

Deliverance from Self-righteousness

A Message by Rockey Jackson, July 26, 2021

(Note: Scriptures referenced, but not in the text, may be found in the Endnotes.)

Introduction

Hello, My name is Rockey Jackson. I'm a retired Systems Engineer. I had a thirty-four year career in the aerospace industry. Before that, I served eight years as an Intelligence Analyst in the United States Air Force. I am an analyst by nature, training and experience. It may take some time, but I figure things out.

I am not Brother Wonderful. Whatever your idea of the perfect Christian leader is, that's not me. I do not represent any church, denomination or ministry. I hold no formal degrees, though I have plenty of credit hours.

I'm going to share with you some of my basic beliefs. They are what I have come to believe after many years of life, study, prayer, meditation and seeking after the Lord. I was raised in the church, from the nursery on up. It was a mixture of religion and relationship. I professed my faith at the age of ten. In my first year of college the Lord introduced me to His Holy Spirit. God's Redeemed Saints have been my passion ever since.

All of us like it when the things we believe are confirmed and we don't like it when our beliefs are challenged. It is called Confirmation Bias. I have it too, but as a hard headed Engineer I would rather know the truth and have hurt feelings than to be happily in error. So please go to your emotional closet, get out your steel toed boots, slicker and rain hat. I'm intentionally going to step on toes and rain on everyone's parade.

My message today is "Deliverance from Self-righteousness." It has three purposes:

- First, to minister deliverance to the Self-righteous and those who may be bound in some way by the teachings or doctrines of self-righteous religion.
- Second, to affirm, liberate and empower God's Redeemed Saints.
- Third, to invite all who haven't done so to enter into a submitted relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

I will begin this hour with an introduction that will define Redeemed Saints and Self-righteous Sinners. It will identify many differences between the two. Then I will make three points. The first will be the process that turns Sinners into Redeemed Saints. The second will be how we keep our spiritual life and relationship with God healthy and vibrant. The third will be how we live our lives for God without religious rules or a self-righteous, judgmental spirit. Finally, I will conclude with a summary comparison of Redeemed Saints and Self-righteous Sinners. Everyone will be invited to enter into a submitted relationship with God and instructions will be given on how to do so.

To the Self-righteous let me say that I am for you, not against you. I'm not your judge. I don't know who you are. I can't point you out. All I will be able to do is to give some indicators of self-righteousness by revealing some differences between Redeemed Saints and Self-righteous Sinners.

I actually love Self-Righteous Sinners in several ways. I love them with storge, the love of the familiar. I grew up in the church. They are like my extended family. I am totally familiar with the Self-righteous and their ways. I love them with philia, brotherly love. We share many things in common. We both want to please God and be acceptable to him. We both want to be obedient to God. We share doing

good works in the world. I also love them with agape, the unconditional love of God. I want to see them move from the Kingdom of Satan to God's Kingdom. One of the saddest things I can think of will be to see those who say: **“Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?”** Only to hear the Lord say: **“I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”** (See Matthew 7:21-23.)¹

All of this is very personal for me. The home I grew up in was divided. My mother had a personal relationship with the Lord. My father was what's called a cultural Christian. It was the culture he grew up in and he acted within those cultural norms. He was an usher and a deacon in the churches we attended. He had to say the words to affirm his faith when joining those churches, but they were just words without substance. He remained a Self-righteous Sinner. People have asked me how I know that. I know it because of my father's testimony. In his early fifties, God convicted my father and he surrendered to God. His life was dramatically changed. What was always just form before then became substance. I want to tell all of the Self-righteous among us here today that they can change too, just like my father did.

That's enough about me. Let's begin.

Saints and Sinners

In Isaiah 64:6a we are told: **“But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.”** The Hebrew implies that these filthy rags are actually soiled menstrual cloths. Now that is just plain gross and that is how God views our self-righteousness. It is gross to Him.

The Lord gave me this illustration. It shows all of humanity divided into the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan. (See below.)

Saint is the term God uses throughout the Bible for His people. It goes far beyond the religions of Christianity and Judaism. Saint has several meanings, but for our purpose the best definition is: set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively His. Saints have been redeemed and their sins are covered by the righteousness of the Lamb of God. They are the Ecclesia. In the Greek, ekklesia means a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly. For both Jews and Christians it came to mean the totality of the faithful, especially when gathered for worship. Here I use it to refer to all Redeemed Saints who have been called out of the Kingdom of Satan and gathered into the Kingdom of God.

Sinners are in the Kingdom of Satan. They may be one of three extremes and are usually some combination of the three: Self-righteous, Rebellious, or Worldly. The Self-righteous tend to be legalistic, the Rebellious tend to be satanic and the Worldly tend to be atheistic. The Self-righteous and the Rebellious often have religion in common. The Self-righteous and the Worldly share the trait of doing it their own way. The Rebellious and the Worldly are both ungodly.

The Rebellious and Worldly with their satanic and atheistic ways are pretty easy to distinguish from Redeemed Saints. The Self-righteous, however, can be very difficult to distinguish because they share many commonalities with Redeemed Saints. Both want to please God and be acceptable to him. The Redeemed Saints come to God in humility with nothing but their faith, trusting that God will save and redeem them. The Self-righteous come to God in pride, believing that their good works will make them acceptable in His sight. Both want to be obedient to God. The Redeemed Saints have developed a relationship with God, they are obedient to the spirit of the law that God has written on their hearts.

Kingdom of God

Redeemed Saints, The Ecclesia
(Sins are covered by the righteousness of the Lamb of God)

Faith
Relationship
Humble

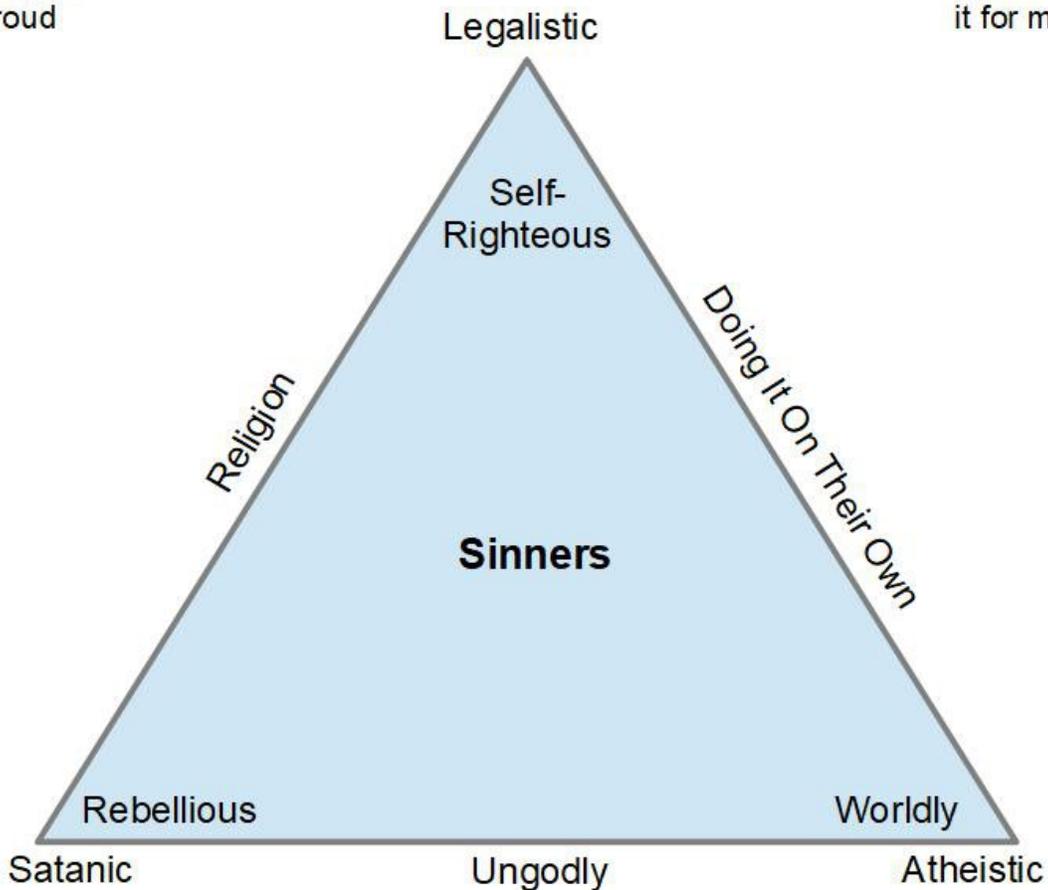
Saved/Redeemed

God's Way
What does
God want?

