is for these married people to repent and to utterly abandon their selfish destruction and to serve one another with joy and gladness- to God's Glory- and God will restore those three components and then love will automatically resurface and thrive.

And the very same thing is true about God. People see no benefit in turning off the sports program or the video game or the mystery novel or the Garden to spend time in God's Word because they no longer love God.

Prayer meetings are boring if you are not in love with the Lord. To study the Bible seems to be such a waste of time when compared to watching the Super Bowl or texting friends or making more money or downloading a new app on your smart phone.

But people no longer love God- even after He has forgiven and saved them- because they no longer *admire* God and they no longer *respect* God and they are no longer in *awe* of God. And there is only one way to restore admiration and respect and awe for God and that is that God will be good to perform a miracle in that very soul of that

individual and grace them with personal revival.

And this cannot be an *emotional* revival that only lasts a few weeks- but a *spiritual* revival that will change the individual to the point where he will once again fall in love with serious and deep, line upon line and precept upon precept studies of the Bible, where he will learn and understand Truth, where he will love to spend time in the Presence of the Lord in prayer, where he will join in with His brethren around the Table of the Lord in Communion and where he will be blessed to learn from his brothers and sisters in godly times of fellowship.

Because those four things are what made the early Church to be “common” with every believer on earth. It is what made them alike with each other. It is what made the Church of Jesus distinct and different from the world and it is what made them strong. Turn with me to read about this from **The Acts 2:42:**

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

1. The Apostles' Teaching
2. Fellowship
3. Breaking of Bread
4. Prayer

These four things are what made them the Church. These four things are what made them strong and vibrant and it is what caused them to be in awe of God and to hold God in high regard and to admire God. And notice that they did these four things “**continually**”. And that they were “**devoted**” to them.

I was 16 years old when I first read this verse. And God drilled into my heart and mind the importance of these four things. And for over 40 years now- I have been faithful to emphasize these four things to everybody who listens to me. They are a hallmark of my Ministry.

And I want to emphasize these four things to you again this morning. You place a priority on these four things and you will grow in God. You separate from anything and anyone that hinders these four things- you consciously choose these four things over and above everything else and anybody else- and you will grow in your admiration

for God and you will grow in your respect for God and you will grow in your awe of God and by doing that- your love for God will grow as well and then prayer and fellowship and Bible Study and partaking of the Lord's Supper will come easy for you.

These four things will not always keep you away from false teaching however- but they will equip you and allow you to see that false teaching and to eventually escape it and run towards Truth.

And my point is that you can be as creative as you want to about trying to become strong in the Lord. You can invent clever new methods to supposedly disciple people by having picnics and by going bowling and by having pottery classes and weight loss classes and by starting motorcycle clubs- the modern Church is full of these things.

But after all of those things are said and done- if you are not in the Bible as a serious and consistent part of your daily life to the point where you are actually seeing Divine Truth and if you are not developing a powerful prayer life to the point where you are being convicted of sin on a regular basis and if you are not engaging in times of godly fellowship with other believers who are doing the other two things to the point where you are actually learning how to be godly and how to avoid sin through their walk with God that you did not already know- if you are hanging out of Church and skipping Services- then I will tell you that you are weak and you are *not* growing in Grace and you are *not* being discipled and you are *not* becoming strong in the Lord and the Power of His Might because you are trying to circumnavigate around the Biblical Method and it simply will not work. So go God's Way and live.

Okay so now we know that God gave Truth and that God desires for us to know Truth and to appreciate Truth and to value Truth and to disagree with and reject all that is opposed to Truth. And we know that God has created a way and a method for us to grow in Truth so that our admiration of God and our respect for God and us being in awe of God is high and those three things will produce in us a deep and abiding Love for God that will draw us close to Him and allow us to enjoy Him and will empower us to resist sin and to overcome evil and fight the good fight of faith until He returns. Okay we got that.

But now I have a question:

If it is God's Will that we know Truth- why is there error?

If it is God's Will to give us Truth and to preserve that Truth for us and if it is God's Will that we know that Truth and love that Truth and obey That Truth and defend that Truth- and if it is true that God is absolutely Sovereign over everything all the time- the why is there any error at all?

Isn't error and false teaching and apostasy and heresy wrong? Isn't it destructive? Didn't God Himself say in **Hosea 4:14b**

... the people without understanding are ruined.

