

## **Part One of The Narrow Way Gospel Study Guide (PDF format).**

Here are the other parts:

- Part One: Learn the gospel and come to agreement with it. (Contains 10 lessons)
- Part Two: Your appropriate immediate response to the gospel.
- Part Three: Your ongoing response to the gospel.

This Part One represents a very detailed explanation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ written by Thomas Bear and published on July 16, 2025.

## Part One: Learn the gospel and come to agreement with it.

Some people think that there is no such thing as a Creator (God) and that there is no such thing as life after death. Yet, even these people are afraid of death because they cannot know for sure what will happen to them after they die.

The vast majority of people believe in some type of higher power and in some type of afterlife. Most of them believe that to attain a place in heaven, **a person must strive to earn it by living a good life in this age**.<sup>1</sup> Generally speaking, without a firm guarantee, such people can only hope that they are good enough to be accepted into heaven. Because they cannot be certain that God will accept them into heaven, most people simply avoid thinking about death and hope for the best.

God knows that people are troubled about death and what might happen to them when they die. The Bible contains His message of sure hope that can take the uncertainty away. Jesus said, *“Do not be troubled in your heart...In My Father’s house there are many dwelling places. And if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you to Myself, that where I AM, there you may be also” (John 14:1-3)*. To take away the fear of death, Jesus did not teach that people should block it out of their minds. No, He taught that God has made a sure way to heaven that does not depend on our performance. God’s way is based upon sure promises He has made that were made possible through the performance of His beloved Son Jesus.

When a disciple heard Jesus’ words (above), he asked Him, *“Lord, we don’t know where You are going so how are we able to know the way?”* Jesus said to him, *“I AM the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:5-6)*.

Through His life of obedience and death on our behalf, Jesus has made a sure way to heaven for all who come through Him. Because this Way is based upon His perfect obedience (including His death), uncertainty is replaced with peace because eternal life is promised to all who believe into Jesus.

This study guide explains why Jesus is the ONLY WAY to the Father in heaven. It also teaches what you must do to lay hold of the WAY and enjoy true peace that comes from trusting God’s sure promise of eternal life.

Because most people are very good at blocking the thought of death out of their minds, they are usually not troubled about it. If you find yourself troubled about it lately, let me suggest that God is working to draw your attention to His WAY of salvation. I strongly suggest that you open your heart to His message of hope rather than block out the thought of eternity. The fact that you are thinking these thoughts is an indication that He is personally inviting you to partake of eternal life through His Son Jesus.

In this first section (Part 1), you will learn about God’s Way of salvation. Subsequent sections teach what you must do to lay hold of that WAY and enjoy peace with God through Jesus His Son.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the common teaching of most religions, but not the Bible.

## You must come to God His way, not yours.

Many, if not most people think that there are many ways to heaven. They think that it does not matter if a person is a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Hindu or a Christian. They think that as long as a person tries to live a good life and is devout in his religion, he will have a good chance at making it into heaven. Perhaps you think this way. The Bible teaches that this is simply not true. Consider this astounding statement that Jesus spoke:

*"Jesus says to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'" (John 14:6).*

The next few pages explain why Jesus is **THE ONLY WAY** to heaven. Until you understand why Jesus is the only way, God's message of salvation will not make sense to you, and you will not be able to embrace it with all your heart. You will remain in disagreement with God.

The religions basically teach that the way to gain God's acceptance is by keeping His rules. The next few pages demonstrate that while it is good to keep God's rules, you cannot gain God's approval that way because of the following reasons:

- You have already broken His laws (rules).
- You have rebelled against Him by ruling over your own life.
- God is absolute in His righteousness and cannot excuse a single sin.

Once you understand and embrace these truths about yourself and God, you will fully understand that Jesus is indeed, the only way to heaven. You will understand that you cannot get to heaven by trying to follow a religion with all your might. In addition, other astounding teachings of Jesus like the ones below will also make perfect sense to you.

