

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

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 5- Luke 5:17-26**

65- What is Saving Faith?- Part 1

March 21, 2010

Luke 5:17-26

I want you to know that I am trying my very best to get through the **Gospel of Luke** in a reasonable amount of time but so much is formative- so much is at the very heart of the Christian Faith that so many people in the modern Church are either ignorant about or confused over that I find it so important to deal with issues that extend beyond the statements of the text themselves.

In this passage- we are dealing with the issue of Forgiveness. And truly there is not any issue of Holy Scripture that is more important and more needful for sinful human beings to know about and to understand than how a Holy and All-Righteous God will deal with our sins.

It is true that we are all great sinners and we constantly and consistently transgress against God's Law, and it is also true that God is a great God Who must vindicate His Own Righteous Nature by judging all sin, and so how in the world vile sinners are going to be able to pass through God's Judgment on our lives and enter into Heaven forever is *the* single most important question of all time.

And how we understand things like Grace and Mercy and Forgiveness alongside of how we understand God's Own Righteousness and Justice is paramount to how we view God and how we view Man and how we view Salvation. So it is vital that we develop a Biblical understanding of these things rather than a worldly or carnal, or even a popular understanding of these things.

The issue of Jesus forgiving this wicked sinner here in **Luke 5** is one of two underlying issues of why the Jewish people as a whole rejected Jesus as being the Messiah of God- the other being that they

could not and cannot to this day bring themselves to understand that Jesus was God Almighty in human flesh.

But we cannot simply move past this so quickly. The fact that these Jewish leaders- who spent 12 hours a day studying the Law- could not comprehend the two most important items of human existence is breathtaking, and is testimony to the fact that the Incarnation and God's Grace and Mercy are very deep and profound and very powerful concepts that demand more from us than simple and silly slogans and statements that you hear from many in the modern Church.

Let me set the stage for you. We read in **1John 4:16** that:

... God is love...

And there is nothing more comforting or more soothing than for us to know that Our Heavenly Father is Love. It isn't that God simply "loves" as an action on His part- but that God *is* Love. Love is part of the very Nature and Character of God. And we are correct to teach that God is Love and we are correct to glory in that Truth and to trust in that and to uphold that in all of our existence because without God being Love- nothing else really matters.

But as true as that is- that God is Love- it is also true that Love is not *all* that God is. God is also Holy and God is also Righteous, and those two qualities are equally as much a part of God's Own Character and Nature as Love is. So it is fine to say that God is Love- I revel in God's Love- I would not be here were it not for God's Love. But what is *not* fine is to stop there and then think that because we now know that God is Love that we now know God- because unless we also know that God is equally as Righteous and equally as Holy as He is Love- then we really do not know or comprehend the God of the Bible in fullness.

The product of God *being* Love is that God loves, and the product of God being Holy and Righteous is that God meets out perfect Justice by judging all sin. And somehow we must get to a place where we realize that God is just as passionate about His Justice as He is His Love.

But what has happened over the last 150 years or so is that the modern Church has overly emphasized God's Love to the detriment of God's Righteousness and Holiness, and that is a terrible mistake. Because unless Love is balanced with Justice- God's sweet and precious

and glorious Love becomes something hideous and something horrible called "leniency".

And we must know that leniency is not Mercy, and leniency is not Grace, and leniency is not Love. Leniency is that someone who is guilty gets away with being guilty, and thus escapes Justice because the Judge is lenient. So that makes leniency a travesty against Justice and it is an affront against Holiness and Righteousness, and leniency is something that God would never do because it is something that patently offends God. I want you to turn with me to **Exodus 34:5-8:**

5 The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD.

6 Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;

7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

8 Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship.

Now notice here that Moses wrote this and said that God descended in the cloud and came to where Moses was, and that God proclaimed the "Name of the Lord".

Now the word "name" is more than simply what we are called. It is also who we are, and it contains our character and our reputation. That is why we tell our young children- "*Do not dishonor my name*". What we are telling them is that they must not act or live in such a way that reflects negatively on the reputation or the character of the Father. And that is why the wisest man in the world, Solomon said this in **Proverbs 22:1:**

A good name is to be more desired than great wealth, Favor is better than silver and gold.