... didn't the Apostles warn us repeatedly about a false gospel and false teachers and false apostles and aren't we told to study and to learn so that we will know Truth so that we will not be deceived and so we will not be led astray?

So then if God is against that which is false – why is there so much of it in the earth? If false teaching is so destructive to His Cause- why does God not end it? If God wants people to be saved and wants them to hear and know and believe the Truth- why is the earth filled with all sorts of false things that hinder that? Why did the Pharisees exist if they were deceived? Why did Jesus tolerate their heresy? Why did God allow them to even live as they were deceiving people and leading them astray?

And keep in mind that these Pharisees didn't just disagree with Jesus. This was not a "gentlemen's disagreement". They didn't simply "agree to disagree" on some finer points of theology. No, they thought Jesus was evil. They thought and they said and they promoted the story that Jesus was of the devil- that the mighty, unmistakable, miraculous, earth shaking Works that Jesus did in broad daylight in the sight of hundreds and thousands of people was of Beelzebul- the prince of devils. These people thought that Jesus was from hell and that He was wicked and that He was a child of the devil who was to be thoroughly rejected and condemned. How do you get so deceived? How do you get so wrong about so much? How can a human being possess such a dark heart and such blinded eyes and such deaf ears? How can you get anymore wrong than they were about the single most important issue?

So could it be that God has Designs for deceptive signs and wonders? Does God have Good and Wonderful Purposes for heresies and

false teaching?

From the time of Moses to this morning- this has been and will always be an issue. Let us look at what our Lord Jesus promised us from **Matthew 24:21-25**:

21 For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.

22 Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

23 Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There *He is*,' do not believe *him*.

24 For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

25 Behold, I have told you in advance.

Now keep in mind that these are not little carnival tricks. Jesus said in verse 24 that they are "*great* signs and wonders". Great. Strong. Powerful. Persuasive. But they are not aimed to bless or to draw anyone close to God or to convict anyone of sin or to save a single soul. No, these signs and wonders are all aimed at doing one thing: deceive.

Paul talked about two kinds of people in **2Thessalonians 2:8-13** when he said:

8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;

9 *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,

10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,

12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

Now the phrase, “**power and signs and false wonders**” here in verse 9 is a literal translation of a Greek phrase that shows that the “falseness” or the “error” of these signs and wonders is not that they aren’t real miracles- but that they lie about reality. These signs and wonders here in this verse are absolutely real genuine supernatural manifestations- but they are from satan and not from God and they are designed to lead people *away* from Jesus Christ. So why does God allow that?

Similarly, at the end of history—false teaching and heresies will dog the church.

2 Timothy 4:3&4

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

At the other end of history- things have been this way from the time of Moses. And it is Moses who answers our two questions:

- ✓ Does God have Designs for deceptive signs and wonders?
- ✓ Does God have Purposes for heresies?

Here’s the key passage from **Deuteronomy 13:1-3** that says:

1 “If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder,

2 and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,’

3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Notice five things about this:

1. Moses tells us that signs and wonders in the service of heresy really do happen. These things are not sleight of hand tricks or figments of the imagination. “If a prophet . . . gives you a sign or a

wonder, and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass. . .
." And they really do come to pass. So this is not smoke and
mirrors. These are supernatural- but not in the service of Truth.

2. Some miracle workers aim to draw believers away from the true God. "If he says, '*Let us go after other gods . . .*' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet." In other words, some very evil and destructive heresies ("let us go after other gods") are endorsed with miraculous signs and wonders.
3. God has a sovereign Design in these deceptive signs and wonders, and He has Purposes for the heresies they support. He mentions one of these designs and purposes here: "**for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.**" When *temptation* happens from man, a *test* is happening from God. This is God's Design in the deceptive signs and heresies.
4. Love for God is what God is being tested. "Your God is testing you, *to know whether you love the Lord your God* with all your heart and with all your soul."
5. I conclude from this that the heart that loves God sees through miraculous deception. Therefore genuine Love for God is not based mainly on miraculous power. It is based on seeing through miraculous power to true Divine Beauty. Therefore, love for God is a powerful protection against heresy, even when it comes with miraculous confirmation.

Understanding these five things from **Deuteronomy 13:1-3** helps protect us from deceptive signs and wonders and from heresies. But *understanding* Truth is not enough. *Love for God* is both the aim of God's testing and the means by which His tests are passed.