- Most people are perishing. (See Matthew 7:23-24 **below**.<sup>2</sup>)
- Most people will be surprised at the judgment. (See Matthew 7:22-23 **below**.<sup>3</sup>)

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<sup>2</sup> "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is **the way** that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

<sup>14</sup> "Because narrow is the gate and difficult is **the way** which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

<sup>3</sup> "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' <sup>23</sup> "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Matt. 7:22-23).

## God deserves perfect obedience from you.

God created you and therefore, He owns you. Because we are so self-centered, we tend to think that everything was created for our wellbeing and pleasure. This is not true. Everything was created for the honor and pleasure of God's beloved Son:

*By Him (Jesus) all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16).*

In addition to creating you, He has graciously kept you alive by providing food, water, covering and even air to **breathe**.<sup>4</sup> You owe everything to God, including your very life. Therefore, every single thing you do should be done to please Him, not yourself.

God is pleased whenever you obey Him. He is displeased and offended whenever you disobey Him. Because He created you and owns you, He has the right to demand perfect obedience from you.

Whenever you do anything that He does not want you to do, you disrespect Him greatly. Each time you do something you know is wrong, you treat God as if He is not your boss. Whenever you disobey God, you make yourself out to be God. (You are ruling over your own life instead of submitting to His rule.)

God not only demands perfect behavior, He also demands a perfect thought life. The following passage contains a partial list of actions and inward thoughts that offend God:

*"the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21).*

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<sup>4</sup> "God said, 'See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food'" (Genesis 1:29-30).

Instead of honoring God with perfect obedience, all people (including you) have insulted Him with blatant disobedience.

We have a tendency to think of ourselves as basically good. But consider how God views us because of our blatant disobedience:

*“There is none righteous, not even one;... All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one.’...With their tongues they keep deceiving,’... ‘Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness’; ‘Their feet are swift to shed blood, Destruction and misery are in their paths,... ‘There is no fear of God before their eyes.’” (See Romans 3:10-18).*

If you sincerely examine your life, you should acknowledge that you have disobeyed God countless times. God has provided a tool to help you do a more thorough evaluation – His law (rules). Most people are familiar with a small portion of His Law called the **Ten Commandments**.<sup>5</sup> If you are honest, you should be able to recall a time when you disobeyed your parents. Each time you did this, you broke the fourth commandment. The third commandment says that we must not take God’s name in vain. This is far reaching but it surely prohibits using God’s name as a cuss word. It even prohibits the expression “Oh my G\_\_.”

Remember also that God counts even sinful thoughts as evil. The seventh commandment says, “You shall not commit adultery.” But Jesus taught that even inward lust after another person makes a person guilty before God. He also taught that if we ever have a moment of hatred for another person, we are guilty of murder **in God’s eyes**.<sup>6</sup>

Every time you knowingly did something that God did not want you to do, you broke the first and greatest commandment, “You shall have no other God’s before Me.” In those moments, you rejected God’s rule over you and chose to do your will instead of His. (You acted as if you are God.)

To become a candidate for God’s salvation, you must first embrace the fact that you are completely guilty of breaking God’s laws (rules). In this way, you treated Him as an enemy rather than your King.

Are you starting to understand why Jesus is the only WAY to heaven?

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<sup>5</sup> You can read all Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17.

<sup>6</sup> See Matthew 5:21-30.

## You cannot erase your sins from your record.

In the prior lesson, we learned that all people (including you) are completely guilty of breaking God's laws. In spite of this fact, you might still think that you are basically a good person and that the good things you have done will hopefully outweigh the bad things you have done. In the next lesson, you will learn that God's justice is absolutely strict, and requires Him to punish each and every sin. But for now, I suggest you consider yourself as being stained with sin and that there is nothing you can do in your power to remove sin's stain.

God considers even the good things you do in your own power to be tainted and therefore unacceptable. They cannot remove sin's stain.

