



Sharing Christ – Part 4
Various Scripture
GCSP – 06/13/2009

A well-known pastor was in another city to preach at series of revival meetings. The host pastor took this well-known pastor to lunch and on a tour of his city the day before the meetings began. They passed an unusual looking liquor store and the visiting pastor commented on the strange appearance of the store. The host pastor then mentioned that it was part of a chain of liquor stores that were spread all across town. He then mentioned that the owner was a member of his church.

The visiting pastor wondered aloud how that could be. The host pastor went on to speak about how faithful the liquor store owner was to the weekly services. The visiting pastor asked, "Does it bother him that he owns all these liquor stores?"

The host pastor replied, "We've talked about some but he figures people are going to buy liquor regardless so it might as well be from him." When the visiting pastor asked what the liquor store owner's life was like, the response was that he recently divorced his wife and was now living with a much younger lady. The host pastor then said, "You know, sometimes it's hard for me to understand how a Christian can live like that."

It's hard for me to believe that someone who teaches and preaches from the Bible can believe that someone like that is a Christian. But that is the inevitable by-product of a church culture that does not confront people with the reality of their sin. Churches are filled with people claiming to be born again who live like pagans. And most Christians have been conditioned to never question the legitimacy of someone else's faith. Multitudes declare that they trust Christ as Savior while indulging in lifestyles that are plainly inconsistent with God's Word – yet no one dares to challenge their testimony.

It is absurd to suggest that a person can encounter the holy God of Scripture and be saved without also coming to grips with the ugliness of sin and thus long to turn away from it. The accounts we see in Scripture of those who encountered God and came to genuine believing faith were engulfed with an overwhelming sense of their own sinfulness. Upon meeting Jesus, Peter said, "**Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!**" Paul called himself the "**Chief of sinners.**" Job, of whom God called a righteous man, proclaimed "**I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!**" Isaiah, upon seeing God, said "**Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips.**"

Many other examples in Scripture show men and women falling on their faces and trembling uncontrollably in the presence of God – smitten with the weight of their own sin.

In **Luke 5:32**, Jesus said, "**I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.**" Jesus came to call those who know they have a terminal disease of the soul, those who are hopeless and desperate, those who are hurting, those who are hungry and thirsty, those who are weak and weary, those who are broken, those whose

lives are shattered; those who are sinners and know it and are searching for forgiveness.

Jesus spoke these words to the Pharisees. His use of the word "**righteous**" was used in a mocking manner because of the self-righteous attitude of the Pharisees. They didn't see any real spiritual need in their lives. And people today are following in the footsteps of the Pharisees – especially people who flock to the contemporary church for a feel-good message each week and then get about the business of living their lives in any manner they see fit.

People don't come for healing unless they know they have a disease; they don't come for life unless they know they are under the penalty of death; they don't come for salvation unless they know they need to be saved; and they do not come to Christ for forgiveness unless they know they have a sin problem.

Before we dig into this issue in more detail, turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Ephesians**. I want us to know beyond any shadow of doubt, who is responsible for our salvation before we go any further in this series.

Let's pray before I read.

Ephesians 1:3-14

Hopefully, you got the point by how strongly I emphasized the uses of, He, Him, Himself, His, Christ, and Jesus Christ. Is there any doubt whatsoever as to who is responsible for your salvation? It is God, it is Jesus Christ, it is the Holy Spirit that blessed you with every spiritual blessing, and chose you, and adopted you, and predestined you, and redeemed you, and forgave you, and lavished His grace upon you, and made know to you the mystery of His will, and gave you an eternal inheritance, and sealed you with His Spirit as a pledge of His promise to finish in you what He has started. And all of this has happened in your life (if you are a genuine born again believer) for the praise of His glory.

So what did you do? "*I had faith*" someone might say. Oh really? The Bible says that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, and then the Bible also says that God's Word is foolishness to those who do not believe. Try working your way out of that puzzle. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God but the Word of God is foolishness to you if you aren't already a believer.

"*Well then, I believed*" someone else might say. Jesus said, "**No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him**" (**John 6:44**).

"*Well, at least I was responsible to repent*" yet another might say. **Acts 5:31** says Jesus granted repentance to Israel, and **Acts 11:18** says God granted repentance to the Gentiles.

