

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED

What the Bible Teaches About

FAITH

Revised Edition, 2026

GORDON LYONS

ESV Edition

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Faith

Table of Contents

IMPORTANT NOTICE.....	ii
COPYRIGHT NOTICES.....	iii
Permitted Charges and Payments	iii
Translation Information.....	iii
PRINCIPAL WORKS CONSULTED	v
Faith	vii
PART 1	1
Synopsis: Faith	1
Note 1: True Faith versus Temporary Faith, Assent, and Misplaced Faith.....	1
Scripture References (ESV) <i>True Faith v Temporary Faith, Assent, & Misplaced Faith</i>	1
Note 2: Faith in a Religion Cannot Save	2
Scripture References (ESV) <i>Faith in a Religion Cannot Save</i>	2
Note 3: Faith is God’s Gift	3
Scripture References (ESV) <i>Faith is God’s Gift</i>	3
Note 4: Men and Women Must Seek the Lord	4
Scripture References (ESV) <i>Men and Women Must Seek the Lord</i>	4
Note 5: Faith Acceptable to God.....	5
Scripture References (ESV) <i>Faith Acceptable to God</i>	5
Related Bible Truths.....	6
Part 1 Summary.....	7
PART 2	8
Doctrine of Faith: Preliminary Remarks	8
Basis and Nature of Faith.....	8
The Holy Spirit Testifies to the Truth.....	9
Scripture References (ESV) <i>The Holy Spirit Testifies to the Truth</i>	9
Consequences of Rejecting God’s Testimony.....	10
Scripture References (ESV) <i>Consequences of Rejecting God’s Testimony</i>	10
True and False Faith.....	10
Counterfeit Faith.....	10
Part 2 Summary.....	12

PART 3	13
The Parable of the Sower	13
Part 3 Summary.....	19
PART 4	20
Falling Away from the Faith	20
No True Faith Without Regeneration.....	21
To Repudiate the Gospel is to be Lost.....	21
To Turn Back is to be Lost	23
Many Who Acknowledge Christ will be Lost.....	24
Part 4 Summary.....	25
PART 5	26
Backsliders and Unbelievers	26
Part 5 Summary.....	31
PART 6	32
Danger of Unbelief	32
God's Wrath Remains Upon Unbelievers.....	32
Without the Gospel, People will Perish	34
Part 6 Summary.....	35
PART 7	37
Genuine Saving Faith	37
Whoever Believes has Everlasting Life.....	38
Delivered from Condemnation	39
Part 7 Summary.....	40
PART 8	42
Saved by Grace	42
Faith is God's Gift.....	42
Neither is there Salvation in Any Other	43
Multitudes will Perish	43
Part 8 Summary.....	45

PART 1

Synopsis: Faith

Faith is that gift of God's grace which, at the proper time, he freely bestows upon all the elect by the working of his Holy Spirit in effectual calling. God does this with the intent that those who receive the gift of faith might be enabled—*freely and willingly*—to repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. All who believe are delivered from the punishment due to sin, and saved from the wrath of God. Faith includes wholehearted trust in, and commitment to, the Son of God as one's personal Saviour and Lord. Everyone who repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ does so because he or she has been effectually called and regenerated by the Holy Spirit (i.e., born spiritually anew from above). Regeneration is not effected through water baptism, but through the almighty inward working of the Holy Spirit in a sinner's life. Upon their regeneration, God justifies (or declares righteous) all those who believe on his Son. Every believer's new life in Christ must be characterised by holiness.

Note 1: True Faith versus Temporary Faith, Assent, and Misplaced Faith

The faith of which the Bible speaks is distinct from all other forms of faith. Other forms of faith include temporary faith, and assent. Temporary faith is counterfeit faith (see further on *Counterfeit Faith* below). Assent is the mere outward agreement with a system of teaching or doctrine, or the outward acceptance of a particular religion. A marked characteristic of assent is that it lacks any inward change of heart. Also included in other forms of faith are those beliefs that do not rest unreservedly on Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of men and women, and the only Mediator between God and man.

Scripture References (ESV) *True Faith v Temporary Faith, Assent, & Misplaced Faith*

Acts 17:22-23

²² So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. (See vv.16-31)

Acts 17:34

³⁴ But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them. (See vv.32-33)

Romans 10:2-4

² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.
(See vv.5-10)

1 Timothy 2:5-6

⁵For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. (See vv.1-4; cf. John 14:6; Heb. 8:6; 9:15)

Note 2: Faith in a Religion Cannot Save

Millions of people claim to believe in Christ—but the faith they possess is not true faith. Their faith is in the religion to which they belong, and to its teachings, rather than in the Person and redemptive work of Christ as revealed to us in the Bible. The faith of which the Bible speaks is associated only with those whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated. Faith in any religion that differs from the teaching of the Bible is not genuine God-given faith. Similarly, the demons have faith. They believe in Christ—and tremble at the prospect of their final doom. Their faith—which although based on a clear knowledge of the truth—differs fundamentally from true faith. They are utterly convinced of the consequences of their sin and of their final judgement. However, their complete faith or belief in their eternal destiny can never be associated with their salvation—for there is no possibility of salvation for the devil and his (fallen) angels. So it is with all those who do not possess true spiritual and God-given faith, or who place their entire confidence in any form of truth that is different from the Word of God—the Bible.

Scripture References (ESV)

Faith in a Religion Cannot Save

Matthew 7:21-23

²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ (See vv.13-20)

Galatians 1:6-9

⁶I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. (See vv.10-12)

Galatians 4:4,6

⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” (See vv.1-15)

James 2:19

¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! (See vv.14-26; cf. Matt. 8:29; Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34)

Note 3: Faith is God’s Gift

Faith is the gift of God. Men and women cannot exercise this kind of faith of their own free will. This is because the Fall has left man’s nature (including his will) depraved or corrupted. It is also because—by nature—fallen mankind is totally opposed to, or at enmity with God, and is spiritually dead. Therefore, although fallen man has a degree of free will and *moral* ability, he lacks entirely the necessary *spiritual* ability to repent and believe. This situation cannot be resolved by fallen man himself. Only by the work of the Holy Spirit can he be granted new spiritual life and enabled to respond. In his great mercy, however, God regenerates and grants faith to all those whom he has predestined unto life eternal. The Holy Spirit effectually calls them, creates within them new spiritual life (the new birth), awakens them to their great spiritual need and danger, and grants them the necessary ability and willingness to exercise faith in the Son of God. All whom the Holy Spirit thus draws to the Lord Jesus Christ respond with a grateful heart to the offer of salvation, and no one is ever turned away.

Scripture References (ESV) Faith is God’s Gift

Ephesians 1:11-13

¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, (See vv.4-14)

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (See vv.1-10)

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

¹³ But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits ¹ to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. ¹⁴ To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note 4: Men and Women Must Seek the Lord

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Those who come to God must believe that he exists, and that he rewards those who diligently seek him. Although true faith is God's gift, God still requires mankind to exercise the utmost diligence in seeking to know his ways, and to repent of their sinful way of life. Man cannot claim to be excused on the grounds of inability. His inability to respond to God's commands or to his offer of salvation is rooted in his own sin, for which man himself remains responsible. Although devoid of *spiritual* ability, fallen man has sufficient *moral* ability to seek to know the ways of the Lord, and it is his responsibility to do so. This is why God commands all mankind to seek him while he may be found. God's sovereignty in election does not absolve man of his responsibility or accountability to God.