Works
Religion
Proud

Unsaved/Unredeemed

Their Way
What's in
it for me?



Kingdom of Satan

The Self-righteous are religious and legalistically follow the letter of the law of their religion. Both want to learn and share about God. Self-righteous Sinners focus on the Book of the Lord. They learn from the Logos (the written word) according to their own interpretation. In pride, they believe that they can speak for the Lord with full assurance of their absolute truth. Redeemed Saints focus on the Lord of the Book. In relationship with God, they learn from both the Logos and Rhema (spoken word) of the Lord. Seeking God's will in every situation, they endeavor to speak from the Lord in humility, knowing that they only have partial knowledge of the truth. (See 1 Corinthians 13:8-12.)² Both want to worship God. As theologians noted many years ago, Self-righteous Sinners define god in their own image. Their image of god is cast in stone by their religion. They worship the image of god that they have made. Redeemed Saints are growing in their understanding of and relationship with God. They know that their understanding of God is incomplete. (See 1 John 3:2.)³ They worship God as He has revealed Himself to them through relationship and His word.

This gets even more confusing because the Self-righteous want to appear righteous before God and man. They expend great effort to look good. They talk about how faithful they are to their religion, how many meetings they attend and how many religious programs they watch. Often they are much better at performing good works in the world that the Redeemed Saints should also do. They have an objective written set of rules and they can point to them, boasting about how well they obey the rules. The Redeemed Saints, on the other hand, can be a rather motley group. To begin with they were all sinners who were saved by the grace of God. They have no pretense of perfection. Their spirits were reborn at conversion, but their souls are in the process of being sanctified throughout their lifetime and their flesh will not be redeemed until they receive heavenly bodies at the Resurrection of Life. They talk about their relationship with God who to them is a loving Father, Brother and Friend. How can they explain the subjective nature of God's law written on their heart and their obedience to God's individual will just for them?

Saints and Sinners are separated by the Redeemed Saints doing it God's way while the Self-righteous say in their hearts: "I'll do it my way." In the end the spiritually minded Redeemed Saints are asking the question: "What does God want?" The carnally minded Self-righteous in contrast ask the question: "What's in it for me?"

Redeemed Saints and Sinners have existed together since the fall from grace and will continue to the end of this age. Speaking of the first two brothers the Bible tells us that Cain brought God a sacrifice of his works while Able brought a sacrifice of faith. Cain's sacrifice was rejected and Abel's sacrifice was accepted. In his self-righteous wrath, Cain killed his brother Abel. (See Genesis 4:1-15,⁴ Hebrews 11:4⁵ and 1 John 3:11-12⁶) When Saul was rejected by God because of his fear of man and pride, he persecuted and tried to kill David who God called a man after My own heart, because of his faith. When Jesus ministered on the earth he was opposed by the Pharisees (who were self-righteous), the Sadducees (who held the form of religion while denying its power), the Herodians (who were worldly) and all the rebellious who followed Beelzebub in his many forms. In Matthew 23⁷ Jesus pronounced seven woes on self-righteous hypocrites. In verses 29-35 he details how they persecute the Saints throughout history. In the end the Self-righteous, Religious, Worldly and Rebellious all conspired together to kill the perfect Lamb of God who was their only salvation.

In the world, Redeemed Saints still exist with Sinners in all their various forms and Sinners are in all religious organizations, even those with a Christian label. For the Self-righteous Sinners, it is their natural habitat. Most sincerely want to please God and be obedient to His law. In their pride they

believe their own efforts will be enough to earn their redemption. There are some Worldly Sinners in religious organizations for many reasons: it may be the culture they grew up with, it may have to do with relationships or it could be just for the social benefits of belonging. If the Rebellious Sinners belong to a religious organization it is usually one that worships Satan in one form or another. However some of them also attend Christian churches to see if there is anything godly or righteous going on so they can curse it. If they have enough influence they may even throw a monkey wrench into the machinery to stop it all together.

Saints certainly want to accept into their fellowship all who truly want to come to God, but the Sinners described above are hypocrites, actors who can put on a very good show of godliness. A person's faith, humility, desire to please God and be in relationship with Him is easy for God to Judge because He judges the heart of a person. For the Redeemed Saints it is very difficult to judge because they only see the external actions and fruit may take a lifetime to mature.

In Matthew 13:24-30⁸ Jesus gave the parable of the wheat and the tares. In it He explained how God has sown good seed into the earth, but His enemy has come and sown bad seed in the same field causing tares to grow up along with the wheat. Both the wheat and the tares continue to grow together until the harvest when the wheat is gathered unto God and the tares are burned with fire. Redeemed Saints are God's harvest of wheat. Sinners are the tares sown by God's enemy. This leaves us with the following question. How can the tares escape the fire and become God's wheat? It is said that a silk purse can not be made out of a pig's ear and the world would say that a Sinner cannot become a Saint, but in Luke 18:27: **“Jesus replied, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.””**

How to Enter into Relationship with God

So, how do Sinners become Saints? Perhaps the greatest treatise on salvation ever written is the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ecclesia at Rome. One evangelical tool uses just a few verses from the book of Romans to present God's plan of salvation. It is called the Roman's Road and it is worth the journey.

The first way point on the Roman's Road is verses 3:10 and 3:23: **“As it is written, “There is none righteous, no, not one.” “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”** To parody a famous transmission from the near disastrous Apollo 13 Moon mission: “People, we have a problem.” The God who created everyone is holy, righteous and perfect. What people do that is not holy, righteous or perfect in God's sight is sin. No one is perfect in God's sight because everyone has sinned at some point.

The second way point is 5:12: **“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”** In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had only one rule to follow and they still chose to break it. This sin caused shame and a separation between them and God. A curse of sorrow was placed upon Eve and a curse of death upon Adam. (See Genesis 2:4-3:24.⁹) Like Adam and Eve, everyone has sinned in some way. Sin separates people from their Creator and separation from the God who created them brings spiritual death.

The third way point is verses 5:8 and 6:23: **“But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”** In the Garden, God showed that it is by the shedding of innocent blood that sins are covered when he put animal skins over Adam and Eve's shame. It was for sinners that God sent his only begotten son the Lord Jesus Christ to sacrifice his own innocent blood to make atonement for their sins, remove the separation and restore spiritual life.

The fourth and final way point is verses 10:9-11 & 13:

“That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture says, whosoever believes on him shall not be ashamed.”
“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

If in their hearts, sinners believe that God has made provision to redeem them and they receive Jesus Christ as their Lord, then God will extend grace unto them, forgive their sins and restore them to spiritual life. In response, out of the newly redeemed Saint's heart will flow confession of what God has done for them.