*"We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).*

We cannot make up for past sins by our feeble attempts to keep God's rules:

*Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:19-20).*

Don't make the mistake of falsely assuming that you are part of "the **good people**."<sup>7</sup> If you imagine yourself good simply because you are not guilty of physically killing another person or committing some other heinous crime, think again. Remember that according to Jesus, even a moment of hatred towards another person is murder in God's eyes. (See Matthew 5:21-22.)

To be a candidate for God's salvation, you must fully embrace the fact that you cannot erase your past sins by attempting to be good now. You are stained by sin just like everyone else. You need to be saved!

(Are you beginning to see why Jesus is the only WAY to heaven?)

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<sup>7</sup> Many people think the world is made up of good people and bad people. And they conveniently group themselves in with "the good people" group. Remember that the Bible says there is no one who is good in God's eyes. (Everyone is in "the bad people" group.)

## God's justice is absolutely strict and requires Him to punish each and every sin.

*Note: It is likely that your current view of God will conflict with some of the information in this section. In fact, you may not have ever heard about these Bible teachings. Because of this possibility, this section is longer than the previous sections. This information is critical because it demonstrates why Jesus is the only way to heaven. Unless you come to agreement with the information in this section, you will not understand why Jesus is the only way to heaven and the gospel will not make sense to you.*

Most people think that because God is merciful, He can excuse or overlook sin. Though the Bible does indeed teach that God is merciful, it also portrays Him as holy, pure and separate from sin. It also teaches that His justice is absolutely strict and requires Him to punish each and every sin:

*Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You cannot look on wickedness with favor" (Habakkuk 1:13a NASB).*

### **The Bible portrays God as holy, separate from sin, pure.**

Prior to the advent of Christ, the holy God revealed Himself in a limited way to and through the nation of Israel. Notice how they were impacted:

*"The Lord your God is a consuming fire" (Deuteronomy 4:24).*

*"So it was, when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. "And you said: 'Surely the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God speaks with man; yet he still lives. 'Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God anymore, then we shall die. 'For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?" (Deuteronomy 5:23-26).*

Not even Moses was holy enough to get a full glimpse of God because of His holiness:

*He (Moses) said, "Please, show me Your glory." Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. "So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. "Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen" (Exodus 33:18-23).*

About 1500 years before Jesus came down out of heaven, God instituted a temporary way for the nation of Israel to meet with God through the tabernacle and Levitical priestly rituals. Things had to be done perfectly by those who attempted to approach Him through this temporary means. If not, the person would die.

On the first day of the tabernacle service, two sons of Aaron died instantly when they went into the outer room (called "the holy place"), simply because they did not burn the correct incense. (They had good intentions in their hope to serve God as His appointed priests.)

*"Then Aaron lifted his hand toward the people, blessed them, and came down from offering the sin offering, the burnt offering, and peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces. Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron,*

*each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified' (Leviticus 9:22-10-3).*

These two men sincerely thought they were doing their priestly duty. But because they took the wrong incense into the tabernacle, God killed them instantly by sending down fire from heaven.

On a similar occasion (before Jesus came), the nephew of King David died while they transported the ark of God back to Jerusalem. His mistake was simply reaching out to steady the ark so it did not fall off the cart.

*"So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill, accompanying the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark. Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the LORD on all kinds of instruments of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals. And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God" (II Samuel 6:3-7).*

Uzzah, King David's nephew was a sinner like every one of us. Like every one of us, he was stained with sin and considered by God to be unclean (apart from Christ's earned righteousness). He attempted to do something good when he reached out his hand to steady the ark. But because the ark was the designated place where God would meet with His people, Uzzah was instantly consumed by fire. This is a picture of what happens if any unclean person attempts to approach the holy, righteous God. As Habakkuk 1:13 says, God's eyes are too pure to look upon evil.