Scripture References (ESV)***Men and Women Must Seek the Lord***

Isaiah 55:6-7

⁶ "Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
⁷ let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our Gd, for he will abundantly pardon. (See vv.1-3)

Acts 17:26-28

²⁶ And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷ that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way towards him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸ for

"'In him we live and move and have our being';
as even some of your own poets have said,

¹ chose you as the firstfruits...: [2 Thessalonians 2:13](#) Some manuscripts chose you from the beginning. (ESV footnote)

“For we are indeed his offspring.’ (See vv.22-29)

Acts 17:30

³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, (See v.31)

Acts 26:19-20

¹⁹ “Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰ but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. (See vv.13-18)

Hebrews 11:6

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (See vv.1,3)

Note 5: Faith Acceptable to God

Those whom the Holy Spirit makes willing and able to exercise genuine faith are those whom God justifies and to whom he grants the gift of life eternal. No-one who comes to Christ is ever turned away. In effectual calling, the Holy Spirit makes a person aware of their very great spiritual need and danger: i.e., he convicts, convinces and converts them. All that God then requires the sinner to ‘do’ is to believe wholeheartedly on the One who is able to heal and deliver—the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in this sense—the sense of total dependency and absolute trust in the Lord—that the Bible so often commends people for their faith. This applies both in relation to healing of the soul and healing of the body.

Scripture References (ESV)

Faith Acceptable to God

Matthew 8:10-13

¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he marvelled and said to those who followed him, “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. ¹¹ I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹² while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” ¹³ And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed at that very moment. (See vv.5-9)

Romans 3:20-25

²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. (See vv.26-28)

Hebrews 11:39-40

³⁹ And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. (See entire chapter)

Related Bible Truths

Closely allied to the doctrine of faith are the doctrines of predestination, repentance, regeneration, and justification. All those whom God has predestined to eternal life are effectually called by the Holy Spirit, through whom they are granted the gifts of repentance and faith. Everyone who thus comes to Christ is born again or regenerated spiritually, and justified with the imputed righteousness of Christ.²

Summary below

² See *Bible Truths Explained: Predestination; Repentance; Regeneration; Justification*.

Part 1 Summary

- **Faith is God's gracious gift:** True saving faith is bestowed by God through the Holy Spirit in effectual calling, enabling sinners freely and willingly to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **Faith rests wholly on Christ:** Biblical faith involves wholehearted trust in, and commitment to, Jesus Christ as personal Saviour and Lord—the only Mediator between God and mankind.
- **True faith differs from false forms:** Temporary faith, mere assent to doctrine, outward religion, or misplaced trust in any system other than Christ cannot save and involves no inward change of heart.
- **Religion itself cannot save:** Confidence in a church, religious identity, religious works, or even correct knowledge of truth is not saving faith unless joined to personal trust in Christ through regeneration by the Holy Spirit.
- **Regeneration precedes saving faith:** Fallen mankind lacks the spiritual ability to repent and believe apart from the inward, almighty work of the Holy Spirit, who gives new spiritual life.
- **Faith is not produced by human merit:** Salvation is by grace through faith, not by works, so that no one may boast; God grants faith to those whom he has chosen and effectually called.
- **Human responsibility remains:** Although faith is God's gift, men and women are commanded to seek the Lord, repent of sin, and turn to God while he may be found.
- **Inability is no excuse:** Fallen humanity's inability to respond spiritually is rooted in sin, for which each person remains accountable before God.
- **Saving faith is acceptable to God:** Those whom the Holy Spirit makes willing and able to believe are justified by God and granted eternal life; no one who truly comes to Christ is turned away.
- **Faith involves total dependence:** The faith commended in Scripture is absolute trust in Christ's power to heal, deliver, justify, and save both soul and body.
- **Faith leads to holiness:** Everyone regenerated and justified by God must show the evidence of new life in Christ through holiness and spiritual fruitfulness.
- **Related doctrines:** Faith is closely connected with predestination, repentance, regeneration, and justification: those predestined are called, granted repentance and faith, born again, and justified in Christ.

PART 2

Doctrine of Faith: Preliminary Remarks

The Visible and Invisible Church

- The **visible** church is the world-wide company of *professing* believers. When we use the term, the ‘visible church’, we are making and implying no distinction between *true believers* and *false professors* within the church. Anyone who claims to belong to Christ—whether that claim is genuine or not—is designated as a member of the visible church.
- The **invisible** church is the world-wide company of *true* believers. We refer to it as the ‘invisible church’ because it is composed exclusively of genuinely regenerated believers—many of whom are known only to God. Numerous people say that they belong to Christ—but, in fact, they do not. These people are false professors or counterfeit believers. Sometimes, only God is able to distinguish between these false professors and his own people. Only God’s redeemed people constitute the true or invisible church. Frequently, the Word of God refers to these as the members of Christ’s body, or the redeemed of the Lord.

Basis and Nature of Faith

Faith Rests on the Authority of God

We do not rest our faith on our feelings, nor do we base it on our moral and intellectual apprehension of the truth. Again, we do not found our faith on any rational or persuasive human arguments—however valid these arguments may appear to be. Biblical faith is founded on the *authority and testimony of the living God*, and it is attested to by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit.

By faith in the testimony of the Bible, we are convinced that God created the world. By faith in that same infallible testimony, we are convinced that God created Adam; and that—by his fall—Adam involved the whole human race in sin and misery. By faith, we are convinced that God destroyed the world by a deluge. By faith, we are convinced that God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he has appointed.

Faith, therefore, rests on the authority of God, and on the solid and incontrovertible evidence revealed to us in the Word of God—the Holy Bible. The facts of the Bible or Scriptures are more to be believed than any facts of history or science: for, in their original forms (*‘autographs’*), the Holy Scriptures were the infallible Word of God. This inerrant Word has now been handed down to us in the form of translations, via manuscripts copied from the autographs.

As originally delivered by God, the Word of God cannot err or be mistaken in its declarations, until the day that God can err or be mistaken in his pronouncements.

Such is the nature of our faith. Its foundation is the authority of God. Its framework is the testimony of God. To disallow God’s authority is to show contempt for God. To disbelieve God’s testimony is to make God a liar.

The Holy Spirit Testifies to the Truth

Scripture References (ESV)

The Holy Spirit Testifies to the Truth

Concerning the inward witness of the Holy Spirit to the truth and authority of God's Word, the Scripture says:

John 14:26

²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

John 15:26

²⁶ "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. (See v.27)

John 16:13-15

¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (See vv.7-12)

1 John 5:6-8

⁶ This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.

1 John 5:9-12

⁹ If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. ¹⁰ Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. (See v.13)

Consequences of Rejecting God's Testimony

Scripture References (ESV)

Consequences of Rejecting God's Testimony

Concerning the serious consequences of refusing to believe the Word that God has spoken, that Word says:

Hebrews 12:25

²⁵ See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. (Cf. 2:2-4; 3:15-19; 10:28-31)

Hebrews 12:29

²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.
{Deut. 4:24} (See vv.18-28;
cf. Exodus 24:17; Isa. 66:15-16)

True and False Faith

As has been indicated in Notes 1 and 2 above, not all faith is associated with salvation. There are several different *kinds* of faith (as distinct from *degrees* of faith). The various kinds of faith include mere assent; i.e. the mental or intellectual acknowledgement given to a set of doctrines, or to a system of religion. However, giving one's assent to a set of doctrines, or to a particular religion, is not the same thing as believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith that consists only in mental assent, or which is based only on an intellectual knowledge of religious truths, is not true biblical faith. A person may believe earnestly in his religion; in the doctrines of his church, or in the form of church to which he belongs. However, if he does not centre his faith on Christ as his living personal Redeemer, then that person's faith is of no avail. Again, if his faith does not involve the regeneration, justification, and sanctification of that person's life, then the faith he possesses is worthless. It is a dead faith.

Dead faith is a false or counterfeit form of faith. It is a nominal faith—a faith in name only. As such, it cannot benefit those who profess it. They are still in their sins; and, unless they realise their danger and truly repent, they will certainly perish.

Counterfeit Faith

Except under very close and expert examination, many counterfeit banknotes can rarely be distinguished from genuine banknotes. So it is with the Christian faith. There is a form of faith that is counterfeit. It has many of the outward appearances of being genuine—but it is not.