So we are told to live our lives in such away so that we may build up our "name" or our "reputation" so that our name means something at the bank or in business dealings or in the House of God. When you tell

lies or you don't pay your bills- your reputation takes a hit, and, therefore, your "name" is brought down low. It is a requirement that all leaders in the House of God have a good "name" or a good "reputation" or a good "report" not only inside the walls of the Church among the believers but also outside the camp- in the community, among the lost, at the bank, and at the grocery store- that your word is your bond, and that you are honorable in all your dealings, or you're not qualified to be a leader- no matter how well you preach or how well you know the Bible.

And we must know that God Himself, and the way that lost people look at the Word of God will either be uplifted or put to shame by the way in which we live our lives and develop our reputations.

That is why we pray, *"In the Name of Jesus"*. You see, we are all wicked sinners who have no direct contact with God the Father. Our only contact with God is *through* Jesus and *by* His shed Blood on our behalf. If we ever tried to be in God's Presence apart from the Blood and Righteousness of Jesus covering us- God would destroy us in an instant.

And so we have no rights and no ability to approach God or to ask God for *anything* except that we go to Him and we ask humbly in the "Name" or in the perfect Reputation or through the sinless Character of Jesus. And the Bible says that when we go to God through Jesus- we have *absolute* access to God the Father and *absolute* contact with God the Father- but only because of Jesus and the pristine Character that He Himself has, and only because of the spotless Reputation that He has with the Father, and not because we are able to do this on our own.

So by putting that statement at the end of our prayers- we are placing Jesus' Name, or Jesus' sterling Reputation with the Father at the end of our requests. And so to place Jesus' Name at the end of a self-centered prayer or a sinful prayer or a prayer that is not God's Will is to take the Name or to take the Reputation or to take the Character of the Lord God in vain, and is a violation of the third Commandment.

So in order that we might know and understand who God is- God had to reveal Himself to us. And here in **Exodus 34**- God is revealing Himself to Moses in a way that we will now know from this point on- what constitutes God's Name. So everything that God said about Himself after **Exodus 34:5** is part and parcel to what the Name or the

Reputation of the Lord God really is and so we should now read what God said about His Name in verses 6-8 that says:

6 Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;

7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin...

Now at this point we see exactly what the Apostle John was talking about. God is Love and because God *is* Love- God loves. And because God is a loving God by Nature- He is also Compassionate and Gracious, and Slow to Anger, and Abundant in Lovingkindness and Truth, and God keeps lovingkindness for thousands and God forgive Iniquity and God forgives Transgression and God forgives Sin.

So all of this Revelation about the one true living God causes us to know and to believe and to proclaim that God is Love. And this is right and we should believe this and we should proclaim this and we should trust in this and we should rejoice that our God is Love.

But that is not all that God is and it is not all that God does. Please finish verse 7 with me:

... yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.

Now this is the flip side to God being Love and that is that God is also equally Righteous and Holy as He is Love, and because God is Righteous and Holy- God meets out Justice against all sin and will *by no means* allow sinners to get by with the sin that they commit against Him.

Now look at Moses' response to God revealing both His great Love and His great Justice to him in verse 8 that says:

Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship.

So we see here that true worship, true humility comes from a proper understanding of Who God is in both His great Mercy and in His

Justice. So here is the great dilemma. If God is Holy and Righteous and will by no means clear the guilty- then how does God manifest Mercy and Grace to wicked sinners? And if God gives unworthy transgressors Grace and Mercy to save them- doesn't that mean that God has cleared the guilty and is lenient? So it appears that in the very Name and Reputation of God's Own Self-Revelation about His Own Character and Nature that we have an inherent contradiction.

It appears that God is *either* Love *or* that God is Just, but that God could not possibly be both Love *and* Just at the same time and in the same way to the same person. Because if God ever forgives Sin and Iniquity and Transgression through Mercy and Grace- then that does great damage to the part of His Character that is Holy and Righteous. But if God by no means clears the guilty- then nobody would ever get saved- because we are all guilty.