At the end of the Roman's Road, travelers are commonly led in a form of the sinner's prayer. It is a prayer of faithful humility to restore relationship and normally would include:

- confession – admitting to being a sinner and falling short of God's perfection
- repentance – turning from self-righteousness, rebellion, and worldliness to God's way
- supplication – humbly requesting that God, in his mercy and grace, will forgive the sinner
- profession – announcing belief that Jesus Christ has made the sacrifice for sin
- submission – receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and asking “What does God want?”

The Roman's Road and sinner's prayer are good and effective tools for evangelism, but what about those who never hear the gospel? In Romans 1:19-20 it says: **“Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has shown it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”** God has made Himself known and revealed the plan of salvation in the creation. There are those throughout the earth who just intuitively understand what God has revealed in the creation. Their faith has saved them without knowing either the plan of salvation or that Jesus died for their sins. They are Redeemed Saints even though they've never said the Sinner's Prayer nor made public confession of their faith.

So what is the necessary essence of salvation? It is this: the humility to recognize one's own imperfection, the belief that God has made a way of restoration, the desire to have relationship with God and to accept God as the Lord of one's life. All of this rests on faith, as it says in Romans 1:17: **“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”**

So what good then are things like the Sinner's Prayer, public confession of faith and baptism if they are not necessary for salvation? Well if they are performed by Self-righteous Sinners who are taking pride in their works of religion or those who are just looking for fire insurance without any intention of receiving Jesus as Lord, then they have no value at all. They are just words without substance or acts of religion. On the other hand, if they are performed by Redeemed Saints as an act of faith in humble obedience to their Lord and Savior then they are an Ebenezer. An Ebenezer is a stone of remembrance, a memorial, a commemoration of divine assistance. They are announcements before heaven and earth of the redeemed Saint's heartfelt faith and obedience. Memorials that stand for all time in memory of decisions made and commitments accepted.

God is a loving father who desires a relationship with His children. That is why Jesus didn't teach a religion, but as a friend he met individuals at the point of their need: healing for the sick, deliverance for those in bondage, food for the hungry and most importantly revealing the nature of the Father to those who were seeking God. For those seeking salvation, Jesus spoke directly to their individual need:

- To Nicodemus: **“You must be born again.”** (John 3:1-21)¹⁰
- To a sinful woman: **“Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”** (Luke 7:36-50)¹¹
- To the rich young man: **“Come and follow me.”** (Matthew 19:16-22)¹²
- To Zacchaeus: **“Today salvation has come to this house.”** (Luke 19:1-10)¹³
- To the woman at the well: **“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give me to drink; you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water.”** (John 4:1-42)¹⁴
- To the woman caught in adultery: **“Neither do I condemn you: go, and sin no more.”** (John 8:2-11)¹⁵
- To Martha: **“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die.”** (John 11:17-27)¹⁶
- To the criminal on the cross: **“Today you shall be with me in paradise.”** (Luke 23:39-43)¹⁷

Each of these could be a separate study in its own right. The point is that religion makes everyone conform, but the infinite and omniscient God is able to see into each person's heart and meet them individually to satisfy their need.

Salvation doesn't depend upon correct doctrine or membership in the correct religious institution, though both can be a benefit. When people stand before the Lord of glory no church membership roll will be consulted. The only book checked to see if we accepted the Lord's salvation will be the Lamb's Book of Life.

In Matthew 8:11-12 Jesus said: **“And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”** Are the Redeemed Saints in danger of being cast out? Heaven forbid! Jesus is the Messiah of Israel and the Christ of the whole earth. When He came as the Perfect Lamb of God to be a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin He came specifically to the Jews. Some believed in Jesus and were saved, but many of the Pharisees (those who trusted in their self-righteousness), the Sadducees (those who held the form of religion while denying its power) and the Herodians (those who advocated compromise with the world) did not believe. What Jesus meant was that these non-believing Jews would be cast out. Their membership in the Jewish nation and religion would not save them.

Now this can easily be brought to the present. The church today has many self-righteous, some worldly and a few rebellious members counted in the congregation. How shocked many of them will be when Redeemed Saints are welcomed into the Kingdom of Heaven from every tribe and tongue while the Lord says this to them: **“I never knew you, depart from me.”** (Matthew 7:23.) How can that be? How can an omniscient God not know someone? Well obviously this isn't just a casual knowledge of

someone's name as an acquaintance. In the story of Adam and Eve it says that Adam knew his wife Eve and she conceived a son. It was an intimate physical knowledge that produced physical life. Here God is talking about an intimate spiritual knowledge that produces spiritual life. That is why it is important to maintain an intimate relationship with God. A relationship with a religion will not suffice.

So how does a sinner become a saint? They must give up their pride, rebellion, and love of the world. In humility they must admit that they are not righteous and believe that God has made provision for the forgiveness of their sins. Finally they must desire to come into right relationship with God, make Him Lord of their life and desire God's will for their lives. All of this depends on faith, for: **“The just shall live by faith.”** (Galatians 3:11b)

How to Maintain a Relationship with God

Now I'm going to share how a redeemed Saint may die spiritually, leave the Kingdom of God and return to the Kingdom of Satan. I also want to share how Redeemed Saints keep their relationship with God vibrant and their spirits alive in the Kingdom of God. In Matthew 24:12-13 Jesus said: **“And because wickedness is multiplied, most men’s love will grow cold. But he who endures to the end will be saved.”**

The Parable of the Sower is found in all three of the synoptic gospels, but Mark 4:3-20¹⁸ also contains an explanation of the parable by Jesus. In it the Lord says that when an evangelist shares the good news, some of it falls on hard hearts and the devil immediately snatches it away. Other seed of the gospel falls into stony ground where there is no depth of soil. It brings forth new life quickly, but when the first persecution comes it dies just as quickly. Still other seed falls into the weeds and, over time, riches, lusts and other desires of the flesh choke the life out of it. Finally there is the seed that is planted in the good ground, into hearts that hear the gospel, receive it gladly and do not let it go. This seed brings forth the fruit of eternal life in abundance.

In the third chapter of Hebrews¹⁹ the Bible teaches that there are three ways for Redeemed Saints to leave their relationship with God and return to a state of spiritual death. The three ways are: rebellion, loss of faith and sinning unto death. Usually some combination of all three ways play a role in the spiritual death of a redeemed saint. First, rebellion is turning against and resisting God's authority. It is willfully returning to spiritual death. Second, Redeemed Saints are saved from spiritual death, by their faith in God's grace to provide the way of salvation. If they lose their faith, then their relationship with God dries up and their spirits die. Third, sin puts an obstacle of shame in the middle of the Redeemed Saint's relationship with God. This can be seen in the story of Adam and Eve. When they sinned they covered their shame with fig leaves and hid from God. The Father still came looking for his children. When He found them they confessed, God extended His mercy to them and relationship was restored. He then showed them that it was not by their works (the fig leaves) that their shame was covered, but by His grace and the shedding of innocent blood (the animal skins) that their sin was forgiven.

The downward spiral staircase of sin that ends in spiritual death is revealed in James 1:14-15: **“But each one is tempted when they are drawn away by their own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”**

There are five steps of sin from temptation to spiritual death. They are:

1. Tempted by desires (what the flesh wants instead of what God wants)
2. Enticed by desires (thinking about or dwelling on the temptation)

3. Conception of desire (the plan to fulfill the temptation)
4. Birth to sin (executing the plan to fulfill the desire)
5. Sin full-grown (the desire becomes a way of life with no repentance).