Many people claim to have accepted Christ. They may show many of the outward evidences of belonging to Christ. They may attend church services regularly, and they may take part in these services. They may speak as though truly converted, and they may give a testimony of their 'conversion'. They may even witness openly of Christ to others—and yet not be truly saved. These

people have tasted of the Holy Spirit in his 'common' operations. However, the Holy Spirit has never renewed their souls by his regenerating and sanctifying power. Their faith is counterfeit: and if counterfeit, it is dead. These people are yet in their sins. As such, they remain under the wrath and curse of God.

Let us remember that not all of Jesus' disciples belonged to the Lord. In common with others, Judas Iscariot associated with the Lord's followers. He sat under the teaching of the Lord Jesus. He preached the gospel to the people, in common with the other disciples. He held a position of trust and responsibility among the Twelve, for he was their official treasurer. As far as we know, and in common with the other disciples, Judas performed miracles in the name of the Lord, and cast out evil spirits in Jesus' name. Yet, as we know only too well, Judas Iscariot never belonged to Christ. He associated with the Lord's people, but he was a child of the devil and a son of perdition. Therefore, we must realise that such people will always be found in the church. Like Satan and his messengers when they appear to God's people as though they were angels of light (i.e., holy angels), such evil individual within the church can appear to other people as holy, righteous and good. But God knows the truth, and he will judge them as their attitudes, thoughts and deeds deserve.

Not all who profess faith in Christ belong to Christ. The Lord Jesus makes this truth very clear in his teaching on this subject. On the pages that follow, we will consider one of these teachings in detail.

Summary below

Part 2 Summary

- **The visible church:** The visible church consists of all who profess faith in Christ, whether their profession is genuine or false.
- **The invisible church:** The invisible church consists only of true, regenerated believers, many of whom are known fully only to God.
- **Profession is not proof of salvation:** Many may claim to belong to Christ, yet only those redeemed and renewed by God truly belong to his people.
- **Faith rests on God's authority:** Biblical faith is not founded on feelings, human reasoning, or persuasion, but on the authority and testimony of the living God.
- **Scripture is faith's foundation:** Faith receives the testimony of the Bible as God's revealed Word, including creation, the fall, judgement, redemption, and the truth concerning Christ.
- **God's Word is trustworthy:** As originally given by God, Scripture is infallible and cannot err, because God himself cannot err or be mistaken.
- **The Spirit confirms the truth:** The Holy Spirit bears inward witness to the truth and authority of God's Word and testifies concerning Christ.
- **Rejecting God's testimony is serious:** To reject God's Word is to refuse the One who speaks from heaven and to incur grave spiritual danger.
- **Not all faith is saving faith:** Mere intellectual assent, outward religious agreement, or confidence in a religious system is not the same as believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **Dead faith cannot save:** Faith that does not centre on Christ as Redeemer, and that does not involve regeneration, justification, and sanctification, is worthless and dead.
- **Counterfeit faith may appear genuine:** Some people may display outward signs of Christian profession, service, testimony, or zeal, yet remain unregenerated and unsaved.
- **Judas illustrates false profession:** Judas outwardly associated with Christ and his disciples, served among them, and appeared trustworthy, yet never truly belonged to Christ.
- **God alone knows the heart:** False professors may deceive others and appear righteous, but God discerns the truth and will judge each person rightly.
- **True faith requires regeneration:** Genuine saving faith is produced by the Holy Spirit's renewing and sanctifying work, not by outward religion or temporary spiritual impressions.
- **Part 2's central warning:** A profession of faith must be tested by inward renewal, continuing trust in Christ, and the fruit of a sanctified life.

PART 3

The Parable of the Sower

The radically differing types of faith are clearly demonstrated in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4:2-20; Luke 8:4-15).

In this parable, it becomes evident that a person may say he believes, and yet be lost. He may claim allegiance to Christ, and yet not belong to Christ. He may follow Christ for a while; he may become involved in Christian service, and yet he may apostatise³ or renounce his profession of faith.

The Parable of the Sower Explained

The correct understanding of this parable is basic to all that the Lord Jesus teaches about those who profess faith in his name. Failure to understand the significance of the Lord's teaching will lead to mistaken ideas about who is truly saved and who is not.

In view of its importance, we will consider separately each of the four categories mentioned in the parable of the sower. Note carefully the profession that each category is represented as making, and the actual state or condition of each category —whether justified and saved, or condemned and lost. Comparison should be made of the three accounts given by Matthew, Mark and Luke.

1a. Seed by the Wayside

Matthew 13:4

⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them.

Mark 4:4

⁴ And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.

Luke 8:5

⁵ "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it.

³ *apostatise*: to fall away from, or abandon completely and finally, one's beliefs.

1b. The Lord's Explanation of the Seed by the Wayside

Matthew 13:19

¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

Mark 4:14-15

¹⁴ The sower sows the word. ¹⁵ And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.

Luke 8:11-12

¹¹ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹² The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

1c. Comment

This is the first category mentioned. These people hear the gospel, but they fail to understand it. Before they can think seriously about what they have heard, Satan snatches away the seed sown in their hearts. The Word, therefore, makes no lasting impression on the lives of these people. They continue as they were before—in their lost state. Such are they who receive the seed fallen by the wayside.

1d. Profession

Each of the individuals in this category heard the gospel, but none of them embraced the message nor did they profess faith in Christ.

1e. State

Condemned and lost.

2a. Seed in Stony Places

Matthew 13:5-6

⁵ Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, ⁶ but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away.

Mark 4:5-6

⁵ Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶ And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away.

Luke 8:6

⁶ And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.

2b. The Lord's Explanation of the Seed in Stony Places

Matthew 13:20-21

²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.⁴

Mark 4:16-17

¹⁶ And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷ And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.⁵

Luke 8:13

¹³ And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away.

2c. Comment

This second category of individuals who hear God's Word, receive it and continue in the way of the Lord for a while. However, eventually, it becomes evident that their faith was not true or genuine faith, and that they have never truly been converted. This becomes evident by their failure to persevere under difficulty or persecution. Ultimately, these people abandon their profession of faith and return to the world.

⁴ falls away: [Matthew 13:21](#) Or stumbles. (ESV footnote)

⁵ fall away: [Mark 4:17](#) Or stumble. (ESV footnote)

2d. Profession

Each of the individuals in this category did profess faith in Christ—perhaps in response to an emotional appeal or need. When put to the test, however, they fell away and abandoned their profession of faith in Christ.

2e. State

Condemned and lost.

3a. Seed among Thorns

Matthew 13:7

⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.

Mark 4:7

⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain.

Luke 8:7

⁷ And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it.

3b. The Lord's Explanation of the Seed among Thorns

Matthew 13:22

²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

Mark 4:18-19

¹⁸ And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, ¹⁹ but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

Luke 8:14

¹⁴ And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.

3c. Comment

This third category of individuals hears the Word of God, and they make a profession of faith in Christ. For a time, they continue in the faith, and may appear to everyone to have experienced a genuine spiritual conversion—especially since they appear to be making progress in the things of the Spirit.

These people may continue in the services of the church for many years. Eventually, however, becoming overwhelmed with the cares or riches of this world—or preferring to seek fulfilment in this life's fleeting pleasures—they prove spiritually unfruitful. Ultimately, they abandon their profession of faith. These were never true believers. They had all the outward signs of being Christians, but they lacked the regenerating, sanctifying and sustaining power of the Spirit in their lives.

Such are all who make a profession of faith and who follow the Lord outwardly, but who do not produce in their lives the fruit of a regenerated and sanctified heart.

3d. Profession

Each of the individuals in this category did profess faith in Christ. They continued in their profession—perhaps over a prolonged period. Ultimately, however, they proved spiritually barren. Those who do not continue to bring forth fruit to the glory of God, prove that they do not possess the Spirit who produces that fruit.