The very fact of God's Own Character and Nature *demand*s that God judge all sin because He is Holy and Righteous. Not one single sin can go unpunished by God or else God ceases to be Just, and if God ever ceases to be Just- then He sins against Himself. So God's Justice *demand*s that by no means will the guilty be cleared of their guilt and that every sin and every transgression that has ever or that will ever be committed by all men must be forever punished by eternal damnation.

But the fact of God's Own Character and Nature also *demand*s that God forgives and pardons and issues Mercy and Grace to unworthy sinners because He is Love. All sin must be forgiven by God or else God ceases to be Love, and if God ceases to be Love then He sins against Himself. So God's Love *demand*s that even the worst of sinners will be forgiven and that every sin that has ever been committed by even the most vile of wicked men will be completely and totally removed by Grace and Mercy.

So how in the world can God be both Just and Love at the same time to the same people in the same way without violating either His Love or His Justice? And the answer to that theological dilemma is standing right before these religious hypocrites at that very moment.

Because of Jesus- God is able to remain both Just and Merciful, and His Righteousness and His Holiness do not collide against His Love.

And this is the reason why God the Father had to take on human flesh and Jesus had to be born of woman. This is the reason why Jesus

had to live 33-1/2 years here on earth before He died. This is the reason why Jesus had to be tempted in all points like as we are and yet remain perfectly sinless. This is the reason why all of our sins had to be imputed to Jesus in a legal sense so that as Jesus died on the Cross- our sins died with Him and this is why the full Fury of God's Just Wrath against sin had to be poured out on Jesus and why Jesus had to die and this is why Jesus had to be raised up from the dead by the Glory of the Father on the third day.

So God is Just in that He punished all sin- all sin was placed on Jesus and God judged that sin in Jesus. And God is Merciful in that He pardons and forgives and saves those for whom Christ died. So in Jesus Christ, and only in Jesus Christ, God is allowed to remain Just and Merciful; He is allowed to remain both Righteous and Love.

But you say, *"Doesn't this mean that God is lenient toward those He saves because He doesn't punish them for their sins?"* No, because God placed all our sins on Jesus and then poured out His Wrath on Jesus- this allows God to Judge all sin while giving us Mercy. Our sins were fully judged- it's just that we didn't have to pay the price for that Judgment - but only because God placed all of our sins on Jesus. And Jesus is the only One Who literally deserves God's Love- but because God imputed the spotless Righteousness of Jesus on us- God may now love us.

Now all of this had to be done just this way or else God could not be both Just and Love at the same time to the same people in the same way. If one single thing changed about the Incarnation, if Jesus is not fully God and fully Man in the same Body at the same time without conflict or contradiction, If the Trinity is not true, If the full Deity and the full Humanity of Jesus is not true, If one thing changed about Jesus living a human life, if one thing changed about Jesus being tempted and yet remaining perfectly sinless, if one thing changed about God imputing all of our sins on Jesus, if one thing changed about Jesus literally and in reality receiving God's unrestrained Justice against all sin, if one thing changed about Jesus' time in the ground, if one thing changed about Jesus rising from the dead on the third day, then God could not have remained both Just and Merciful and we could not have eternal life.

But because Jesus was God- Jesus was morally Perfect and He was Sinless and He was Pure and Holy, and because Jesus was tempted

in all points like as we are, yet without sin- Jesus literally earned His Own spotless Righteousness. And because God imputed all of our sins onto Jesus- God was free then to pour out all of His Fury and all of His Wrath against those sins on Jesus while He was on the Cross. And because Jesus died for our sins- God is able to forgive us and issue us Mercy and Grace and because Jesus lived a sinless life- God is able to impute Jesus' spotless Righteousness to us and we can go to Heaven forever.

So God has remained Just in Jesus because all sin has been forever judged and will forever be in hell. And this act vindicates God's Justice. And God has remained Love in Jesus because since all of our sins have been paid for- God is free to grant us Grace and Mercy, and this act vindicates God's Love.

God is free to be Merciful to us- but only because He was Just against Jesus. Were it not for the fact that Jesus received God's Justice for our sins- God would not and could not be Merciful to us. That would be leniency and that would be sinful. But because the Wrath of God was poured out in full on our sins as they were imputed to Jesus on the Cross- that allowed God's Justice to be forever satisfied and because God's Justice is vindicated- God's Mercy and Grace and Love may flow to us like a river.