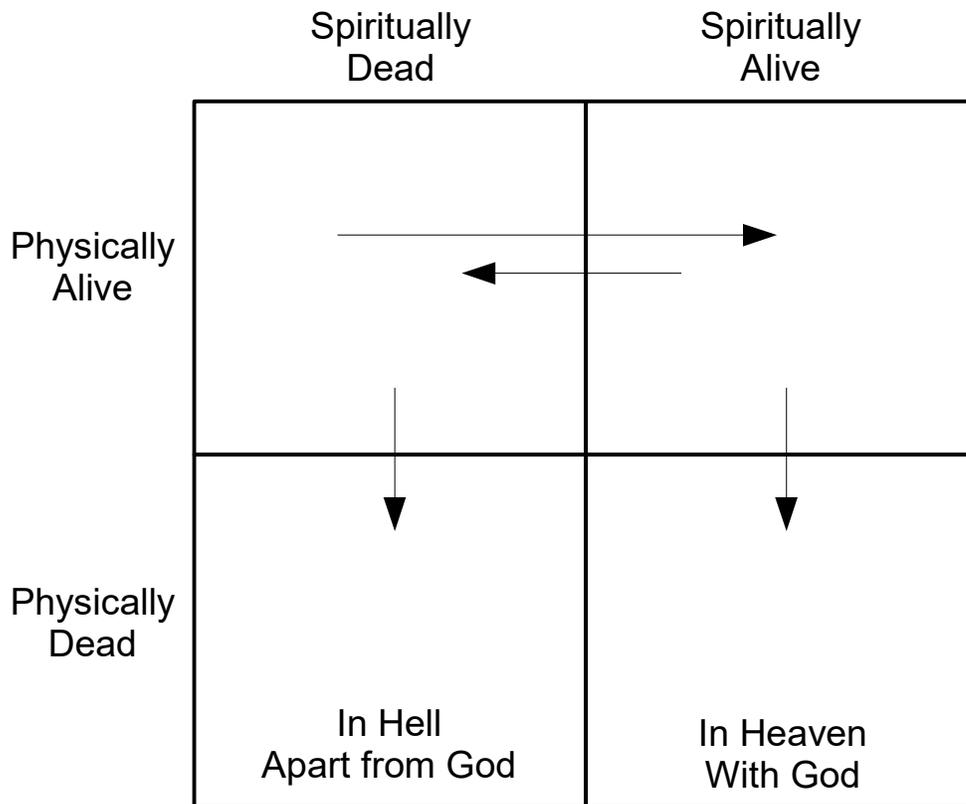
When Adam and Eve broke their covenant with God, their sin and shame became an obstacle in their relationship with the Father. It is the same with all Redeemed Saints. In the beginning when God created the human race, he gave them a bit of his own spirit as it says in Genesis 2:7: **“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”** Both for Redeemed Saints and for sinners, God's spirit is eternal and it carries a person's soul (mind, will and emotions) into eternity. Spiritual death is not like physical death where one ceases to exist physically. Spiritual death is separation from God. It only takes one original sin to become a sinner. However, once the sinner receives the grace of God and becomes a redeemed Saint, it then takes the five steps listed above to place so many obstacles in the relationship that complete separation eventually occurs. A physical body that receives no nourishment withers and dies. A redeemed Saint's spirit is nourished by their intimate relationship with God. If there is no relationship with the Heavenly Father then the spirit withers and dies. All the while, just like the Prodigal's father in Luke 15:11-32²⁰, their loving Heavenly Father is waiting for them to repent so relationship may be restored.

So how does a redeemed saint remove the obstacles they've placed in their relationship with God by sin? They confess their sin to the Father, repent of their sin and ask to be forgiven. As it says in 1 John 1:9: **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** This can be just between the redeemed saint and the Father or the redeemed saint can set up an Ebenezer by including one or more other believers to hold them accountable.

A Redeemed Saint may rebel, lose their faith or sin unto death at any age, but it is perhaps most common during the time of life when a youth is straining to become an adult. Many give their lives to God and receive His salvation when they are young and their hearts are tender. Then approaching adulthood they may rebel against their parent's or other authority and carry it over to God. They may feel an injustice if a significant person in their lives dies suddenly from trauma or disease and blame it on God. Then again they may just desire to be lord of their own lives apart from God. Others lose their faith through worldly education that denies the creation and the existence of God. Then there are those who are over taken by the desires of their flesh as they become acquainted with the sinful pleasures of the world. Their relationship with God and their spiritual life dies as sin grows in them. Whatever the cause, it is plainly visible that many youth who make a good start with the Lord do not make it to adulthood as Redeemed Saints.

A person may be physically alive or physically dead. At the same time they may be spiritually alive or spiritually dead. This means that a person can be in one of four states that can be shown in a common four-pane illustration (see below). Because of original sin, everyone begins life in the upper left box as sinners who are physically alive and spiritually dead. If they recognize that they are sinners and in faith receive God's forgiveness, then they move to the physically alive and spiritually alive box in the upper right hand quadrant. People can move between the spiritually alive and spiritually dead sides of the illustration as long they are physically alive. (See Ezekiel 18²¹, specifically verses 21-32.) When people die physically, then they move to one of the boxes in the lower half of the illustration. If they are spiritually dead when they die, then they are twice dead and move into the lower left quadrant where

they spend eternity separated from God in the place prepared for them called Hell. If they are spiritually alive, they move into the lower right quadrant and they spend eternity with God in Heaven.



In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul compares life to running a race:

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

What is the prize? It is eternal life with God in heaven. God does not give participation awards, but to every Redeemed Saint who endures to the end of their physical life God will give them the Crown of Life. They will then continue in their relationship with God forever. No one will be forced to spend eternity with God. Those who choose to do it their own way and follow their own desires will be granted their wish. They will remain separated from God for all eternity. As the scriptures say in 2 Corinthians 6:2b: **“now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.”** Everyone must choose while they still have physical life, hopefully they choose wisely.

How to Live in Relationship with God

Now I want to talk about how we live for God without religious rules or a self-righteous, judgmental spirit. We'll begin by clearly understanding the purpose for God's two witnesses law and grace. In Deuteronomy 19:15b we are told: **“On the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.”**

In Revelation we are told that Satan and the Beast will make war and try to destroy two people groups who testify to the law and to grace. In Revelation 12:17 it says: **“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.”** In Revelation 14:12 during the Third Woe that reveals the mark of the beast we are told: **“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”** The two people groups who testify for God are the Jews who keep God's law and Christians who testify to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So what is the purpose of God's law and grace?

The law is the body of divine commandments that are codified in the Old Testament. It declares what people must do to be acceptable to God by their works. Throughout history there have been people who reject relationship with God and say in words or deeds, “Just tell us what we must do to be acceptable to You.” They want to know the minimum requirements to go to heaven, but they don't want God to be Lord of their lives. So God gave them the law to satisfy their request. No one is able to obey the law completely. It only takes one original sin to become a sinner, only one black mark to no longer be perfect. Those who obey the law must be perfect to be acceptable to God. As it says in Galatians 3:10-12: **“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.””**

One example of rejecting relationship with God occurred when the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt. God wanted them to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation in relationship with Him as it says in Exodus 19:6a: **“You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”** God wanted relationship with all of Israel. However, the children of Israel were afraid of God and withdrew from relationship with Him. It says in Exodus 20:19: **“Then they said to Moses, “You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.””** In effect they were saying: just tell us what we must do to be acceptable to God. That generation died in the wilderness and never entered the promised land.