During the time of Moses (1500 years prior to the advent of Jesus), the priests who officiated in the tabernacle worship had to follow strict rules or they could be struck dead on the spot. And none of them could even go into the holiest room of the tabernacle except the high priest. And he could only come one time each year. He had to come with blood from a sacrificed animal. He had to wear bells on his gown so the people could listen to make sure he was still alive. The most holy room had a thick veil and all the fixtures pictured concepts that taught about the holy God's unapproachable nature. The New Testament says that the Holy Spirit was teaching through all of it that the way to God had not yet been made open. In other words, "Sinners keep out!"

*"Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing" (Hebrews 9:6-8).*

The problem is that God is pure, and all people are stained with sin, unclean in God's sight. God has not changed. He remains pure and holy. No sin can come into His presence. Apart from Christ's earned righteousness in their account (described in subsequent sections), all people are stained with sin and considered by God to be unclean. Because of this reality, even good things we attempt to do in our own power are considered unclean before God and therefore, unacceptable and unpleasing.

**Because God's justice is absolutely strict, He must punish all sin.**

The Bible portrays God as a judge who must uphold His righteous law.

*There is no unrighteousness in Him" (Psalm 92:15).*

Human judges often fail to uphold righteousness. Imagine a situation in which a man kidnaps, tortures and then kills a little child. For ten years, he alludes being caught. Then, suddenly, he feels remorse and turns himself in to the police. The police bring him to court. The judge notices the man crying with sincere remorse. Then, suddenly, the judge speaks up and says to the man, "I can see that you are remorseful. Plus, when I woke up this morning, I felt merciful. So, I am letting you go free." I hope you realize that this judge is not a righteous judge. He did not enforce the law. The Bible teaches that God is not like this unrighteous judge. There is no unrighteousness in Him. He must uphold the law perfectly. He cannot accept plea bargains like the unrighteous human judges.

*"For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe" (Deuteronomy 10:17).*

If God excused just one single sin, He would no longer be righteous. It would be wrong (not righteous) to excuse any sin whatsoever.

*"The Lord will not let the guilty go unpunished" (Exodus 34:7, Nahum 1:3).*

The Bible teaches that God is great in mercy, but not at the expense of His perfect righteousness. It is impossible for sinful man to come into God's holy presence and live. Therefore, any human being that comes to the judgment with only his own attempts to do righteous things will experience the full wrath of God.

*"Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire" (Nahum 1:6).*

*"We know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. And again, 'The LORD will judge His people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:30-31).*

Since everyone is stained with sin, no person can come into His presence without being consumed instantly. In addition, being a righteous judge, He cannot let a single sin go unpunished. But because He is merciful, He made a righteous way for guilty sinners to have their sins remitted (washed away). In the process, He remained absolute in His righteousness because the sins were indeed punished. He sent His Son down out of heaven to take the punishment. Since the sins were punished, the way into God's presence is now legally (in a perfectly righteous way) open to all who come through this WAY.

Prior to Jesus' death on the cross, the way into God's presence had not been manifested. But God demonstrated to us that THE WAY is now made open through the death of His Son. The moment He died on the cross, God Himself ripped the veil to the holy of holies from top to bottom to demonstrate that the WAY into God's presence is now made open. This was a supernatural event in that the veil was made of very thick material and the rip began very high off the ground, and at the exact moment necessary.

*"Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep (died previously) were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. So, when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, 'Truly this was the Son of God!'" (Matthew 27:50-54).*

Because God is absolute in His righteousness, He cannot excuse any sin whatsoever. Therefore, had Jesus not come here and died to save us from our sins, the way to the Father would have remained shut and all people who ever lived would be doomed to face the wrath of God that is coming soon. I hope you now understand why Jesus said:

*"I am THE WAY, the truth and the life. Nobody comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).*

There is no **alternative**<sup>8</sup> way. All who come to the judgment with their sins must be excluded from God's presence forever. But because God is merciful, He does not enjoy in the least sending people to **hell**.<sup>9</sup> He has made a way to have our sins removed (remitted) from us in a way that does not violate His absolute righteousness.

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<sup>8</sup> If an alternative approach were possible (such as through trying to do good things), then God would not have sent His Son to die as a substitute sacrifice. He gave His life because there was no other way to satisfy God's righteousness.