But if anything changes- then this could not happen. If Jesus is not God Almighty in human form- then this could not happen. If Jesus sinned one time in thought, word, or deed- then this could not happen. If Jesus did not earn His very Own Righteousness through His Own Works- then this could not happen. If God did not impute all of our sins onto Jesus- then this could not happen. If God did not pour out the full Fury of His Wrath against our sins on Jesus- then this could not happen, If Jesus did not rise from the dead on the third day - then this could not happen, and if God did not impute Christ's Own Righteousness to us by faith alone- then this could not happen.

But all of that did happen. And because all of that happened- we are free, and because all of that is true- God is both Just and Merciful to us, and because all of that happened- God is infinitely Holy and yet He is Absolute Love, and because all of that happened- our precious Jesus- the Darling of the Trinity- took our place underneath the Wrath of God and Jesus died for us and Jesus suffered for us and Jesus was punished for us and that is the only reason why we can be saved today.

Everything must be just like this or everything falls apart. Nothing can change- not even in the slightest. To change one single thing about Jesus or what He did or what God did for Him and to Him changes everything and those changes will either keep God from being Just or keep God from being Love and either way- we lose.

And we must know that Biblical Christianity alone provides this. There is not another single religion or human philosophy on the face of the earth that allows God to be both Just and Merciful at the same time and in the same way to the same people because only Biblical Christianity has Jesus.

And that is why I cry out so hard against false teaching. It isn't because I have a craw in my throat about certain groups- I don't have an ax to grind against certain people. I am not anti- this or anti- that- I am pro-God.

The reason I cry out to those who adhere to what Judaism or Islam or what Gnosticism or Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses teach to repent about their false understanding of Who Jesus is- is because if Jesus is not fully God and fully Man- then God cannot remain both Just and Love, and we cannot be saved. The reason why I cry out to those who adhere to Roman Catholic Teachings to repent of their false understanding of Salvation is because unless we are saved by Grace through Faith in the finished Work of Christ alone- then God cannot remain both Just and Love and we cannot be saved.

This isn't about our own personal opinions or private interpretations. This isn't about me trying to get people to agree with me. This is far more important and far more serious than petty squabbles like that. If anybody rejects the full Deity or the full Humanity of Jesus- then they change the details about how God can remain both Just and Merciful and they cannot be saved. If anybody rejects the sinless life of Jesus- they change the details about how God can forgive sinners and yet by no means clear the guilty and they cannot be saved.

Because if Jesus wasn't God - then all He was is a glorified man or almost an angel but not quite. And as just a man - Jesus would have been a sinner, and if Jesus sinned just one time in thought, word, or deed- then He did not keep His Father's Law perfectly, and if Jesus didn't do that then he could not have possibly developed His Own spotless Righteousness, and if Jesus didn't develop His Own Spotless

Righteousness- then God cannot impute that Righteousness to me, and if God does not impute Jesus' Righteousness to me- then I cannot go to Heaven. That is why Jesus must be God and Man.

If anybody rejects the substitutionary Death of Jesus on the Cross - then all my sins have not been paid for, and if all my sins have not been paid for- then I will have to pay for some of my sins, and if I have to pay for even one sin- then I will have to spend eternity in Hell.

So I hope that you can see just how serious this is. That is why the Bible was written- so that we would read it and study it and be taught it, and so that we would know it and believe it and trust in it and proclaim it and stop people from trying to monkey around with it simply because it is too deep or they are too shallow. God's Own Name and Reputation and Character and Nature is at stake here, not to mention our own Salvation.

And all the seriousness of this infinitely important issue of how wicked sinners can be forgiven and how God can remain both Just and Merciful at the same time came full bore right here in that house on that day with this paralyzed man on that cot.

The very second that Jesus pronounced eternal forgiveness to that unworthy sinner laying in that cot- the Justice and the Mercy of Almighty God fused together through the Lord Jesus Christ, the man-made religion of the Pharisees was destroyed forever, Salvation by obedience to the Law was exposed as the fraud that it is, and the glorious Good News that in Jesus- God's Just Wrath against our sins has been forever satisfied, and now God is free to issue out Mercy and Grace to us was proven to be true.