So understanding Truth awakens us to our need to love God. But *love for God* sees through deceptive signs and wonders to the falsehood they support and flees to Christ. *Love for God* sees through the heresy and holds fast to him.

But why would a sovereign loving God allow false beliefs to seemingly prosper? And what can we learn from their existence?

First of all, we learn that there is sin in the world. Sin is in each of us, and one of its outcroppings is the effect it has upon our minds. It effects our abilities to perceive, understand, and communicate. It also effects our hearts which are constantly in rebellion against the truth. Therefore, God has seen it fit to not immediately overcome our sin all at once.

Rather, God has seen it fit to have a history of Redemption- first with Israel and then with His Church- a history through which men progressively grow in their understanding of God. Both in individual lives and in the corporate body God has chosen not to completely obliterate sin overnight- but to use the means of Grace to sanctify His people *progressively*.

For example- one of the evidences of sin is that we think wrongly. Our minds either do not comprehend Truth or we do not comprehend it fully. And the result of that is that we think something is true that is actually error. And then we go about to put that error into practice and to teach that error to others until God the Holy Spirit convicts us and brings Truth to light and we repent and change.

And so God folds into His larger Purpose of gradually sanctifying His people- the fact that He allows sin to have this mind-altering effect on us. And the result is that we learn the exceeding sinfulness of sin by how we more easily embrace false teaching rather than Biblical Truth. Likewise, we learn that God's Providence intends not to solve sin instantaneously- but to solve it over time.

But then the question arises, *"Why does God do that? Why doesn't He just snap His Finger and make everyone instantaneously holy and take them immediately into heaven as soon as they are saved and end this thing? And why doesn't God take Satan out of existence?"*

We know He *can* do these things, because He *will* do them at the second coming. He is going to make us perfect. But why doesn't God do it now? What are the long term Purposes of God in allowing error and sin into the world? And the answer lies in God's over all Purpose for why He does everything.

It would be far better for us in the sense of escaping problems if God were to simply take us to Heaven as soon as we are saved or

immediately destroy satan now. But that would not be best for us in the sense of what the entire Purpose of Salvation really is.

It is a tragedy that many in the modern Church honestly think that Salvation is all about us enjoying ourselves in Heaven- perhaps with softball leagues or endless shopping sprees. And all this wrong thinking about Salvation is due to the fact that we have become embarrassingly self- centered and selfish in our thoughts- even about God.

The main reason why God saves us and forgives us is so that we may know and love and enjoy Him forever. That brings God the greatest amount of Glory- unworthy sinners being saved by God's Grace and Mercy and not by what they did for themselves- spending all of eternity praising and glorifying Him.

But in His complete Omniscience- God also knows that we can never obtain the fullness of joy unless and until we are forcefully rescued from our sin and brought into a place where we can know and love God. That the fullness of joy is not in us enjoying ourselves- even in Heaven- but in us enjoying God.

So God has designed Salvation in such a way that precisely by allowing sin and error and temptations and tests to abound- and then empowering us to struggle to overcome them- we will grow in our capacity to know and love and enjoy God forever which will in turn bring to us the ultimate in personal satisfaction and joy.

We would never taste and appreciate the Patience of God—and many of His other magnificent Attributes—if we didn't have to battle our sin the way we do- right up to the end of our lives. We would never cast ourselves on Grace and throw ourselves on God's Mercy the way we do or appreciate His Patience the way we do.

Paul said that God chose him- the chief of sinners- in order to display God's perfect Patience by making Paul an example to those who would believe in God through his testimony. Clearly Paul knew that Christ chose him, a sinner, in order to display something about God's Own Character- namely, His Grace and Patience. How did God use Paul in doing this? Through an abundance of terrible and awful things brought into Paul's life and then empowering Paul to face and overcome each one.

So the ultimate answer to this mystery is that God runs the world the way He does because, in the end- more of His Own glorious

Attributes will be more fully seen and admired and respected and worshipped than if God had done everything instantaneously and not tolerated any error or any sin in the world and in the people of the Church.

And so even as we war against error- we need to know that ultimately God wins and He wins big and that God uses the tool of error and deception in our lives to cause us to admire, respect, and to stand in awe of Truth and the Giver of Truth- our great God

Amen. Let's pray.