<sup>9</sup> *"As I live," says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live'" (Ezekiel 33:11).*

Because God is merciful, He made a way to save us.

From the very beginning, God has been communicating through His prophets about His plan to redeem sinners. In order to save sinners, He said that He would provide a **substitute sacrifice for sins**.<sup>10</sup> He planned to send His **divine Son**<sup>11</sup> into the world to die in our place (to take the punishment we deserve). Jesus Christ was **born of a virgin**.<sup>12</sup> Jesus was without sin. He lived His entire life without ever sinning. He was perfectly obedient all the time. He was tempted in every way that we are, yet He did not sin - ever. (See Hebrews 4:15.) This qualified Him to be the substitute sacrifice that God would accept. When He died on the cross, He paid the debt that we could never pay. Then, God raised Him from the dead indicating that He received this death as payment in full for sins. (Read **Philippians 2:7-11**, **Hebrews 9:24-26**, and **Hebrews 10:11-14**.<sup>13</sup>)

So, this salvation that was made possible by Jesus' substitutionary death on our behalf was accomplished without violating God's absolute righteousness. (**Read Romans 3:21-26 below**.<sup>14</sup>)

**Jesus is THE WAY!** (The only way to heaven.)

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<sup>10</sup> This is pictured beforehand in the Old Testament in passages like Genesis 22, Isaiah 53, Exodus 12, and Psalm 22.

<sup>11</sup> By "divine," I mean He was like no other man. He was "God with us." (See Matthew 1:20-23.)

<sup>12</sup> All other humans are infected with sin passed on through the seed of their biological father.

<sup>13</sup> *"coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* (Philippians 2:7-11).

*"Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another -- He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"* (Hebrews 9:24-26). (Priests used to sacrifice animals before Jesus came.)

*"every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified"* (Hebrews 10:11-14).

<sup>14</sup> *"But now, apart from law, God's righteousness is revealed, being witnessed by the law and the prophets (in the Old Testament writings), even God's righteousness through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all who believe, for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of God's glory, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God, set forth publicly as a propitiation, on the basis of the faithfulness, by His blood. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because of the passing over of sins previously committed in the forbearance of God. It was to demonstrate His righteousness at this present time -- that He might be both just and the One who justifies the one who is of the faith of Jesus"* (Romans 3:21-26 SCOT).

Salvation from the coming wrath is offered to whoever truly wants it (truly believes).

*"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes (and continues to believe) into Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16 SCOT<sup>15</sup>).*

If any man believes (and keeps believing) from the heart that Jesus died for his sins (took the punishment he deserves) and rose from the dead, he receives remission of sins and eternal life. (Read **Acts 13:38-39**<sup>16</sup> below.)

#### **What does it mean to truly believe?**

People who "truly believe" agree with God that they are sinners that deserve God's everlasting punishment for their rebellion against Him. The "tax collector" in the parable below had the required attitude:

*"And He (Jesus) also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and **viewed others with contempt**.<sup>17</sup> 'Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: "God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get." But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:9-14 NASB).*

People who truly believe, will come and continue to come humbly to God for mercy and help. (They know that without Jesus, they are hopelessly lost and unable to save themselves.)

People who truly believe, believe so much that they are willing to lose their life **on account of Jesus**.<sup>18</sup> They continue to believe even when **threatened with death**.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Note: This is a more literal translation than you will find in most English Bibles. The word for believe is in the Greek present tense and it conveys continuation. Also, the word for "into" conveys a continuous motion. The person's believing moves him continually into Jesus in a spiritual sense.

<sup>16</sup> *"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him remission of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39).*

<sup>17</sup> Look down on others as if they are inferior and not important.