Grace may be defined as receiving a blessing that we don't deserve. On the other hand, mercy may be defined as not receiving a punishment that we do deserve. The Bible tells the story of what God has been willing to do to make atonement for sin and reconcile a person's relationship with Him. This is salvation from the consequences of sin. It is what theologians call Great Grace. Most often, it is simply referred to as grace. It includes mercy in that Redeemed Saints do not receive the punishment of separation from God that they do deserve. At the same time they also receive unmerited grace to be restored in their relationship with God, which they don't deserve. It is a free gift that cannot be earned, only received by faith.

The law was given for sinners who want to be acceptable to God by their works, but those who come into relationship with God abide in His grace. They only need to submit to God as their Lord to be forgiven. As the Apostle Paul explained in Romans 7:1-6:

“Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”

The story of the rich young man in Matthew 19:16-26²² is an example of someone deciding to live under the law or grace. The young man's first question to Jesus was the age old question, what must I do to have eternal life? Jesus gave the correct answer for someone trying to earn their salvation by their own works. He told the young man to obey the law. The young man replied that he had always obeyed the commandments, but he still wanted to know what more he should do. Jesus perceived that the young man understood that the law could not save him. So in Matthew 19:21: **“Jesus said unto him, “If you will be perfect, go and sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; then come and follow me.”**” At these words, the young man went away with sorrow in his heart because he was not willing to give up his possessions.

There is a great paradox surrounding grace. It is a free gift given by God that no one can purchase. Grace must be received by faith not earned by works. At the same time it will cost the believer everything. It is not a wealth transfer, but an attitude adjustment. When a person receives Jesus as their Lord and Savior, they must humble themselves and give up sovereignty over their lives. They stop seeking their own will and asking the question, what's in it for me? They begin seeking the Lord's will and asking the question, what does God want? Their stuff becomes the Lord's possession and they become His stewards with authority over the resources entrusted to their care. If a person can't get past Jesus as their Lord, then they never make it to Jesus as their savior.

God does not treat everyone the same. Those who are in rebellion to God and want to be accepted by their works must obey the law perfectly to be accepted. They see God as a harsh judge. Those who have submitted themselves to God in faith are forgiven their sins. When they do disobey, they can simply repent to be perfectly restored again. They experience God as a loving Father, Brother and Friend.

From the beginning, God has shown grace to His children. The requirements for salvation have always been the same. When Adam and Eve sinned and hid from God, He sought them out and provided the way for their relationship to be restored. Law and grace were contrasted in Cain and Abel. Cain offered a sacrifice of his works that was rejected by God. Able offered a sacrifice in faith and was approved by God. Sacrifices performed by the self-righteous, proudly believing that their works make them

acceptable to God are worthless, but if the same sacrifices are humbly given in faith that God forgives sin then they are acceptable.

The law is a witness that tells people what they must do to be acceptable to God by their works. Testifying to the law Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-18: **“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”** Grace is a witness that explains what God will do to make people acceptable to Him by faith. The first Jerusalem council took up the issue of law and grace in Acts 15:1-29²³. In verses 10-11 Peter says: **“Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”** In verses 19-21 James says: **“Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.”** The law is for Sinners while grace is for Redeemed Saints. That is why both witnesses endure until the Lord returns and they do not give conflicting testimony.

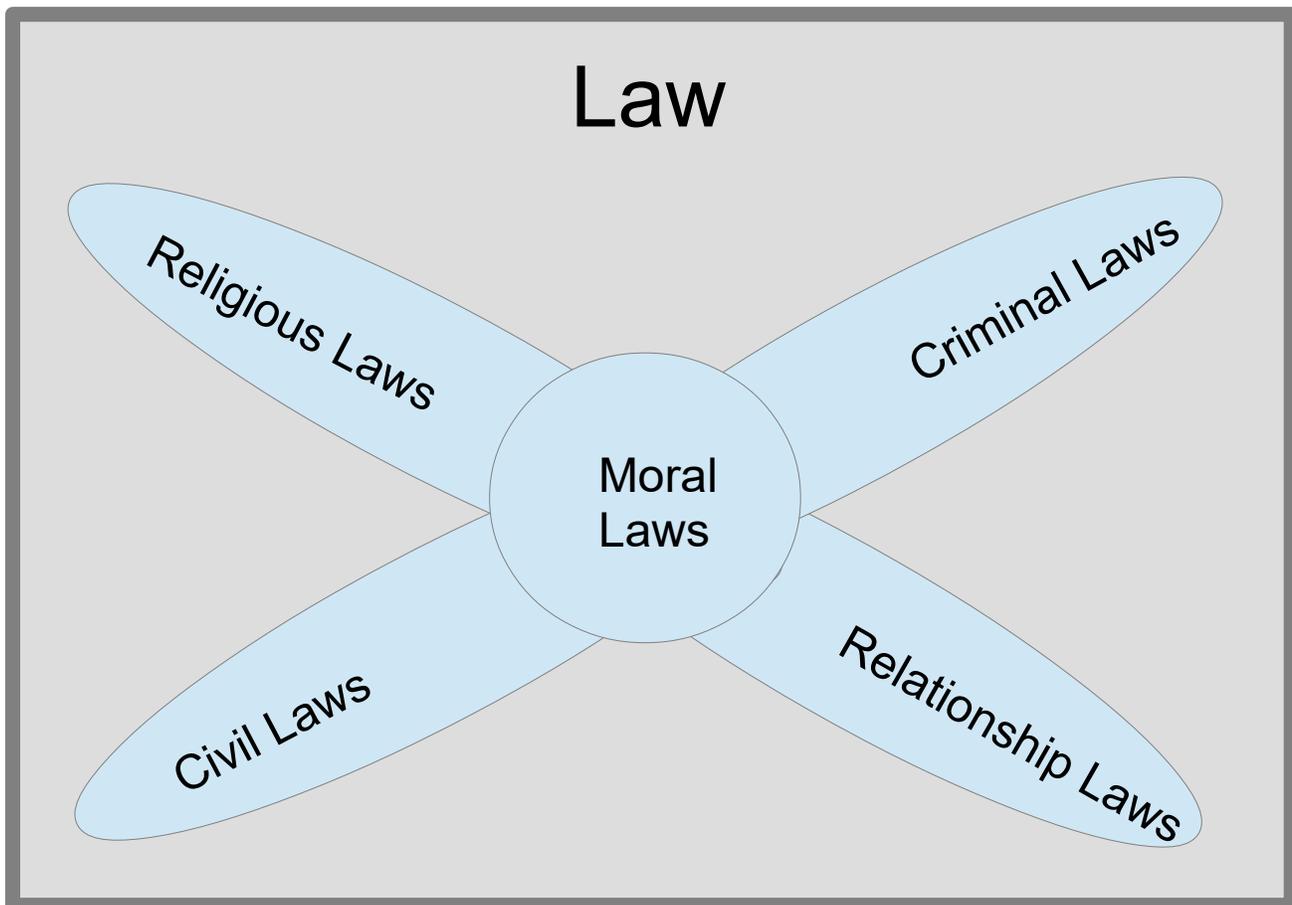
Since the law is for sinners and grace is for Redeemed Saints, then by what standard do Redeemed Saints live? It is written in Jeremiah 31:33 (and quoted in Hebrews 8:10²⁴ and 10:16²⁵): **“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”** Is this a copy of the law that was written on stone tablets? No, this is a law of relationship. It is personalized with the will of God for the individual believer. That is why it is written on their hearts. It takes into account the redeemed saint's level of sanctification, maturity, strengths, weaknesses, gifts and calling. It is obedience to the still small voice of the conscience that leads the believer to do God's will in every situation. Religion demands one rigid set of rules for everyone, the initiate and the proficient. Relationship is with an individual. Jesus said in John 14:15-17: **“If you love me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”** Redeemed Saints live by the law that is written on their hearts as they are led by the Holy Spirit of God.