And that is why they hated Jesus and that is why they tried to trap Him and that is why they sought to kill Him and that is why at the end they violated everything that they said they believed in in order to have Him Crucified.

Now how in the world did all of this happen to this pitiful man lying on this cot? God granted him what is called "Saving Faith". Now just what is this "Saving Faith"? Saving Faith is the gift of God that comes freely to those who are chosen from before the foundation of the world for Salvation. It is a strong and powerful and supernatural faith that does not originate from inside the human vessel, but is an external faith, an alien faith, a faith that comes from an external source- God-

and a faith that is mercifully and graciously given to the unworthy sinner by a Sovereign act of God.

And so let's talk about Saving Faith by looking at a very familiar passage that most of you have memorized over your life in **Ephesians 2**, but this is a passage that most people have never understood correctly. Let's go to **Ephesians 2:8&9** and let's read what the Apostle Paul said about Saving Faith.

Ephesians 2:8&9

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Now let's take this piece by piece. The subject here is obviously Salvation, and how wicked unworthy sinners are justified by a Holy and Righteous God. The Apostle Paul penned down these inspired, inerrant, and infallible Words as he was moved along by the Holy Spirit, and Paul starts off by saying how we are saved.

Notice the wording of verse 8. We are saved *by* Grace and we are saved *through* Faith. Now the word "by" means "source", and the word "through" has to do with the "means" or the "vehicle" of our Salvation. So the *source* of our Redemption is Grace, and the means by which we receive this gracious Salvation is Faith.

The Apostle Paul teaches here that we are saved "by" something called "Grace". Now just what is Grace? Most people give a very simple answer to that and say that Grace is "unmerited favor". But what does *that* mean? What does it mean for something to be unmerited? Well it means that it is not deserved; that it is not earned; and it means that it isn't something that you worked for to be paid. We must understand that if Grace is to be Grace- then we have done *nothing* to merit to earn or to be worthy or to be owed God giving it to you. Nothing. And this goes to the very heart of why the New Covenant is infinitely superior to the Old Covenant.

You see under the conditions of the Old Covenant- God said, "*If you do this- then I will do that*". In other words- our ability to gain favor with God under the Old Covenant was based on our performance. If we sinned- we received God's Wrath, and if we stopped sinning- we received God's favor. Pretty simple, right?

The problem with that set up is that all men sin. All men born of women sin. All rich people sin, all poor people sin, all educated people sin, and all uneducated people sin. Sin is engraved into our DNA from the Fall of Adam and is part of the makeup of every single human being on earth. But that's not all- it gets worse.

Not only do we all sin- but we all sin constantly and we all sin repeatedly- no matter how great the threat of Divine Damnation might be and no matter how thrilling the Promises of eternal Joy may be- neither the Threat or the Promise of God is strong enough to remove sin from our lives and hearts and bodies.

We must know that we cannot educate our way out of sin- which is why I say to you that unless your formal education is complementing your Biblical knowledge of God- it is a hindrance and not a blessing to you. We must also know that a society cannot advance itself technologically beyond sin- which is why you should not be wasting your time fantasizing about Science Fiction- but become engaged in real life- preaching the Gospel to every creature. We cannot prosper ourselves out of sin- so take heed to yourselves, my beloved, and see to it that you do not love money and that you are not coveting after this world's goods.

We must know that Government cannot remove sin from our lives- so do not put your trust in any politician or any political party; Medicine cannot develop a vaccine against sin- so understand that as long as you are in this fleshly body- you will fail God in some capacity.

And so anybody or any group who teaches that they don't sin or anybody who thinks that they can stop sinning on this earth and in this life and reach a place of sinless perfection is deceived pure and simple. They are not thinking clearly and their understanding about the reality of sin is clouded and they may need to be on medication- but they certainly don't need to be teaching anybody.

So the Old Covenant was between God and Man and that is why nobody could attain Salvation by keeping the Law- because nobody keeps the Law. We all fail to keep God's law perfectly and continuously in thought, word, or deed all day long, and so if Salvation only comes through obedience- then nobody is saved because nobody is perfectly obedient.

