

Asking and Answering the Only Question that Ultimately Matters – A Personal Challenge

Speaking the Truth in Love Series

Do you (how do you) know that you are truly born-again in Christ?

Key Words: Sin, Death, Repentance, Believe, Blood, Sacrifice, Resurrection, Forgiveness, Salvation, Judgment

Part One: *When “Minding Our Own Business” Violates Scripture and Has Eternal Consequences*

The title phrase, *speaking the truth in love*, is found Ephesians 4:15. In much of this letter to one of the churches he founded in Asia Minor (Turkey), he was reminding them of who they were before they received Christ as Savior and what their lives should look like now. They should be growing in their faith and strong in their walk with the Lord—not turning back to old sins or listening to false teachers and bad doctrine. Paul had difficult things to say to them at times and he loved them especially because they were his spiritual children. He had to be careful to speak the truth in love to them and encourage them to do the same when speaking with less mature Christians and those who may not have really been saved.

That is what we are going to dive into this week—speaking the truth in love when the subject is hard and one that the hearer may not receive well, if at all, and might to you to mind your own business. But this is eternity we are considering and that is a long time. So it is imperative that these conversations

be had when doubts arise whether by word or deed of those whose lives and lifestyles are inconsistent or in conflict with the salvation that Christi preached and brought. For this we press on.

You must understand that Jesus and the apostles Paul, Peter, and John all pointed to the fact that there were people in the church who claimed to be saved but no *evidence of repentance* and *change of heart*, mind, or behavior could be seen. We are not the judge of anyone's heart regarding salvation. God alone is judge. **But** Jesus gave very clear teaching on how we know someone is truly born-again. As older Christians mature in the faith and faithful in our walk with the Lord, we are both allowed and compelled to observe, instruct, admonish, rebuke, and correct when we see the aforementioned people and lifestyles. We do so out of love and the desire to see a life turned or returned to Christ to make certain that persons salvation and place in eternity.

To that end, I followed up a recent such conversation by providing the following verses as (1) a reminder for those who are in Christ but wayward in their lives and need correction and instruction (2) a pathway for the lost to Christ and eternity in Heaven with Him and all saints. They helped me in my development in Christ and reframed my thinking and teaching. If you allow the Holy Spirit to work in and on you as you read and study them, you will realize the world tries to tell you who you are, but He will tell you Whose you are. The first is death; the second life.

Rather than go back to Genesis 3 and the fall of man, I assume you know that sin entered the world thru Adam and Eve, and that curse has been upon all of us since. (Genesis) The world was broken as was the relationship between holy God and sinful mankind. I began this with the beginning of the New Covenant – the New Testament. This is the love story of Jesus for people. It is not soft love as some teach it. It is often tough love; difficult to hear and harder to obey and follow.

But that is what separates true Christians from spectators who call themselves Christians or the hard core lost who think we are fools. Here is how the redemption love story unfolds.

- **Jesus means Savior.** He was the promised Messiah of the OT (Genesis 3 to Malachi 4)

"She will give birth to a Son; and you shall name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."
Matthew 1: 21

- **His message was simple—sin and repentance.**

"From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 4:17

- **His message was His mission.**

"I have not come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners." Luke 5:32

- **That does not include me, does it? Everyone** needs Jesus. No one is "good enough".

*"for **all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"*
Romans 3:23

- **Bad News. Sin brings the death penalty.**

*"**For the wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**" Romans 6:23*

- **If we are all sinners, how does anyone get to Heaven?**
(Explain believe.)

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes in Him** shall not perish, but have eternal life. "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already (our sin), because*

he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:16-18

- **There must be other ways to find God.**

"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." John 14:6 (Jesus is the ONLY way and that gives many people heartburn.)

- **How can Jesus make that claim? Perfect life, blood sacrifice, resurrection.**

"knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things . . . , but with precious blood, as of a **lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.**" 1 Peter 1:18-19

"He is not here—He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you...the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men...crucified, and the third day rise again." Luke 24: 6-7

- **The Day of Judgment Has Been Set.**

"So having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now proclaiming to mankind that all people everywhere are to repent, because He has set a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all people by raising Him from the dead." Acts 17:30-31

Now that we have been reminded of or presented with the absolute Truths of God's word, let's move on to the hardest question you will ever be asked and with which you may or must confront others...