Grace is not a license to sin. The law that is written on the redeemed saint's heart contains all of the basics, the things that everyone should have learned in kindergarten. Be kind and don't hurt the other children. Be honest and tell the truth. Be content with what you have and don't take the other children's stuff. Obey your parents and others who have proper authority. Most importantly, we should have learned to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, our souls, our minds and our strength. When Redeemed Saints receive God as their Lord, then nothing is more important in their lives than Him.

Most of us have some experience with both religion and relationship. We know that they both have some commonality of law. Here is an illustration that I hope will help sort it out (see below). The large square is the domain of all law. There are many laws that I haven't labeled on the illustration. For example the laws of mathematics, laws of physics and laws of chemistry. I'm sure everyone can think of many more. What I have put on the illustration are the laws of government and God's laws. The laws of government are generally divided between civil laws and criminal laws. They come together or overlap at what we would call moral laws. As we've seen from our discussion above, God's laws are

divided into what we might call religious laws written in stone and relationship laws written on hearts. Each of these also overlap the range of moral laws. That we are still under the moral laws is made plain in Galatians 5:19-21:

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



Many Scriptures make it plain that we are free from religious laws. We don't have time to go into them in this message, but here is a partial list.

- Dietary laws – Mark 7:17-23²⁶ and Acts 10:9-16.²⁷
- Sacrificial laws – Hebrews 10:1-10.²⁸
- Sabbath laws – Luke 6:1-5²⁹ and John 5:16-17.³⁰
- Laws of the Religious Calendar – Colossians 2:16-23.³¹

Redeemed Saints are no longer subject to the letter of the law that was given to sinners. Now they obey the spirit of the law who is their Lord. This goes beyond the minimum requirements. It is the moment by moment obedience to the voice of the Lord. It's not following the religious rules, but walking in relationship with God by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Religious people do not understand this. They demand one set of immutable rules. It is simple and clear cut. God, on the other hand, does not want automatons. His desire is for people who willingly enter into a submitted relationship with Him. He wants them to obey His still small voice of conscience.

Relationships are messy. There are misunderstandings. Two egos are not always aligned together. There are disagreements and battles of two different points of view. God understands this. It is what He chose to create. He is willing to work with people, teach them and shape them as long as they choose to stay in a submitted relationship with Him. When His people disobey and repent, He forgives them. People also need to forgive themselves and God after there has been stress in the relationship. The relationship is strengthened by overcoming these trials. It endures all tests as long as Redeemed Saints do not shut the Lord out of their lives by rebellion, loss of faith or sinning unto death.

Judging

If we understand that God has written an individually tailored law for each Redeemed Saint, how then can we judge them? The law of relationship with God has been written on their hearts. It includes the moment by moment leading of the Holy Spirit for their lives. How can one person know God's specific will for another? It is impossible to judge this as it is written in Romans 14:1-4:

“Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.”

We can replace the things eaten in this passage with almost anything that separates us including denominations, doctrines and practices. We stand before and are responsible to our Lord, not other people of religion.

Another thing we cannot judge is whether or not another person is saved. God judges our hearts, not the religious things we have or haven't done. The Lord judges our inner thoughts and attitudes, not our outward appearance. As it says in 1 Thessalonians 2:4: **“But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.”** And in Luke 16:15: **“And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”** God knows our hearts, but we cannot see into the heart of another person. We may have impressions based on the evidence that comes out of a person's heart, but we never have complete knowledge like God does and we therefore cannot rightly judge if a person is saved or not.

About judging others, it says in Luke 6:37: **“If you don’t want to be judged, don’t judge. If you don’t want to be condemned, don’t condemn. If you want to be forgiven, forgive.”** Many people take from this that all judging is bad and they should never judge another person. However we have seen that we are still subject to what may be called the moral laws. In the fifth chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul confronts the issue of gross immorality in the church. He concludes with this statement in

1 Corinthians 5:12-13: **“For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore 'put away from yourselves the evil person.’”**

We cannot judge another person's heart or God's specific will for them, but we can and must judge the immoral acts committed by members of the congregation. Most of the time it isn't judgment that is required, but a simple willingness to confront with truth. This must not be done based on accusation or gossip. There must be two or more witnesses or verifiable evidence. Even if there is not enough evidence to make a judgment, we can still validate the victim by affirming that what happened to them was wrong and not their fault.

So what judging needs to be avoided? A person's deeds are visible to the world. Facts simply exist, they don't require judgment. A person's heart cannot be adequately judged by another person. Their thoughts, motives and relationship with God are not visible for the world to see. It is the self-righteous judgmental spirit that needs to be avoided.

Conclusion

The time has come to conclude this message. If you have felt gut punched and/or become mad while I shared some of my basic beliefs, it is a strong indication of self-righteousness. Redeemed Saints should have felt affirmed, liberated and empowered. For some of them, there were things that finally clicked into place. If you know for certain that you are a Redeemed Saint and you still felt like your ear was flicked or that you were gut punched, then it may indicate a mixture of relationship and religion. Our lives are like our houses, they get cluttered. From time to time we need to clean them. If so, confess and ask God's forgiveness. Set things right again. It may also indicate that you possibly have an emotional attachment to a false doctrine. I don't ask you to believe me. I do ask you to search the scriptures to see if these things are so.

Today, I've been preaching to myself, to the congregation, to the choir, to the worship team, to the worship leader, to the senior pastor, to the church staff, to the elders, to the board members, to the Sunday School teachers and all of the other volunteers. Think about it. If a Self-righteous Sinner wants to be acceptable to God by their works of religion, what better place is there to do so than in the church?

If you are asking the question: “What will people think?” It is another strong indication of self-righteousness. I can't speak for everyone, but I rejoice with God and the angels whenever a sinner is saved. When it is a Self-righteous Sinner who is already a member of the church, then I'm also very happy to have one more Redeemed Saint and one less Self-righteous Sinner to put up with in the congregation.

In the following table I've listed Twenty things that may indicate if a person is a Redeemed Saint or a Self-righteous Sinner. I invite each of you to put a check mark beside each one you think fits you. When done you can see which side is weighted heavier and what things need to be changed in your life.

Redeemed Saints come to God in humility, believing that their faith will make them acceptable to Him. They have entered into a submitted personal relationship with the Lord of their lives. Self-righteous Sinners take pride in their works, they believe that their acts of religion will make them acceptable to God.

Redeemed Saints	Self-righteous Sinners
Faith Humility Relationship	Works Pride Religion
God's Way What Does God Want?	My Way What's in It for Me?
Obeys the Spirit of the Law God's Individual Will Just for Them See God as Loving Father, Brother and Friend	Obeys the Letter of the Law Follow the Rules View God as a harsh Judge
Sinners Saved by Grace Motley Group No Pretense of Perfection	Faithful to their Religion Look Good and Appear Righteous Set an Example of Perfection
Spirits reborn at conversion Souls being sanctified throughout life Bodies Not Redeemed until Resurrection of Life	Meetings they attend Programs they watch Good Works they do
Focus on the Lord of the Book Learn from the Logos and Rhema in relationship Speak from the Lord	Focus on the Book of the Lord Learn from the Logos by their own interpretation Speak for the Lord
Growing in their understanding of God Know that their understanding is incomplete Worship God as He has revealed Himself to them	Define god in their own image Image of god is cast in stone by their religion Worship as god the image they've made

Redeemed Saints are concerned with doing things God's way. They are always asking the question: "What does God want me to do in this situation?" They are led by the Holy Spirit. Self-righteous Sinners do things their own way. They decide what is right by their religious rules. They ask the question: "What's in it for Me?" They might object to this, stating that they are following God's will when they follow their religious laws. I know that they are sincere, but they have chosen their religion and their desired reward is eternal life as they strive to meet or exceed the minimum requirements to make themselves acceptable to God by their works.