The net result is that every single human being on earth from Adam all the way down to you and me are nothing but transgressors of God's Law and we fall way short of bringing God the Glory that He so

richly deserves to receive from us, and thus, we are all woefully short in our own power and through our own strength to please and glorify God.

So what makes the New Covenant so vastly superior to the Old is that the New Covenant is not between God and Man- the New Covenant is between God and God.

God made a Covenant with Himself to save sinful Man- in spite of their rebellion and in spite of their wickedness, and if God had not done this- nobody would ever get saved.

So it is God alone Who chooses, it is God alone Who calls, it is God alone Who draws, it is God alone Who regenerates, it is God alone Who justifies, it is God alone Who keeps, and it is God alone Who glorifies fallen Man. And God does all of this by Himself and for His Own Glory, and Man has nothing at all to do with this other than to be amazed and to be in awe and to thank and to praise and to magnify God for His Amazing Grace.

And the fact that people get upset about God being Sovereign, and the fact that they get upset about the fact that God saves lost Man all by Himself without any human participation or cooperation only proves how fallen we really are. Why would anyone get upset about something that gives God all the Glory? Why would anyone in their right mind want to steal some of the Glory instead of giving God all the Glory?

Why does the idea that Salvation is a Sovereign Work of God bother people so much? I'll tell you why- because they are fallen and part of *being* fallen means that fallen Man wants to be in charge, and Man wants to receive Glory and he wants to rob God of those things, and fallen Man in his fallen condition wants to be God so that he is worshipped as God.

So Paul boldly declares here that fallen Man is not saved by what he does- but he is saved by God's Grace; unmerited favor, unearned special treatment, and undeserved love. So understand clearly, dear friends, just what Grace really means. Grace is not leniency- no Grace is favor and love and special treatment that you don't deserve, that you have not earned, and that you are not entitled to receive.

And by definition- two things must be true in order for Grace to be given to anybody. First of all God must be Absolutely Sovereign or else He could not give Grace to those who are not worthy. Because if Grace is not earned or undeserved as we just said that it is- then Grace must

be *imposed* or Sovereignly *placed* or *given* to those who do not deserve it by One Who has the Power and the Ability and the Desire to do so.

Listen up. Since we cannot *get* Grace- we must be *given* Grace. And we cannot be *given* Grace unless the One Who gives it is greater and more powerful than we are. So if Grace is true- then by default God must be Sovereign. And if God is not Absolutely Sovereign- then Grace cannot be *given*- it must be *gotten*, and if Grace is *gotten* and not *given*, then how could Grace then be unmerited or unearned? So since Grace is *given* and not *earned*- then we must also acknowledge that God is Absolutely Sovereign because He is the One Who gives it and we are the ones who are unworthy to receive it.

So we must first define these two words- Grace and Faith. The word that was translated into English here as "Grace" is the Greek word *charis*, which means: *unmerited favor; unearned love; and undeserved special treatment*. And we must find the context for this word in those three terms: unmerited, unearned, and undeserved.

Unmerited means something that is not given as the result of us having any claim to it. Unearned means something that has not been earned through labor or obedience, and Undeserved means something that is not owed to us. So Grace is not the result of us holding any claim to it, Grace is not something for which we have worked to receive, and Grace is not something we are worthy of.

And keep in mind that not only is Grace not earned in the present tense- it is also true that in order for Grace to remain Grace- the conditions for it can never change. So Grace cannot *ever* be earned; we can never in any way ever be worthy of Grace- no matter what we do and in no way can we do anything that would ever make Grace something that we merit. So Grace is at the moment it is given and is right now and will forever remain unearned, unmerited and undeserved or it ceases to be Grace.

But we have a serious problem. Because if Grace is not merited or earned or deserved- then on what basis is Grace given? The fact that Grace is neither earned nor deserved does not *diminish* its value- but *elevates* it because if we hold no claim to Grace at all, and if Grace is not owed to us in any sense of the word- then there must be a very powerful and a very important reason why it is given.