Stop trying to figure it out. Your brain will cramp up before you manage to come up with what your part in your salvation was. Yes, we must have faith, we must believe, and we must repent, but all of these things are graciously given to us at the point of God saving us. Go back and read the passage in Ephesians again:

Verse 5 – **His will**
Verse 6 – **His grace**
Verse 7 – **His blood; His grace**
Verse 9 – **His will**
Verse 11 – **His purpose; His will**
Verse 12 – **His glory**
Verse 14 – **His glory**

And yet, Christ came to call sinners and not the self-righteous. You ask, "How does that work?" I don't know. I haven't got a clue. All I do know is that there is no salvation to those who do not have faith, and who do not believe, and who do not repent of their sins, and who do not change their life. You simply cannot come before a holy God, be granted salvation, and walk away unchanged. If you do walk away unchanged you are also unconverted and are bound for hell. If your life is significantly different at church than it is the rest of the week out in the world, then one would have to assume you are unconverted. If you only come to God because He loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life, but somehow skip over the fact that God hates sin and requires obedience to His Word and submission to His will, then you have missed the boat in a big way!

If your mind isn't swimming enough in the deep end of the pool, let's paddle out a little farther. Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **Luke**.

Luke 13:23-24

Hold it now, I must have misread that. It looks like it says that there will be those who seek the Lord for salvation but will not be able to find Him. You read that right.

I'm just playing with you. Let's read the rest of the passage.

Luke 13:25-28

The context of this passage goes on to show us that it is on Judgment Day that those who seek salvation will be denied – it will be too late at that point. But it also shows us that relatively few will be saved even before Judgment Day, as opposed to the 70-90% of Americans who claim to be Christian.

Let's briefly take a look at Judgment Day. Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Revelation**.

Revelation 20:11-15

As we are learning in our Wednesday night study, just about everyone thinks they are a good person. In the interviews we see on the DVD portion of our lessons, even many of those who admit they are sinful and guilty according to God's standard still believe they will obtain heaven because by their estimation they have done more good than bad on this earth.

Here's the problem, even one sin, one lie, one time using God's name in vain, one instance of not loving God with all your being, one thought of lust, one feeling of hatred without just cause, one stealing of an office pen, one thought of jealousy toward your neighbor – just one minor, miniscule sin will get written down in the books mentioned

here in Revelation. **James 2:10** says, **"For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all."**

And if your name appears in one of those books but does not appear in the book of life, your good wasn't good enough to earn heaven. As a matter of fact, nobody can earn heaven. Only absolute perfection earns heaven. And only One ever went through this life with absolute perfection, and that was the man Jesus Christ.

And because of the fact that Jesus suffered and died on the Cross of Calvary, He became the perfect, sinless, blameless, spotless, ultimate sacrifice for sins. The One who knew no sin became sin for you and me. He rendered Himself a guilt offering even though He knew no guilt.

"He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him" (Isaiah 53:3-6).

"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Jesus did it all, Jesus paid it all, and Jesus said with His dying breath on the Cross, **"It is finished!"** So if Jesus finished it all, why do we think there is anything we can add to salvation? Why do some demand that "I had to believe" or "I had to have faith" or "I had to repent" to somehow attribute at least some portion of salvation to themselves? As I said earlier, belief and faith and repentance are indeed requirements of salvation but each of these elements have been granted to us – **"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).**

Good works are the result of salvation and will mark your life after salvation if it is indeed a genuine conversion. Good works do not even enter into the conversation of having anything to do to get you to the point of salvation.

Genuine salvation, possessed by those who will not be standing before the Lord on Judgment Day, will be manifest by a changed life. There will be fruit on your tree, meaning obedience to God's Word will be the mark and pattern and habit of your life.

I need to make something clear that I spoke about in one or more of the first three sermons in this series. I mentioned that phrases like "accepting Jesus" and "asking Christ into your heart" and "inviting Jesus into your life" and "making a decision for

Christ" among others are not found in Scripture. It was not my intention to make you think those phrases are not Biblical, it is just that they lend themselves to the easy-believism, half-gospel, gospel-light approach to evangelism. Being a follower of Jesus Christ or a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ is the better and more accurate choice; at the very least it will give people pause to think when "**counting the cost**" of true salvation.