Redeemed Saints obey the Spirit of God's law. They are free to do God's individual will, just for them, in every situation. They are in a submitted relationship with God and He knows they will make mistakes. The pressure of perfection is gone. They view God as a loving Father, Brother and Friend. Self-righteous Sinners obey the letter of the law. They must perfectly follow the rules of their religion. They see God as a harsh judge.

Redeemed Saints were sinners who were saved by the grace of God. They are now separated unto God, Who calls them saints. Sometimes they still make mistakes and disobey their Lord. I'm afraid that they are a motley group who are going through the process of sanctification as their souls, mind, will, and emotions are being formed into the image of Christ. They have no pretense of perfection. On the other hand, Self-righteous Sinners are faithful to their religion. They expend a great amount of effort to look good and appear righteous as they try to set an example of perfection.

Self-righteous Sinners testify to the number of religious meetings they attend, the religious programs they watch and the good works they do. They believe that God could not possibly overlook their efforts. Redeemed Saints tell about the rebirth of their spirits when they surrendered to God and entered into a submitted relationship with Him. They share their failings, testifying to God's sanctification process in their lives. They also tell about their struggles with the desires of their flesh which will not be redeemed until the Resurrection of Life.

Redeemed Saints focus on the Lord of the Book. They learn from the Logos and Rhema of God in relationship with Him. Seeking God's will in every situation and what He would have them say, they speak from the Lord in humility. Self-righteous Sinners focus on the Book of the Lord. They learn from the Logos according to their own interpretation. In their pride, they believe that they can speak for the Lord with full assurance of their absolute truth.

Redeemed Saints are growing in their understanding of and relationship with God. In humility, they know that their understanding of God is incomplete. In faith, they worship God as He has revealed Himself to them through relationship and His word. As theologians noted many years ago, Self-righteous Sinners pridefully define god in their own image. Their image of god is cast in stone by their religion. They believe that their works of worshiping the image of god that they've made will be acceptable in God's sight.

The Self-righteous Sinner might say that these are just nuances. Well, sometimes a nuance can make all the difference. Let me share an illustration that I hope will help. We can all go to the firing range. Everyone will point their rifle down range. Everyone intends to hit the target, but some will and some won't. Anyone who readies their rifle, fires and then aims is almost sure to miss the mark. The proper sequence is ready, aim and then fire. It makes a difference. Even with the proper sequence, failing to aim and fire properly will still result in a miss. We must correctly sight the rifle on the target, take a breath, let it partially out and then squeeze the trigger. Observing these nuances will result in a high probability of hitting the target with every round we fire. I ask you to stop aiming your life with pride that your works will make you acceptable to God. Aim your life in humble faith that God will forgive your sins. Don't pull the trigger of religion, but squeeze the trigger of a submitted relationship with God.

If the Holy Spirit has convicted you today, if you see that you are a sinner in need of salvation, then do these five things in your heart, expressing them to God.

- Confess – Admit to God that you are a sinner and fall short of His perfection.
- Repent – Turn away from self-righteousness, rebellion, and worldliness. Determine to live in relationship with God, learn His will for you and obey His commands that He gives specifically for you in every situation.
- Supplicate – In humility, request that God, in His mercy and grace, will forgive your sins.
- Profess – Announce your belief that Jesus Christ has sacrificed his own innocent blood in payment for your sin. State by faith that your sins are forgiven.
- Submit – Receive Jesus Christ as your Lord. Ask Him to write His law on your heart and to fill you with His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will lead you to follow the law God has written on

your heart and to do God's specific will for you in every situation. Finally, ask Jesus: "Lord, what do You want of me?" As He reveals His will for you, do it!

If you have truly, in your heart, entered into a submitted relationship with God today, then you have become a Redeemed Saint who is set apart unto God. I welcome you into the Ecclesia. Congratulations, you have been called out of the Kingdom of Satan and you are now a Redeemed Saint in the Kingdom of God. Now live for God as you are led by His Holy Spirit! Your spirit has been reborn, it is alive again. You don't have to be perfect anymore. God will be working with you for the rest of your life sanctifying your soul, mind, will and emotions. You now have the sure hope that you will be resurrected to eternal life with a spiritual body when the Resurrection of the Living occurs and you will live eternally with God in Heaven.

Benediction for Live Presentation

If you gave up self-righteousness, worldliness and rebellion today and received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and you want to give testimony to the change in your life, then stand up where you are. If you were already a Redeemed Saint and you were affirmed, liberated and empowered by this message and you want to show your support for those who are standing, then stand up with them. This is the Ecclesia.

As we end, please receive this benediction: **"May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; may the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."** (Numbers 6:24-26) May you be blessed and highly favored as you leave here and live your life for the Lord. Thank you.

Benediction for Video

As we end, please receive this benediction: **"May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; may the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."** (Numbers 6:24-26)

If you gave up self-righteousness, worldliness and rebellion today and received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and you want to give testimony to the change in your life, then share it in the comments below. If you were already a Redeemed Saint and you were affirmed, liberated and empowered by this message I encourage you to also let us know in a comment. More importantly, give this message a thumbs up and share what the Lord has done for you with the friends and family in your social network. Encourage them to listen to this message too. Make this message go viral!

May you be truly blessed and highly favored as you live your life for the Lord. Thank you.

Endnotes

¹ Matthew 7:21-23, I never knew you

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. **22** Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

² **1 Corinthians 13:8-12, We know in part**

8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. **9** For we know in part and we prophesy in part. **10** But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. **12** For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

³ **1 John 3:2, It has not yet been revealed**

2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

⁴ **Genesis 4:1-15, Cain and Abel**

1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD." **2** Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. **3** And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. **4** Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, **5** but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

6 So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? **7** If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it."

8 Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where *is* Abel your brother?"

He said, "I do not know. *Am* I my brother's keeper?"

10 And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. **11** So now you *are* cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. **12** When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth."

13 And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment *is* greater than I can bear! **14** Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen *that* anyone who finds me will kill me."

15 And the LORD said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.

⁵ **Hebrews 11:4, Abel offers a sacrifice of faith**

1 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

⁶ 1 John 3:11-12, Cain's works were evil

11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, **12** not as Cain *who* was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.

⁷ Matthew 23, Seven woes pronounced on the self-righteous

1 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, **2** saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. **3** Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. **4** For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. **5** But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. **6** They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, **7** greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' **8** But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. **9** Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. **10** And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. **11** But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. **12** And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. **14** Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

16 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' **17** Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? **18** And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.' **19** Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? **20** Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. **21** He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. **22** And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.

23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. **24** Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. **26** Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. **28** Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

29 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, **30** and say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’

31 “Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. **32** Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ guilt. **33** Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? **34** Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, **35** that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. **36** Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! **38** See! Your house is left to you desolate; **39** for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ ”

⁸ Matthew 13:24-30, The wheat and the tares

24 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; **25** but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. **26** But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. **27** So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ **28** He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ **29** But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. **30** Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’ ”

⁹ Genesis 2:4-3:24, Adam and Eve

4 This *is* the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, **5** before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and *there was* no man to till the ground; **6** but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

8 The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. **9** And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. **11** The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. **12** And the gold of that land is good. Bdelium and the onyx stone are there. **13** The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. **14** The name of the third river is Hiddekel; it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. **16** And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; **17** but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

18 And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” **19** Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. **20** So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. **22** Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

23 And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” **24** Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. **25** And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

3:1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”

2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; **3** but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

4 Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. **5** For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. **7** Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

9 Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”

10 So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

11 And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”

12 Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

13 And the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

14 So the LORD God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust all the days of your life. **15** And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

16 To the woman He said: “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

17 Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: “Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. **18** Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. **19** In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”

20 And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

21 Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

22 Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”— **23** therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. **24** So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

¹⁰ **John 3:1-21, Nicodemus**

1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. **2** This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. **6** That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. **7** Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ **8** The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”

10 Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?