3e. State

Condemned and lost.

4a. Seed in Good Ground

Matthew 13:8

⁸Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Mark 4:8

⁸And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”

Luke 8:8

⁸And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.” As he said these things, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

4b. The Lord's Explanation of the Seed in Good Ground

Matthew 13:23

²³ As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

Mark 4:20

²⁰ But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

Luke 8:15

¹⁵ As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

4c. Comment

In the parable of the sower, only the fourth category of individuals proves to be genuine believers. These alone have been born again or regenerated by the Spirit of God, and are being sanctified by God's Spirit. The evidence that they truly belong to God is the fruit they continue to produce in their lives. Not all produce the same measure of spiritual fruit—but all produce some fruit: some, a hundred times as much; some, sixty times; and some, thirty times.

4d. Profession

Each of the individuals in this category did profess faith in Christ. The validity of their profession is being confirmed by the continual evidences of a spiritually fruitful and holy life.

4e. State

Justified and saved.

Summary below

Part 3 Summary

- **Part 3's central theme:** The Parable of the Sower shows that not every profession of faith is saving faith; some may appear to believe, follow Christ for a time, or serve outwardly, yet remain lost.
- **The seed is God's Word:** In all three Gospel accounts, the seed represents the word of God or word of the kingdom, and the soils represent differing responses to that Word.
- **Wayside hearers:** These hear the gospel but do not understand or embrace it; Satan removes the Word before it takes root, leaving them unchanged.
- **Wayside profession and state:** They make no true profession of faith in Christ and remain condemned and lost.
- **Stony-ground hearers:** These receive the Word with joy and appear to believe for a time, but have no root and fall away under testing, trouble, or persecution.
- **Stony-ground profession and state:** Their profession proves temporary and ungentine; when tested, they abandon it and are condemned and lost.
- **Thorny-ground hearers:** These hear the Word and may continue outwardly for a long time, but the cares of the world, riches, desires, and pleasures choke the Word.
- **Thorny-ground profession and state:** Though they profess faith and may seem spiritually promising, they remain unfruitful, lack the Spirit's regenerating power, and are condemned and lost.
- **Good-ground hearers:** These hear, understand, accept, and hold fast the Word in an honest and good heart, bearing fruit with patience.
- **Good-ground profession and state:** Their profession is confirmed by continuing spiritual fruit and holiness; they alone are justified and saved.
- **Fruit is the evidence of true faith:** Genuine believers do not all bear the same measure of fruit, but all bear some fruit because they have been regenerated and are being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
- **Part 3's warning:** Outward profession, temporary enthusiasm, church involvement, or apparent progress cannot prove salvation unless accompanied by persevering, Spirit-produced fruit.

PART 4

Falling Away from the Faith

We should observe that the people who constitute the first three categories in the parable of the sower did not experience the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration (the new birth). Those whom the Holy Spirit truly regenerates, and who are continually bringing forth the fruit of a renewed and sanctified life, cannot finally apostatise or fall away. The Holy Spirit has sealed them unto the day of redemption, and they cannot renounce their profession of faith or lose their salvation.

Concerning those who belong to the Lord, Jesus himself says:

John 10:27-30

²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

Romans 8:14-17

¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons⁶ of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (See vv.18-25)

2 Corinthians 1:20-22

²⁰ For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. ²¹ And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, ²² and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. (See vv.15-19)

2 Corinthians 5:5

⁵ He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. (See vv.1-8)

⁶ sons (of God): Romans 8:14; 'Sons' in this context includes both sons and daughters. See v.16 where the phrase used is 'children of God'.

Ephesians 1:13-14

¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (See vv.11-12)

1 Peter 1:2-5

²according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:

May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (See vv.6-9)

No True Faith Without Regeneration

The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and who possess the indwelling Holy Spirit, are eternally secure. However, those whose faith is not of God, can and do fall away from their profession. Those who profess faith in Christ, but who do not continually bring forth the fruit of a renewed and holy life, do not belong to Christ.

It is to such people that the Scriptures refer when they speak of falling away or apostatising from the faith. God's Word warns that these people cannot be renewed again unto repentance. They have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in his common operations, although, not in regeneration. They have tasted of the heavenly gift, although they have not inwardly received that gift. They have participated in the things of God and of the Spirit, although not with a renewed and sanctified heart.

To Repudiate the Gospel is to be Lost

Those who have had such great privileges—and who have been brought to the very threshold of God's kingdom—if, at this point, they fall away, they cannot be restored again to the point of repentance. They have thrown away the opportunity of grace. They have trodden underfoot the blood of Christ: that blood which had a sanctifying effect on them insofar that they knew and understood the message of the Cross—and yet rejected it. Having come thus far, and yet to repudiate the gospel message and apostatise, is to be lost. Such, in Jesus' day, were many of the religious leaders. They had received a full and accurate knowledge of the truth, but they rejected it—wilfully and inexcusably.

Concerning those who knew the elementary truths of God's Word, but who showed little or no signs of true spiritual progress, the writer to the Hebrews warns:

Hebrews 6:4-6

⁴ For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. (See vv.1-3; cf. 2 Pet. 2:20-22)

Hebrews 6:7-8

⁷ For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ⁸ But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. (See vv.9-12)

Taken in context, the following passage refers to believers. The writer is warning the Hebrew Christians of what would happen (hypothetically) if they should sin wilfully against the truth. However, what applies here as a solemn warning to believers, can be applied in principle to those who have known about the way of salvation, who have come to the very threshold of God's kingdom, and yet who have repudiated the gospel message and have despised the Spirit of grace and of glory, of whom they had sufficient knowledge in his common operations.

Hebrews 10:26-27

²⁶ For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a fearful expectation of judgement, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

Hebrews 10:28-29

²⁸ Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?

Hebrews 10:30-31

³⁰ For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." {Deut. 32:35} And again, "The Lord will judge his people." {Deut. 32:36; Psalm 135:14} ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (See vv.32-36)

To Turn Back is to be Lost

Only those who possess a substantial knowledge of God's ways, and who have experienced something of the Holy Spirit's working in their lives (although, not in regeneration), are capable of apostatising. (And, incidentally, it is only such as those who are capable of committing the unforgivable sin—i.e., blasphemy of the Holy Spirit—as the Pharisees very nearly did.⁷)

For such a person to turn back to sin and to the world—after having professed faith in Christ—is to be lost. It is the clearest indication that the person professing faith did not in fact possess genuine faith. This is an example of counterfeit and temporary faith, or, as James says, dead faith. Such a condition applies to multitudes of people throughout the world. These people come to know of spiritual things. They may 'make a decision' for Christ. They follow him for a while. Ultimately, however, they abandon their profession and turn back to the world.

Unlike these false professors, true believers have been regenerated by the Spirit of God. Those whom the Spirit has regenerated, persevere in their faith and in holiness of life. At times, true believers may backslide. However, they do not finally return to the world, nor can they continue to live to satisfy their sinful desires.

Those who apostatise were never true believers. They apostatise from their profession of faith and from their outward association with the church, but they were never true members of the church—which is Christ's body. The Holy Spirit had never regenerated their souls. Although, while associated with the church, they may have made an open profession of faith, their subsequent manner of life showed that they were without Christ and lost.

To those who were not prepared to become wholly committed to him, the Lord Jesus said:

Luke 9:62

⁶² ...“No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” (See vv.57-61; cf. 1 Kings 19:19-21)

Remember Lot's wife. To *look back*—instead of *pressing forward*—is to be lost. (Gen. 19:26)

Again, the Scripture says:

Hebrews 10:38-39

³⁸ but my righteous one shall live by faith,
and if he shrinks back,
my soul has no pleasure in him.” {*Hab. 2:3-4*}

³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those
who have faith and preserve their souls. (See vv.32-37)

⁷ *Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, or the unforgivable sin*: For further details on this topic, see on *Bible Truths Explained: Sin*, under *The Unforgivable Sin*.