Matthew is a prime example. When Jesus approached him at his tax booth, He told Matthew to "**Follow Me.**" And **Luke 5:28** says, "**And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him.**"

The tax gatherers of Jesus' day were filthy rich, with an emphasis on filthy. By leaving everything behind, Matthew in essence burned all of his bridges behind him. If following Jesus turned out to be a bad move He could not go back and pick up where he left off. People were lined up pretty much from Jerusalem to Rome for the appointment to be a tax collector. The implication of this verse is that Matthew even left the money bags he used to collect the taxes that day behind for anyone to take. He made an abrupt and genuine break from his sinful ways and became a follower of Jesus. Matthew's heart was prepared for this moment and he willingly and immediately was saved to the uttermost when faith and belief and repentance were granted to him.

There is such a thing as "non-saving faith" as opposed to genuine saving faith. We studied in one of the previous sermons the passage in **John 6:66** which says, "**As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.**" That is a picture of non-saving faith; those who associate with Jesus as long as it doesn't infringe on their lifestyle or become too difficult.

Non-saving faith allows you to accept Jesus without forsaking everything to follow Him. Inviting Jesus into your heart says nothing of the lordship of Jesus over your life. Making a decision for Christ does not imply total surrender and submission to His will.

We will not be perfect after salvation, as some teach believe it or not. As long as we remain on this earth and are subject to the flesh, there will be an unending battle with sinful desires and temptation. **Galatians 5** outlines this very clearly for us. Let's turn there so there is no mistaking this issue.

Galatians 5:13-26

Our flesh, our old nature prior to salvation, is in total opposition to the things of the Spirit. Because of the unlimited power of the Holy Spirit we have the wherewithal to no longer sin, but that only happens as we are Spirit-filled and Spirit-controlled; and nobody lives in that constant state. The baptism of the Spirit does not render you immune to sin; the battle will rage until we are rid of there "**earthly tents**" as Paul calls them.

And notice in **verses 19-21** that those who "**practice**" the "**deeds of the flesh...will not inherit the kingdom of God**", meaning they are not saved. If the characteristics of your life include, or are similar to, this list of sinful behaviors, it doesn't matter if you walked an aisle, prayed a prayer, accepted Jesus as your Savior, invited Christ into your life, or made a decision for Christ – you will not inherit the kingdom of God, period, end of story.

If the characteristics listed in **verses 22-23** are NOT part of your life then the same thing could be said. You will not only progressively eliminate sinful practices from your life, you will also progressively appropriate good deeds and the fruit of the Spirit into your daily life.

You will be loving in situations where you normally would not be. You will have joy overflowing in situations where joy never used to be present. You will be peaceful when you would normally be a wreck. You will be patient even if you were never known for patience. You will be kind when you used to be unkind. You will be good when you used to be selfish. You will be faithful in situations where you used to worry and fret. You will be gentle when you used to be abrasive. And you will exhibit self-control when you used to indulge in any and everything your flesh desired.

If you are not experiencing any significant progress in manifesting the fruit of the Spirit in your life then you are in the same boat with the one who continues to practice the deeds of the flesh.

I am not trying to cause you to doubt your salvation, but instead like John the Baptist, I calling you to **"bear fruit in keeping with repentance"** to exhibit that your salvation is genuine. If you are a true Christian this kind of teaching and preaching should encourage you and assure you of your salvation, not give you reason to doubt. If doubts are there then you need to follow the advice of Paul in **2 Corinthians 13:5**, and **"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith."**

And I also want it to be clear that you will not necessarily bear the fruit of repentance in your life all at once. There is Scriptural support for the process of maturity in Christ. Praise God I am a more mature and righteous and holy person than I was several years ago, and praise God that I will be more mature and righteous and holy several years from now as I continue to read, study, meditate on, memorize, and act upon God's Word in my life.

But at the same time, there will be a significant and noticeable change in your life after the point of genuine salvation. You cannot claim genuine salvation if there is no desire to change your life and bring it under the submission of God's Word.

I guess the easiest way to put it is, those who are truly saved will love Jesus. And according to Jesus Himself, those who love Him will keep His commandments.

So where does that leave you? Does the message of this sermon encourage you and bring assurance of your salvation, or has it caused doubt in your heart?

Let's pray.