God giving Grace to unworthy sinners is tied in with God's passion for His Own Glory. God gives Grace to those who do not deserve it

precisely because by doing that- God's Mercy and God's Love is exalted to its highest zenith. In other words- God receives more Glory and His name is exalted and He is praised more for issuing Grace to unworthy sinners than He can by making a waterfall or by building a universe or by creating a butterfly.

If in any way we can do something- anything- to *earn* our Salvation, or if we are in any way involved in *deserving* Salvation like through obedience or by partaking of Church Sacraments- then Grace ceases to be Grace and it is transformed into a Payment or a Reward.

In that warped view- Salvation would be that we work hard to make ourselves acceptable in God's sight, and when we do that- God gives us the payment or the reward for our labor which is Salvation.

And in that scenario- God would actually *owe* us Salvation because we labored hard to earn it, and after we had performed the required work- God would then *have* to pay us by saving us.

But right off the bat- the Apostle Paul silenced those who believe such nonsense by saying that we are saved by Grace. Paul said that God does not owe us Salvation and we have not worked to earn our Salvation and we are certainly not worthy of it- but God mercifully grants to us this Amazing Grace so that as unworthy sinners are saved by this Grace- God is glorified.

So we see then that the source or the origin of our Salvation is God's Favor to us that is Unmerited, and God's Love to us that is Unearned and His Special Treatment to us that is patently Undeserved.

Now notice the next thing that Paul said about how we are saved in verse 8. We are saved:

... through faith

Now this is the saving faith that I was talking to you about. This is the *external* faith, the *alien* faith, the faith that comes from *outside* of us that gives us the ability to believe and be saved. Paul says here that we are saved *through* this faith, or in other words the vehicle that allows us to be saved is not us keeping Communion, it is not us attending the Mass, it is not us praying certain prayers, it is not us saying certain words, it is not us walking down an aisle, it is not us raising our hands, it is not us "making a decision", it is faith. Just faith, only faith.

Now we live in a day when we are bombarded with teachings that try to show us how to exercise our faith, and I would like to say to you right up front that the overwhelming majority of all that is being taught today about faith is utterly unbiblical and is a very sloppy exegesis of Scripture and is basically made up. People have just heard a little bit about faith and it sounds real good, and so they take the ball and run with it- never really studying what the Bible actually teaches about this important subject. Today we are told that we can have faith to be healed and faith to get a new car and faith to get a new job or a new boyfriend or even a new wife, and so this precious gift called faith is portrayed to us as being nothing more than a "tool" through which we can learn how to twist God's Arm to get whatever our hearts lust after.

And so let me repeat this again so there will be no doubt about what I am saying here. Most of the modern teachings about faith are a reproach to Biblical Christianity. They puff up Man's pride and arrogance and ego at God's Expense. Most of these teachings about faith bring glory to Man and not to God; they promote selfishness; materialism and covetousness; they extol worldliness; they make much of Man and they belittle God to being nothing more than a senile old candy store Owner Who sits waiting for us to come so we can exercise our rights and demand that God give us this, this and that; and beloved that is not worship- that is blasphemy; that is not service- it is idolatry, that is not good- it is bad, and that is not being spiritual- it is the height of being sinful.

We must know that Faith is not something that stands alone. Faith always has an object and the object of true genuine biblical Faith is not worldly stuff or more money or better health- no, the object of true Biblical Faith is Jesus. We are to have faith *in* Jesus and we are to have faith *of* Jesus and we are to have faith *by* Jesus, and true faith, Biblical faith always attaches itself to Jesus so that He is honored and so that He is glorified and so that He is made much of- and not us.

And please don't use that tired old excuse that the reason why God wants to make you a millionaire is because God will use your opulence and your big home to impress people so that they will want what you've got because that is simply not true. The reason that we want to be rich is the very same reason that everybody else wants to be rich whether they are lost or saved- pure human greed and arrogance and self-righteousness and nothing more.

And we should not try to sanctify covetousness, dear friends, because we don't make money to be spiritual by doing that- we simply deceive ourselves.

What wins souls, my beloved, is the faithful and full preaching of the Gospel without being ashamed of what it says and by all of us who are saved graciously submitting our own lives to the authority of Scripture on a daily basis.