Many Who Acknowledge Christ will be Lost

Not all false or counterfeit 'believers' abandon the faith, or rather, their profession of faith. Many remain within the visible church, claiming allegiance to Christ and making an outward show of religion. The false believer may resemble the true believer in all his outward appearances; and, at times, it may be virtually impossible for anyone to distinguish between them. God, however, can and does distinguish between them. They may deceive others. Outwardly and publicly, they may acknowledge Christ as Lord. They may do many commendable works of service in the Lord's name. Yet, ultimately, they will fail to enter his kingdom. For, although they may claim Christ as Lord, they do not know him with the faith that proceeds from a spiritually renewed heart.

To this end, the Lord Jesus himself says:

Matthew 7:21

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (See vv.13-20)

Those who profess faith in Christ, but whose heart is not right with God, will be excluded from God's kingdom. Such are not true believers; for their faith does not result in a life that is pleasing to God and that is fruitful in the things of God.

The Lord Jesus continues:

Matthew 7:22

²² On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'

Many who preach the things of Christ will be lost, for they did not preach the things of Christ from a regenerated and sanctified heart. Many who cast out demons in Christ's name will be lost, for they did not cast out demons from a renewed and cleansed life. Many, who perform numerous commendable works in the name of the Lord, will never experience heaven's glory, for they did not know the Lord of Glory as their Saviour. They assented to the truths of God, but they were strangers to the grace of God.

On the Day of Judgment, many people will plead earnestly for recognition as having belonged to Christ. However, the Lord himself is very clear about what he will say to people who professed his name, but who did not know him with true sanctified faith:

Matthew 7:23

²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.' (Cf. Matt. 25:41; Luke 13:23-30)

The Lord will consider all their good endeavours in his name as works of iniquity. Why? Because, although they professed faith in Christ, they did not know Christ personally as Saviour and Lord. They were still in their sins; still at enmity with God by wicked works, and still under the wrath and condemnation of God. They had an outward appearance of piety, but no inward change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit in regeneration. It is a fearful thing to profess faith in Christ, and yet not to know Christ or his redeeming love and power.

Part 4 Summary

- **Part 4's central theme:** Those truly regenerated by the Holy Spirit cannot finally fall away, but those with counterfeit or temporary faith may apostatise from their profession.
- **True believers are secure:** Christ gives his sheep eternal life, keeps them in his hand, and preserves them by the Father's power.
- **The Spirit seals God's people:** The Holy Spirit bears witness that believers are God's children and is given as the seal, guarantee, and pledge of their inheritance.
- **Regeneration produces perseverance:** Those born again by the Spirit continue in faith and holiness, though they may sometimes backslide.
- **Apostasy reveals false faith:** Those who finally abandon Christ show that their faith was not God-given and that they never truly belonged to Christ.
- **Common operations are not regeneration:** Some may experience spiritual privileges, knowledge, conviction, or outward influence, yet never receive the inward renewing work of the Spirit.
- **Repudiating the gospel is fatal:** To know the truth, come near to the kingdom, and then reject Christ is to despise the blood of the covenant and remain lost.
- **Hebrews gives solemn warnings:** Hebrews 6 and 10 warn that those who fall away after great spiritual privilege cannot be renewed again to repentance.
- **Turning back exposes unbelief:** To return finally to sin and the world after professing Christ is evidence of dead, temporary, or counterfeit faith.
- **True believers may backslide, but not apostatise:** A true believer may fall into sin for a time, but cannot finally return to the world or continue in sinful desires.
- **False professors may remain in the church:** Many continue outwardly within the visible church, claiming Christ and doing religious works, yet lack a renewed heart.
- **Outward works cannot save:** Preaching, religious activity, miracles, or service in Christ's name do not prove saving faith if the person does not truly know Christ.
- **Final judgement exposes the heart:** Christ will reject those who professed his name but remained workers of lawlessness, saying, "I never knew you."
- **Part 4's warning:** Profession, privilege, knowledge, and religious service must be accompanied by regeneration, perseverance, holiness, and Spirit-produced fruit.

PART 5

Backsliders and Unbelievers

The Backsliding Christian

Are Backsliders Lost?

At this point, we must distinguish between a true believer who backslides, and a person professing to be a believer who later abandons his profession and returns to the ways of the world.

We freely acknowledge that a true believer can backslide. We also acknowledge that—while in a backslidden state—this person may commit some very serious sins. There is, however, a world of a difference between a backslidden Christian, and someone who abandons his profession and returns to his old way of life. The backslidden Christian is and remains a child of God. The false professor never was a child of God.

Since he is God's child, the backslidden Christian cannot continue in sin indefinitely. His conscience accuses him. God's indwelling Holy Spirit convicts him of his sin. Ultimately, a backsliding believer sees the error of his ways, and he comes back to God in contrition and repentance. Like the prodigal son, he returns eventually to his Father. (Luke 15:11-24)

On the other hand, the false professor or counterfeit believer is not a member of God's family. There is, therefore, no indwelling Holy Spirit to convict him of his sin in the same sense, and to the same extent, as with a true believer. The false professor may feel remorse at times. Eventually, however, he hardens his conscience against the things of God. Ultimately, he reaches a state where he has no desire to repent or to turn to God. His element is this world and its sinful way of life—and there he chooses to remain.

Backsliders Disciplined, But Not Disinherited

A backsliding believer may stumble in his faith, but he cannot fall away from grace. He may disgrace the name of Christ for a time, but ultimately he will abhor and forsake his sin, truly repent, and seek the Lord's forgiveness. Unlike the false professor, the backsliding Christian has no lasting desire to remain in his sinful way of life. His element is the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Once more, he must return to holiness of life.

God, however, may severely discipline a backsliding Christian for the sins he has committed, and for the dishonour he has brought upon the Lord's name. Even so, the believer's salvation remains eternally secure. Although he may forfeit certain of God's blessings, for a time at least, he cannot forfeit God's salvation. He is God's child, and God will not disinherit anyone whom he has called and made his own.

Although the Lord will discipline his backsliding children, he will never disown or disinherit them. Thus, God's Word says:

Psalms 89:30-34

³⁰ If his children forsake my law
and do not walk according to my rules,

³¹ if they violate my statutes

and do not keep my commandments,
³² then I will punish their transgression with the rod
and their iniquity with stripes,
³³ but I will not remove from him my steadfast love
or be false to my faithfulness.
³⁴ I will not violate my covenant
or alter the word that went forth from my lips.
(See vv.27-37; cf. 2 Sam. 7:14-16)

Psalms 94:12,14

¹² Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O LORD,
and whom you teach out of your law...

¹⁴ For the LORD will not forsake his people;
he will not abandon his heritage;

David Disciplined After Backsliding

Concerning sin and discipline, we need only consider the example of the psalmist David. David belonged to the Lord. Yet, while in a backslidden state, he committed adultery and was directly responsible for another man's death.

There can be no condoning what David did. His sins were among the most wicked imaginable. He had degraded himself as a man. He had defiled another man's wife. He had attempted to deceive this other man (Uriah the Hittite) by endeavouring to cover up his adulterous relationship with Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. When this attempt at deceit failed, however, David arranged to have Bathsheba's husband posted to the front line of battle. There—in the thickest of the fighting—Uriah fell, slain.

Thus, God's Word tells us:

2 Samuel 11:1-2

¹ In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

² It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. (See vv.3-13)

2 Samuel 11:14-15

¹⁴ In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. ¹⁵ In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die." (See vv.16-25)

2 Samuel 11:26-27

²⁶When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. ²⁷And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased ⁸ the LORD.

David's sins had been deliberate and calculated. He knew what he was doing—and he did it wilfully. Above all, David had sinned against the Lord. He had dishonoured God's holy name, and he had given occasion to others to speak evil of the Lord's people.