Part Two: *Do you (how do you) know that you are truly born-again in Christ?*

In other words, *are you a Christian as the Bible defines it?*

It is a simple question, but you would be surprised how many people say yes and have no idea what that means and life looks like (or should) on the other side of the Cross of Christ for those who are truly born-again.

Today I am going to speak straight from the Word of God to help you answer this question—the only one that matters; the most important question you will ever answer. It is also the most important question you can, and perhaps must, ask those you love. To do so is the ultimate expression of your love for them because salvation thru Christ alone is God's ultimate expression for you and me. Not asking is often a result of one of these reasons:

- May be an internal sign that you do not love them as completely as you thought
- Perhaps more you are afraid to approach the subject. Been there as well.
- Many Christians seldom consider the eternal consequences of their answer. They believe in Heaven but do not REALLY believe in hell. They are too heavily influenced by their culture (controlled by Satan by the way). Or they are ignorant of what Jesus taught. To say you do not believe in hell is to call Jesus a liar and seriously question your salvation. In fact, it indicts you altogether.

What true repentance looks and feels like:

"For sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death." 2 Corinthians 7:10

Evidence of true salvation according to Jesus.

"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My

Father..." Matthew 7:19-21

Self-examination to see if we are truly born-again.

"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?" 2 Corinthians 13:5

The Truth about hell according to Jesus. He spoke more about this and Satan than any other subject other than the kingdom of Heaven.

*"And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed, than, having your two hands, than to **go into hell, into the unquenchable fire...thrown into hell, where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT EXTINGUISHED.** Excerpted from Mark 9: 43-48*

My dear brothers and sisters, if you are truly born-again in Christ, I hope this is enough to remind you that you are a blood-bought child of the most high God and the price that was paid for your salvation. Live like you know that and love like Jesus did so others may ask you for the reason you have hope in such a world as this.

Part Three: *"Now that you know the Truth, how do you plead? "Speaking the Truth in Love"*

Your Plea: Not Guilty

If you are born again in Christ, this is your plea and God will accept it. You did nothing to earn this verdict or give you the right to stand on this plea except to believe and receive Jesus Christ as your Savior. He did everything God required to switch your plea from guilty to not guilty.

His perfection in life, from birth to death. His blood sacrifice that did not just *cover* our sins, as in the OT

sacrifices, His blood cleansed us from all sin and made us righteous and holy before our perfect, righteous, and holy God. But He did not stop there. He went one step further—His resurrection by which He conquered death so that we would too!

Four Hard Evidences that back up our claim of repentance of our sinful lives that led to forgiveness and salvation.

▪ **Love as He loves us**

“A new commandment (not suggestion) I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” John 13: 34

“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” John 15: 12-13

These “one another” verses (commands) are for Christians to love other Christians. When that love does not exist, the body of Christ is bruised and ineffective in the world to which we are supposed to a testimony of His light and love.

Conversely, when we love one another in Christ and like Him, lost people are drawn in because they see something so unique and different. Where do you stand?

▪ **Forgive as we have been forgiven**

Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be

made. So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, Have patience with me and I will repay you everything. And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 'Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive **his brother** from your heart. Matthew 18: 21-35

The Ultimate Example of Forgiveness: His Prayer on the Cross

"When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. And **the people stood by, looking on...** Luke 23: 33-35a

▪ **Serve in obedience to His example and command**

[Before I read this, I call to your attention that Judas, His betrayer, was still with them.]

"Then (Jesus) poured water into the basin, and began to

wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded...

"So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you." John 13: 5, 12-15

• Testimony (His and Ours)

"Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; the one who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." So the Pharisees said to Him, You are testifying about Yourself, Your testimony is not true." I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me." John 8: 12-13; 18

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Revelation 12:7-11

"The redeemed of the LORD shall say so, those whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy." Psalm 107:2

So my dear brother or sister in Christ, If you are born again in Christ and He is in you, your testimony will be true to Him – your life and your words.

For Christ's sake,

Walter