And we must also know that God has used the suffering of His people all throughout time to win the hearts of the unbeliever. All throughout the Bible- God used the persecution and the suffering of His own people to win souls- not by making them land barons. We can't take a few verses about faith out of context and then sprinkle them on what Jesus said was sin and make it holy. Jesus Himself said that you cannot love God and money at the same time. Jesus said that, and, therefore, any teaching that says that the object of faith is more money is fighting *against* Jesus, and you should run from that teaching as fast as you can.

Now please read where this faith comes from by looking at the rest of verse 8 that says:

... and that not of yourselves, *it is the gift of God*

What is not of ourselves? *What* is the gift of God? Why, Faith! Saving Faith is not of ourselves and saving Faith is the gift of God. We have to know, dear friends, that we were not born with this kind of strong, prevailing Faith. This Faith is the kind of Wondrous, Supernatural Faith that overrides our natural inclination to rebel against God and to run away from God, and this Faith saves us and this Faith is *from* God. This Faith does not originate from deep down inside of us- but the Bible says right here that this Faith is the gift from God, it is not of ourselves. This Faith is Saving Faith!

Now look at verse 9 very closely with me that says:

Not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

You see, if we're saved by *anything* that we do- then the result of that would be that we would be entitled to receive some or all of the credit. If salvation was the payment of our work, if Salvation was the

wages that we earned, if Salvation was the fruit of our labor- then by all rights we would be correct to take some or all of the credit for it. But if Salvation is by Grace and through Faith- and if the Faith that it takes to be saved is a gift from God and is not of ourselves- then only God is entitled to take the credit for it.

Now this is real important- so listen up. The word "works" in verse 9 comes from the Greek word *ergon*, which means: *any act, labor, work or deed*. So if it is true that we already have the faith that it takes to be saved and all we have to do is to choose to exercise that faith as so many teach today- if that is true- then the exercising of our faith is an act of our will and qualifies as a "work".

But God's Word says here that Salvation is not of *any* works; it is absent *any* human effort, *any* human labor, and *any* human deed. The Apostle Paul said by way of Divine Inspiration that Salvation was not the fruit of *any* human work. So only by this saving faith being a gift from God rather than an act of our will can this verse be true.

Many times, people get these things mixed up- so we must be clear about this and we must say it loud and we must say it often- Salvation does *not* come about based on *anything* that we do. Salvation is wholly and solely a Sovereign Work of God, and it comes to no one by human effort or by human choice or through human works. That is the Gospel.

For anyone to believe or teach that Salvation is the result of human effort to make ourselves acceptable in God's sight by being baptized or by speaking in tongues or by taking Communion or by going to confession or by praying the rosary or through petitioning Mary or by giving money to the Church or by keeping the Law or by not eating pork or by worshipping on the Sabbath is pagan humanism, dear friends, and is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

For anyone to believe or teach that Salvation is the result of human choice or human decision or human will power is pagan humanism and is not the Gospel. For anyone to believe or teach that Salvation is the result of any human work in any capacity by any means is pagan humanism and is not the Gospel.

So what was actually happening with this paralyzed man here in **Luke 5** was the complete dismantling of the false religion of the Pharisees who taught that Salvation came by way of obedience to God's Law- and then only to the Jews. But by speaking these simple words to

this man and forgiving his sins- Jesus was proving beyond any doubt two very powerful and unmistakable things:

- 1) That Jesus was God Almighty in a human body and had the Authority to forgive sins
- 2) That Salvation and the Forgiveness of sins will come to all those who have been chosen from before the foundation of the world to receive this gift of faith and this unmerited favor from God- no matter how sick they may be, no matter what their physical condition, no matter what they have done, no matter how bad or how evil they have been, no matter how long they have been in sin, no matter whether they are Jew or Gentile, no matter whether they are Male or Female, No matter whether they are Bond or Free- but all those in whom God has mercifully and graciously set His great Love on before He made the worlds will come to Jesus- even if they have to be carried, and even if they have to tear open the roof, and they will come to Jesus and they will receive forgiveness for their sins and Jesus will save them to the uttermost to the praise and the Honor and the Glory of God.

Let's come and pray

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The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729 www.covenantofpeace.net

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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.