When the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to confront David with his sin, David truly repented of his evil deeds. He frankly acknowledged his sin and guilt when Nathan declared to him, "*You are the man!...*" (2 Sam. 12:7)

Concerning this matter, God says to David through Nathan the prophet:

2 Samuel 12:9

⁹Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. (See vv.1-8)

2 Samuel 12:10

¹⁰Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' (See vv.11-12)

At this point, David acknowledged his sin:

2 Samuel 12:13-14

¹³David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

¹⁴Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD, the child who is born to you shall die." (See vv.15-21)

Then, when David was asked why he had stopped grieving for his child shortly after its death:

2 Samuel 12:22-23

²²He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'Who knows whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?'

⁸ *displeased*: 2 Samuel 11:26-27; In Hebrew, this word means that David's sins were considered ethically *evil* or *wicked* before the LORD.

²³ But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.” (See vv.24-25)

David had returned to the Lord with a humble and contrite heart, seeking forgiveness and cleansing. God forgave, cleansed and restored David to fellowship with himself. Nevertheless, God punished David for his sins. According to the word of the LORD, the child born to Bathsheba died. Although David had pleaded earnestly with God to spare the life of his child, God took that child from him. It is no light matter to sin against the Lord, or to despise his holy commandments.

David's Plea for Forgiveness (Psalm 51)

Psalms 51:1-19

- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
- ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!
- ³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
- ⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgement.
- ⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- ⁶ Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.
- ⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.
- ⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
- ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
- ¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

- ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.
- ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
- ¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.
- ¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- ¹⁶ For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.
- ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
- ¹⁸ Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
build up the walls of Jerusalem;
- ¹⁹ then will you delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.
(See also 2 Sam. 11:1-27; 12:1-25)

This is the kind of heartfelt plea that God expects to hear from his backsliding people. A true, full and frank acknowledgement of sin, and a full confession before God, seeking mercy at his hands, and being prepared to accept the discipline of the Lord wherever that is appropriate. Those who thus return to the Lord in godly sorrow and genuine repentance will surely experience the love, mercy and grace of God in restoring them to full fellowship with himself and with his Son. (Isaiah 1:18-20; 1 John 1:9)

Summary below

Part 5 Summary

- **Part 5's central theme:** A true believer may backslide seriously, but remains God's child; a false professor may abandon his profession because he never truly belonged to God.
- **Backsliding is not apostasy:** The backsliding Christian may fall into grievous sin, but does not finally renounce Christ or return permanently to the world.
- **The Spirit convicts true believers:** Because the Holy Spirit indwells God's children, their conscience is awakened, their sin is exposed, and they are brought back in contrition and repentance.
- **False professors remain unchanged:** Counterfeit believers may feel remorse, but without regeneration they harden themselves against God and choose the world as their home.
- **Backsliders are disciplined, not disinherited:** God may severely chastise his sinning children, but he does not remove his steadfast love, break his covenant, or cast them away.
- **Salvation remains secure:** A believer may forfeit peace, joy, usefulness, or blessings for a time, but cannot forfeit the salvation God has granted.
- **David illustrates serious backsliding:** Though David belonged to the Lord, he committed adultery, deception, and arranged Uriah's death, bringing dishonour on God's name.
- **God confronted David's sin:** Through Nathan the prophet, God exposed David's guilt and declared the serious consequences of his deliberate wrongdoing.
- **David truly repented:** David confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord," and returned to God with a humble and contrite heart.
- **Forgiveness did not remove discipline:** God forgave and restored David, yet still punished his sin, showing that sin against the Lord is never a light matter.
- **Psalms 51 models repentance:** David's plea shows true confession, appeal to mercy, desire for cleansing, longing for restored joy, and acceptance of God's discipline.
- **Restoration is promised to the repentant:** Those who return to God in godly sorrow and genuine repentance experience his mercy, forgiveness, cleansing, and renewed fellowship.
- **Part 5's warning:** True believers cannot remain content in sin, while false professors reveal their condition by hardening themselves and choosing the world over repentance.

PART 6

Danger of Unbelief

Without Faith, People are Condemned

Many unbelievers think that it is a matter of indifference whether they believe in God or not. However, there is no such thing as a neutral or indifferent position. All mankind is guilty of sin. They have offended a holy and righteous God—a God who will by no means clear the guilty. Their sin—original sin, and actual sin—has alienated them from God. Unless, therefore, they repent and return to God, they will one day be judged and consigned to hell.

The way of redemption and reconciliation is through faith in God's Son. When the Holy Spirit convicts, convinces, and brings a person to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, God forgives, justifies that person and reconciles him to himself. In this person's case, the sentence of condemnation, and the wrath of God against sin, has been borne by Christ, who suffered and died in the sinner's place.

However, if a person does not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, then God has not forgiven or justified him. That person, therefore, remains at enmity with God, and God remains at enmity with him. This means that that person still remains under God's condemnation, and is presently abiding under the wrath and curse of God.

No-one should consider such a situation a matter of indifference. Because, if that person does not repent and seek deliverance from his present rebellious and lost condition, God will impose upon him at the Final Judgment the full rigour of his justice and wrath.

God's Wrath Remains Upon Unbelievers

Christ is Either Saviour or Judge

If men will not have Christ to be their Saviour, then assuredly, they must have him to be their Judge. The Scripture warns:

Acts 17:30-31

³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." (See vv.22-29)

Hebrews 9:27

²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgement, (See v.28; cf. 2 Pet. 3:3-10)

God's Wrath Revealed

There will be no sparing those who have not believed on the Son of God. They will pay the due penalty—and that penalty will be everlasting torment. Even in this life, God's wrath is judging those who refuse to acknowledge him. As the Scripture says:

Romans 1:18-20

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (See vv.21-32)

Romans 2:5-6

⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgement will be revealed.

⁶ He will render to each one according to his works:
{*Psalm 62:12; Prov. 24:12*} (See Rom. 2:1-12)

Romans 2:16

¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

Upright People Guilty Before God

Even the most upright person in the world is guilty of ungodliness if he has not believed on the Son of God. Even the most upright person in the world, therefore, is—at this moment—abiding under the wrath of God. Living a good, decent, honest, upright life will never make a person godly. Until the Holy Spirit leads him to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that person remains in his sins and therefore is at enmity with God.

Those who are at enmity with God cannot please God by living upright lives. First, they must be reconciled to God through faith in his Son. While, however, they remain at enmity with God, their lives are ungodly and the Lord considers their 'virtuous deeds' as no better than works of iniquity. Why? Because their good deeds proceed from an unregenerate and evil heart: a heart that is in rebellion against God, by refusing to believe on God's only Son.

The Scripture solemnly warns all those who remain in this impenitent and ungodly position:

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

⁶since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

Without the Gospel, People will Perish

Such will be the destiny of the unbeliever when the Lord comes in his glory. God will pour out in full measure his righteous wrath upon the ungodly. This is why it is essential to preach Christ to all nations, and to call upon all people everywhere to repent and believe the gospel.

The gospel is not something a person may accept or reject at their pleasure. It is a solemn declaration of the good news that all who come to Christ will be fully, freely, and forever justified—and no one who comes will ever be turned away. But it is also a message of condemnation and judgment for those who refuse to heed the external call to repentance.

If such be the dreadful consequences of remaining in unbelief, what degree of responsibility attaches to the Christian to make Christ known to those around him? Will not God hold him accountable if he fails to tell others that—even now—they are under the wrath of God? Will not God hold his people responsible if they fail to make known to a lost world the only way of salvation from the coming Final Judgment?