<sup>18</sup> *"Whoever does not take up his cross and come after me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27).*

<sup>19</sup> *"Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Mark 13:12-13). Note: Our faith is weak. If threatened with death, Christians have sometimes denied that Jesus was their Lord in order to avoid being killed. (The Apostle Peter denied Jesus at least 3 times on the night before Jesus' death on the cross.) But like Peter, those who truly believe will regret denying Jesus, repent, and begin confessing Him before men again. (Peter repented and began confessing Jesus again and he was eventually killed because he followed Jesus.)*

## Jesus also came to deliver us from slavery to sin.

From the beginning of time, God communicated His desire that people live righteous lives. Long before Jesus came down out of heaven, He spelled out His standard of righteousness in His Law that He gave through Moses. This was discussed on Page 12 in case you need to review it. On that same page (12), we saw that all human beings failed to keep God's laws. They were all born with a defect that inclined them towards disobedience. Even those who attempted to live righteous lives were frustrated because no matter how strong their determination to live righteously, they all failed too many times to count. Consider the groanings of David of whom God described as **"a man after My own heart:"**<sup>20</sup>

*God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me" (Psalm 51:1-3 - David's words).*

All people are born with sin's defect that inclines them towards disobedience. Even if they determine to live obediently, they fail because of their inclination to do their own desire instead of God's desire. (They are inclined to rule over their own life instead of letting God rule over it completely.) As seen in Psalm 51 (above), even David had this defect, and he desired to be rid of it.

As we have already seen in previous lessons, God cannot overlook a single sin because His righteousness is absolutely strict. So, He made a way for sinners to have their sins removed through the sacrifice of His Son. While this made it possible for sinners to have their sins remitted so they could be reconciled to God, it did not diminish God's desire that people live truly righteous (obedient) lives. Besides the promise of the remission of sins, the gospel also promises deliverance from sin's bondage. This makes it possible for God's people to live lives that are increasingly righteous which are pleasing to God. (All true followers of Jesus experience this.)

In Part Two, we will examine what God expects from those who come to Him through Jesus. They must first acknowledge that they have been living as rebels, ruling over their own lives. Being sick and tired of the misery of this way of living, those who come to God His way (through Jesus), begin relating to Jesus as Lord (Boss) over their lives. Nobody has the power in themselves to actually accomplish this. But the Bible teaches that God Himself can and will accomplish it in all who trust Him to do so.

All those who truly believe the gospel of Jesus Christ can testify that God miraculously awakened them from spiritual death to new life. The Bible teaches this:

*"God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:4-5 NASB).*

All true followers of Jesus have been changed from within by God's **grace**<sup>21</sup> so that they increasingly desire to obey God rather than resist Him. Instead of enjoying sin, they seek to be freed from it. They seek to please God rather than themselves. Furthermore, God begins transforming their lives so that they begin to think and act more and more like Jesus.<sup>22</sup> They become compassionate people. They begin to live holy lives. They find that their old way of living increasingly gives way to a life of obedience.

**Note:** The deliverance from sin's bondage is not instantaneous. Rather, it is a life-long, often difficult, process that the Bible calls "sanctification" which is described at the beginning of Part Three. This process will include both victories and defeats. If a person experiences many defeats after he becomes a disciple of Jesus, he may become miserable. But this should not deter him from following Jesus. He should not give up. Defeats are part of the process of sanctification that God is using to humble us and grow our faith. The

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<sup>20</sup> See Acts 13:22.

<sup>21</sup> By "grace," I mean supernatural power. God uses His supernatural power to change spiritually dead people into people who are spiritually alive inside.

<sup>22</sup> The Bible word associated with the ongoing change is "repentance."

promise of salvation/glorification is predicated on our continuation in the battle. If we keep getting back up, it proves that we really do believe the gospel promise of glorification to all who believe and continue to believe into Jesus. God does not revoke the gospel promise when we fail. The important thing is how we respond to the defeats. Hating the misery of sin's bondage, we just need to keep getting back up and coming to Jesus for help until he gives it. John 6:37 says that Jesus will never cast out those who come and keep coming to Him for help.