Summary below

Part 6 Summary

- **Part 6's central theme:** Unbelief is not a neutral or harmless condition; those who remain without faith in Christ remain condemned before God.
Key references: John 3:18, 36; Heb. 11:6
- **All mankind is guilty before God:** Every person is guilty of sin, has offended a holy and righteous God, and stands alienated from him unless brought to repentance and faith.
Key references: Rom. 3:10-12, 23; Rom. 5:12; Isa. 59:2
- **There is no indifferent position:** People may think belief in God is optional, but Scripture presents unbelief as rebellion against God and refusal of his appointed way of salvation.
Key references: John 3:18-19; Acts 17:30
- **Redemption is through Christ alone:** Forgiveness, justification, and reconciliation with God come only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who bore the wrath and condemnation due to sinners.
Key references: John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom. 3:24-26; 2 Cor. 5:18-21
- **Unbelievers remain under condemnation:** Those who do not believe in Christ are not forgiven or justified; they remain at enmity with God and under his wrath.
Key references: John 3:18, 36; Rom. 1:18; Rom. 8:7-8
- **Christ is either Saviour or Judge:** Those who will not receive Christ as Saviour must face him as Judge, for God has appointed a day of righteous judgement through his Son.
Key references: Acts 17:30-31; John 5:22-29; 2 Tim. 4:1
- **Judgement is certain:** Scripture teaches that after death comes judgement, and that all people will answer before God.
Key references: Heb. 9:27; Rom. 2:5-6, 16; 2 Pet. 3:7-10
- **God's wrath is already revealed:** Even now, God's wrath is revealed against ungodliness and unrighteousness, especially against those who suppress the truth.
Key references: Rom. 1:18-20; Rom. 2:5
- **People are without excuse:** God's eternal power and divine nature are clearly displayed in creation, so unbelief cannot be defended as ignorance or neutrality.
Key references: Rom. 1:19-20; Ps. 19:1-4
- **Hardness stores up wrath:** Those with hard and impenitent hearts are storing up wrath for the day of God's righteous judgement.
Key references: Rom. 2:5-6; Prov. 29:1
- **Respectable morality cannot save:** Even the most upright, decent, or honest person remains ungodly if they have not believed on the Son of God.
Key references: Rom. 3:20; Isa. 64:6; Eph. 2:8-9
- **Good works from an unregenerate heart are insufficient:** Upright conduct cannot please God while a person remains unreconciled to him; such deeds proceed from a heart still in rebellion against Christ.
Key references: Rom. 8:7-8; Heb. 11:6; Titus 3:5
- **The final destiny of unbelievers is dreadful:** Those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel will face punishment and exclusion from the presence and glory of the

Lord.

Key references: 2 Thess. 1:6-10; Matt. 25:41, 46; Rev. 20:11-15

- **The gospel is both promise and warning:** It offers full, free, and everlasting justification to all who come to Christ, but it also declares condemnation and judgement upon those who refuse repentance.

Key references: John 6:37; Acts 13:38-39; Mark 16:15-16

- **Evangelism is urgently necessary:** Because unbelievers are presently under God's wrath and facing final judgement, Christians bear a solemn responsibility to make Christ known.

Key references: Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 10:13-17; 2 Cor. 5:20

- **Part 6's warning:** To remain in unbelief is to remain lost; therefore, all people must repent and believe the gospel, and believers must faithfully proclaim the only way of salvation.

PART 7

Genuine Saving Faith

The kind of faith associated with the grace of God in salvation is the only kind of faith that is genuine. This kind of faith, however, does not originate from within the person himself. This faith is entirely a gift of God's grace; bestowed at his pleasure upon whom he will. To this end, the Lord Jesus declared:

John 5:21

²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. (See vv.22-23)

John 5:25

²⁵ "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. (See v.24; cf. vv.28-29)

The gift of life—spiritual and eternal life—includes the ability to repent and believe.

Again, knowledge—knowing on whom to believe—and confessing Christ as Saviour and Lord, are essential elements of true faith. This knowledge is imparted through the Word of God. The Holy Spirit brings it home to the soul by his operations in effectual calling and regeneration.

Thus, the Scripture says:

Matthew 11:27

²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. (See vv.25-26; cf. Luke 10:21-24)

Regarding the work of the Spirit, the Scripture says:

John 6:63

⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh ⁹ is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. (See vv.41-66; cf. 2 Cor. 3:3,6)

⁹ *flesh*: John 6:63; Greek, σὰρξ **sarx**. In this context, '*flesh*' (*sarx*) relates not only to a person's body but also to their mind. We use the mind to gain insight or understanding, to reason, to think, to exercise our will, and to express ourself through speech and other actions. In an unregenerate person, the human mind is still in its fallen and sinful state. It is therefore incapable of understanding spiritual truths aright. Unless and until that person is regenerated by the Holy Spirit and granted the new birth, he or she remains unable to exercise saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. However, once God's Holy Spirit bestows the new birth (regeneration) this previously

Those born of God's Spirit are enabled to receive Christ by faith. Thus, the Scripture says:

John 1:12-13

¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (See vv.10-11)

When God bestows the gift of eternal life, the Holy Spirit enables a person to rest his faith wholly on Christ, and on the work he accomplished for the sinner at Calvary. Whoever thus believes on Christ, is exercising genuine saving faith. We refer to it as 'true' or 'genuine faith' because it is the only kind of faith that accompanies salvation and life eternal.

Whoever Believes has Everlasting Life

No-one can come to Christ unless God the Father draws him. However, all whom God has given to his Son will certainly come to his Son. The Father has assuredly promised full salvation to all who look to the Son, and who come to him repentant and believing.

To this end, the Scripture says:

John 3:16

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (see v.17)

John 3:18

¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (See vv.19-21)

John 3:36

³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. (See vv.31-35)

All unregenerate mankind is abiding under the wrath of God. Even so, God still loves sinners of every nation, race, creed and colour on earth. God must, and will, punish sin. However, out of his infinite love and mercy, he has provided a means of atonement for the sins of all his people. This means every person who repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus, through faith in Jesus' atoning sacrifice, God reconciles to himself men and women from every tongue, tribe, people and nation. God has promised that he will forgive, justify, and grant life eternal to everyone who comes to Christ in repentance and faith—and no one who comes will ever be

spiritually dead person is made spiritually alive. As a result, they are then able to embrace Christ by faith and to accept him as their Saviour and Lord, and they do this *freely and willingly*.

excluded. In addition, God will grant them the inward peace that passes all understanding, in the knowledge and assurance of their sins atoned for and forgiven.

Delivered from Condemnation

God justifies (or pronounces righteous with the righteousness of Christ) all those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. By God's grace, and by their faith in the Son of God, they are justified and delivered from the wrath and curse of God against sin, and upon the unrepentant sinner. They each have this certain assurance from the Word of God:

John 5:24

²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgement, but has passed from death to life. (See vv.21,25)

God will not condemn the believer for his sins, for he has justified him. He has pronounced the believing sinner righteous in his sight. God has credited the perfect righteousness of his Son to the believing sinner's account. The believer, therefore, has passed from death to life. God has delivered him from the sentence of eternal death or hell, and has granted him a title to eternal life in Christ.

Thus, the Scripture says:

Romans 8:1

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.¹⁰

Those whom God has justified through faith, are no longer under the sentence of condemnation and judgment.

However, those whom God has justified cannot continue to live according to the dictates and desires of their old sinful nature. The sinful nature has been crucified with Christ. The believer has been born again from above—born to a new spiritual life. By the Spirit, he must learn to put to death the desires of the sinful nature. There is no such thing as justification without sanctification. Godly and holy conduct must follow regeneration and justification.

Faith must result in good works, and a spiritually fruitful life. Only those who are bringing forth fruit in their lives—fruit issuing from a truly regenerated and sanctified heart—will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Summary below

¹⁰ [Romans 8:1](#) Some manuscripts add *who walk not according to the flesh (but according to the Spirit)*. (ESV footnote)

Part 7 Summary

- **Part 7's central theme:** Genuine saving faith is the only faith associated with salvation, and it is entirely the gift of God's grace, not something produced by fallen human nature.
- **Saving faith originates with God:** True faith does not arise from the sinner himself; it is bestowed by God according to his sovereign will and gracious purpose.
- **Christ gives spiritual life:** As the Father raises the dead and gives life, so the Son gives life to whom he will; those spiritually dead hear the Son's voice and live.
Key references: John 5:21, 25
- **Faith includes repentance and belief:** The gift of spiritual and eternal life includes the ability and willingness to repent of sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **Knowledge is essential to faith:** True faith involves knowing the One in whom we believe and confessing Christ as Saviour and Lord; this knowledge is given through God's Word.
- **Christ reveals the Father:** No one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.
Key reference: Matthew 11:27
- **The Holy Spirit gives life:** The flesh is of no help in producing saving faith; the Spirit gives life and applies Christ's words to the soul.
Key reference: John 6:63
- **Regeneration enables reception of Christ:** Those who receive Christ and believe in his name do so because they have been born of God, not by natural descent, human will, or human effort.
Key reference: John 1:12-13
- **Saving faith rests wholly on Christ:** The Holy Spirit enables the sinner to trust entirely in Christ and in his finished work at Calvary as the only ground of salvation.
- **Whoever believes has eternal life:** All who truly believe in the Son will not perish but have everlasting life; those who do not believe remain condemned.
Key references: John 3:16, 18, 36
- **No one comes unless drawn by the Father:** Although no one can come to Christ apart from the Father's drawing, all whom the Father gives to the Son will certainly come.
- **God welcomes all who come to Christ:** Everyone who comes to Christ in repentance and faith is forgiven, justified, reconciled, and granted eternal life; no true believer is ever excluded.
- **Believers are delivered from condemnation:** Those who hear Christ's word and believe the Father have eternal life, do not come into judgement, and have passed from death to life.
Key reference: John 5:24
- **Justification is by faith in Christ:** God declares believing sinners righteous by crediting Christ's perfect righteousness to them, delivering them from wrath, judgement, and eternal death.
Key reference: Romans 8:1

- **There is no condemnation in Christ:** Those who are united to Christ by faith are no longer under God's sentence of condemnation.
- **Justification leads to sanctification:** Those whom God justifies cannot continue living under the rule of the old sinful nature; the believer has been born again to new spiritual life.
- **Faith must bear fruit:** Genuine saving faith results in good works, holiness, and spiritual fruitfulness flowing from a regenerated and sanctified heart.
- **Part 7's warning:** There is no true justification without sanctification; only those whose faith produces spiritual fruit will enter the kingdom of heaven.

PART 8

Saved by Grace

The Word of God reminds all those who belong to Christ of the nature of their salvation. It reminds them also of their total inability to co-operate in effecting their redemption (except insofar as they *willingly* receive the gift of salvation freely offered to them). Again, it reminds them of their deliverance from condemnation and judgment: a deliverance that has been effected for them through the blood (or atoning and redeeming death) of Christ.

To this end, the Scripture says:

Romans 5:6-9

⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. (See vv.10-11)

Faith is God's Gift

The Scripture says:

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (See v.10)

Salvation is the gift of God—but so also is faith.

If God should freely bestow such vast riches of mercy and grace on those who justly deserved eternal condemnation—and if he did not withhold the life of his own Son for our redemption—what right have we to withhold any part of our lives from God?

Our lives are not our own. They are the redeemed possession of the Lord, our Sovereign God. As God's own Word says:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (See vv.15-18; cf. 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:18-19)

Neither is there Salvation in Any Other

Such, then, is the way of salvation—through faith in Christ. There is no other way. There is no other plan of redemption. There is no other means of being reconciled to God, except through faith in his Son. Thus, God’s Word says:

Acts 4:12

¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (See vv.7-11; cf. 1 Tim. 2:5-6)

Those who seek salvation (or the mercy and favour of God) in any other way will surely perish. If they do not seek to know the only true God and Jesus Christ his Son, these people will be lost eternally. They are neglecting or rejecting God’s only appointed way of salvation. They have refused to believe that God’s way is the only acceptable way. They have set at naught the one whom God set forth to be a propitiation¹¹ for sin.

Those who will not be saved through Christ will not be saved at all.

Multitudes will Perish

Unless they turn to Christ in repentance and faith, multitudes will perish for all eternity. By their rejection of God and his truth, they will find themselves consigned forever to endure the miseries and torments of hell. There, they will be forever separated from God and from all hope of redemption.

Many of these people may have sincerely and devoutly practised some form of religion. They may have attempted to worship God according to their own beliefs and culture. But this will not avail them in the day of judgment. On that day, God will ask them but one question: *‘What have you done with my Son?’*

If those will perish who do not know Christ, what responsibility lies upon the believer to make Christ known?

If we fail to tell them what we know, will not God hold us accountable for their blood? Thus, to his servant Ezekiel, the LORD God said:

Ezekiel 3:17-18

¹⁷ “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ¹⁸ If I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die’, and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. (See vv.19-21)

¹¹ *propitiation*: A sacrifice of atonement for people’s sins that fully satisfies and turns away the just wrath of God against the sinner. Jesus’ perfect sacrifice of atonement on the cross results in the believing sinners’ reconciliation with and acceptance by God as his redeemed and adopted child.

And again, the apostle Paul declares:

Acts 20:26-27

²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.
(See vv.17-25)

Acts 20:28

²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. (See vv.29-31)

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ (or God).

Romans 10:17

¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Let us hold fast that Word and proclaim it in all its power, that the Spirit may convict, convince and convert people to God through faith in his Son—all to the glory of his magnificent and most holy Name.

Summary below

Part 8 Summary

- **Part 8's central theme:** Salvation is entirely the work of God's grace, accomplished through Christ's atoning death and received through faith, which itself is God's gift.
- **Christ died for helpless sinners:** God demonstrated his love by sending Christ to die for the ungodly while they were still sinners and unable to save themselves.
Key reference: Romans 5:6-9
- **Salvation is not earned:** No one contributes to their redemption through personal merit, works, or religious effort; salvation is a free gift of divine grace.
Key references: Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 5:6-9
- **Believers are delivered from God's wrath:** Through Christ's blood, those who trust in him are justified and saved from the condemnation and judgement their sins deserve.
Key reference: Romans 5:9
- **Faith is God's gift:** Saving faith does not originate in fallen humanity but is graciously given by God, leaving no room for human boasting.
Key reference: Ephesians 2:8-9
- **Grace demands grateful obedience:** Since God has saved his people at infinite cost, believers should respond with wholehearted devotion and service to him.
- **Believers belong to God:** Christians are not their own; they have been redeemed by Christ's sacrifice and are called to glorify God in every area of life.
Key references: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 1:18-19
- **Salvation is found in Christ alone:** There is no alternative path to God, no other mediator, and no other means of redemption apart from faith in Jesus Christ.
Key references: Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5-6
- **All other ways of salvation fail:** Those who seek God's favour through religion, morality, culture, or any means other than Christ reject God's appointed way of salvation.
Key reference: Acts 4:12
- **Those who reject Christ will perish:** People who refuse to repent and believe the gospel remain lost and face eternal separation from God.
- **Religious sincerity cannot save:** A person may be devout, sincere, and committed to a religion, yet still be lost if they do not know Christ as Saviour and Lord.
- **The central issue is Christ:** Ultimately, every person must answer the question, "What have you done with God's Son?"
- **Believers have a responsibility to warn others:** Like Ezekiel's watchman, Christians are called to warn the lost of judgement and to proclaim God's way of salvation.
Key references: Ezekiel 3:17-18
- **Faith comes through God's Word:** The gospel must be preached because faith comes by hearing the message of Christ.
Key reference: Romans 10:17
- **Paul's example of faithful witness:** Paul declared the whole counsel of God and regarded himself as innocent of others' blood because he faithfully proclaimed the

truth.

Key references: Acts 20:26-28

END