## All who receive the gift of salvation must count the cost.

Jesus said, *"Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it"* (Luke 17:33). He also said, *"Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple"* (Luke 14:27). To "bear one's cross," a person must be willing to be crucified. In other words, unless a person is willing to die for Jesus, he cannot be His disciple.

It is not natural for human beings to do this because of their inclination to retain ownership of their lives rather than trust God and let Him rule over them. People do not naturally want to surrender their lives to God, but this is precisely what God requires. It is unrighteous for us to run our own lives as if we are God. But that is what all people do. Their entire way of living offends God. This is why God requires people to repent of their autonomous (self-ruled) way of living. But for those who are willing to trust Him with their lives and surrender, He promises to miraculously change them forever. Before conversion (which always includes repentance), people run their own lives. After conversion, Jesus is Lord (boss) and He runs their lives.

This is not a matter to be taken lightly. This is why Jesus used the type of language He used to drive the reality of this issue home. Unless a man is willing to die for Jesus, he cannot be His disciple. Jesus must be trusted (believed) even with our very lives. We must yield the ownership of our life to Him and trust His direction and wisdom in all matters of life.

When a man lives this way, it proves that he really does believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. He really believes that just as Jesus was raised from the dead, so he too will be raised from the dead as Jesus promised: *"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes into Me, though he may die, he shall live'"* (John 11:25). True disciples of Jesus believe the following:

- Jesus' death satisfied God's demand for sin's punishment.
- After they die, Jesus will raise them from the dead to live with Him forever (as He promised).

Because they really believe these things, they are even willing to trust Jesus with their physical lives to do with them (and even dispose of them) as He sees fit. Because they believe the gospel, they will learn to trust God completely as they experience afflictions and trials that He arranges to test their faith. They are even willing to endure suffering and persecution that results from being identified as one of Jesus' disciples.

**Note to parents guiding their children:** As the parent, you are the one who is primarily responsible to make sure your child understands the gospel and its implications. I have noticed during my years that children have difficulty realizing the gospel's demand on their lives. Though the decision is yours, I would suggest that you consider describing these things in such a way that is more likely to create a lasting impression. For example, you could tell them that if they decide to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, many of their friends may start to make fun of them. To make a more lasting impression you could tell them that there are some people in the world who hate Christians so much that they kill them. It is possible that one of these people could take them away from home so that they will never see you again. I realize that this may seem harsh to some people but in reality, this could actually happen to them. Such a warning would likely create a lasting impression upon them that is more impactful than mere intellectual knowledge. If a child is made to feel the weight of his decision to become a disciple of Jesus Christ and still insists that he wants to be one, that is a good indicator that he believes the gospel. Jesus is more important to him than the safety of his home and family.

## A summary of the gospel promises.

The gospel promises salvation from the wrath of God that will soon be poured out on the world. It is also God's means to deliver us from the bondage of sin in this life. The gospel invitation is extended to anyone and everyone who wants to be saved from the coming wrath of God. All who believe (and continue to believe) into Jesus receive remission of sins and eternal life. (Their sins are removed from their record, and they begin living a new life that is empowered by God's grace which includes fellowship with Him.)

The ultimate reward for those believing the gospel is the enjoyment of God forever in His presence after He raises them from the dead. Jesus said, *"I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you to Myself, that where I AM, there you may be also."* (John 14:2-3).

The immediate reward in this life is the fellowship believers enjoy with God and His people. Their enjoyment of this fellowship will be hindered by lingering bondage of sin. But the gospel also promises deliverance from the bondage of sin by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit. He takes up residence in those who believe, and He works in them both to will (desire) and to do the things that please Him. (See Philippians 2:13.) This promise of deliverance from the bondage of sin does not appeal to unbelievers because they enjoy the pleasures of their sin. But to those who are weary of sin's bondage and have learned that they are unable to deliver themselves from it, this promise is important. They desire to become increasingly free of sin's bondage so they can enjoy their relationship with Jesus unhindered by sin's destruction. Also, their progress in this life will determine the degree of enjoyment of their future life with Jesus when He returns.