11 Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. **12** If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? **13** No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. **14** And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, **15** that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. **16** For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that

whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. **17** For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

18 “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. **19** And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. **20** For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. **21** But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

¹¹ **Luke 7:36-50, A sinful woman**

36 Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to eat. **37** And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, **38** and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. **39** Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, “This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.”

40 And Jesus answered and said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.”

So he said, “Teacher, say it.”

41 “There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. **42** And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?”

43 Simon answered and said, “I suppose the one whom he forgave more.”

And He said to him, “You have rightly judged.” **44** Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. **45** You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. **46** You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. **47** Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.”

48 Then He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

49 And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

50 Then He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

¹² **Matthew 19:16-22, A rich young man**

16 Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?”

17 So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

18 He said to Him, “Which ones?”

Jesus said, “‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ **19** ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

20 The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?”

21 Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

¹³ **Luke 19:1-10, Zacchaeus**

19 Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. **2** Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. **3** And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. **4** So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. **5** And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” **6** So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. **7** But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, “He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.”

8 Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”

9 And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; **10** for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

¹⁴ **John 4:1-42, The woman at the well**

1 Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John **2** (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), **3** He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. **4** But He needed to go through Samaria.

5 So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. **6** Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.” **8** For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

9 Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

10 Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”

11 The woman said to Him, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? **12** Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?”

13 Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, **14** but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

15 The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.”

16 Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.”

17 The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.”

Jesus said to her, “You have well said, ‘I have no husband,’ **18** for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.”

19 The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. **20** Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.”

21 Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. **22** You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. **23** But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. **24** God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

25 The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When He comes, He will tell us all things.”

26 Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”

27 And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, “What do You seek?” or, “Why are You talking with her?”

28 The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, **29** “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” **30** Then they went out of the city and came to Him.

31 In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.”

32 But He said to them, “I have food to eat of which you do not know.”

33 Therefore the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?”

34 Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. **35** Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! **36** And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. **37** For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ **38** I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.”

39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all that I ever did.” **40** So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. **41** And many more believed because of His own word.

42 Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.”

15 John 8:2-11, Woman caught in adultery

2 Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. **3** Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery.

And when they had set her in the midst, **4** they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. **5** Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?” **6** This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” **8** And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. **9** Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. **10** When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?”

11 She said, “No one, Lord.”

And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”

¹⁶ **John 11:17-27, Martha**

17 So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. **18** Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. **19** And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. **21** Now Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. **22** But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”

23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

24 Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. **26** And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

27 She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

¹⁷ **Luke 23:39-43, The criminal on the cross**

39 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.”

40 But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? **41** And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” **42** Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

43 And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

¹⁸ **Mark 4:3-20, Parable of the sower**

3 “Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. **4** And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. **5** Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. **6** But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. **7** And some seed fell among

thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. **8** But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”

9 And He said to them, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

10 But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. **11** And He said to them, “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, **12** so that ‘seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them.’ ”

13 And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? **14** The sower sows the word. **15** And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. **16** These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; **17** and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble. **18** Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, **19** and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. **20** But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”

19 Hebrews 3 with Author's Notes, Three ways to lose salvation

1 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, **2** who was **faithful** to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was **faithful** in all His house. **3** For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. **4** For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. **5** And Moses indeed was **faithful** in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, **6** but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the **hope** firm to the end.

Author's Note: Heb. 11:1 - “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” This first paragraph sets the stage by referencing the faithfulness of Moses and Christ Jesus. Then it calls the saints to hold fast in their faith to the end.

7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:

“Today, if you will hear His voice,
8 Do not harden your hearts as in the **rebellion**,
 In the day of trial in the wilderness,
9 Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,
 And saw My works forty years.
10 Therefore I was angry with that generation,
 And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart,
 And they have not known My ways.’
11 So I swore in My wrath,
 ‘They shall not enter My rest.’”

Author's note: This is a quote Psalm 95:7b-11. It refers to the Exodus generation who God brought out of Egypt. God wanted to take them to the promised Land, but they rebelled against God's plan and they died in the wilderness. The “promised land” and “enter My rest” are both metaphors for going to Heaven.

12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of **unbelief** in departing from the living God; **13** but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of **sin**. **14** For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, **15** while it is said:

“Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts as in the **rebellion**.”

Author's Note: This paragraph warns the saints to not be like the Exodus generation. Though God brought them out of bondage in Egypt, because they lost their faith (unbelief), sinned and rebelled against God they did not enter the promised land. It reminds the saints to remain steadfast until the end.

16 For who, having heard, **rebelled**? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?
17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who **sinned**, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? **18** And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who **did not obey**? **19** So we see that they could not enter in because of **unbelief**.

Author's Note: The last paragraph explicitly explains the metaphor of this entire chapter. Those God delivered from Egypt (itself a metaphor for Satan's Kingdom) did not enter the promised land because of rebellion, sinning unto death and loss of faith (unbelief).

²⁰ **Luke 15:11-32, The prodigal son**

11 Then He said: “A certain man had two sons. **12** And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.’ So he divided to them his livelihood. **13** And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. **14** But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. **15** Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. **16** And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

17 “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! **18** I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, **19** and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.” ’

20 “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. **21** And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. **23** And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; **24** for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.

25 “Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. **26** So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. **27** And he said to him,

‘Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.’

28 “But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. **29** So he answered and said to his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. **30** But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.’

31 “And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. **32** It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.’ ”

²¹ Ezekiel 18, Gaining and losing salvation

1 The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, **2** “What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? **3** “As I live,” says the Lord GOD, “you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel.

4 “Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul who sins shall die. **5** But if a man is just and does what is lawful and right; **6** if he has not eaten on the mountains, nor lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, nor defiled his neighbor’s wife, nor approached a woman during her impurity; **7** if he has not oppressed anyone, but has restored to the debtor his pledge; has robbed no one by violence, but has given his bread to the hungry and covered the naked with clothing; **8** if he has not exacted usury nor taken any increase, but has withdrawn his hand from iniquity and executed true judgment between man and man; **9** if he has walked in My statutes And kept My judgments faithfully—he is just; he shall surely live!” Says the Lord GOD.

10 “If he begets a son who is a robber or a shedder of blood, who does any of these things **11** and does none of those duties, but has eaten on the mountains or defiled his neighbor’s wife; **12** if he has oppressed the poor and needy, robbed by violence, not restored the pledge, lifted his eyes to the idols, or committed abomination; **13** if he has exacted usury or taken increase—shall he then live? He shall not live! If he has done any of these abominations, he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him.

14 “If, however, he begets a son who sees all the sins which his father has done, and considers but does not do likewise; **15** who has not eaten on the mountains, nor lifted his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, nor defiled his neighbor’s wife; **16** has not oppressed anyone, nor withheld a pledge, nor robbed by violence, but has given his bread to the hungry and covered the naked with clothing; **17** who has withdrawn his hand from the poor and not received usury or increase, but has executed My judgments and walked in My statutes—he shall not die for the iniquity of his father; he shall surely live! **18** “As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, robbed his brother by violence, and did what is not good among his people, behold, he shall die for his iniquity.

19 “Yet you say, ‘Why should the son not bear the guilt of the father?’ Because the son has done what is lawful and right, and has kept all My statutes and observed them, he shall surely live. **20** The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

21 “But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. **22** None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live. **23** Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” says the Lord GOD, “and not that he should turn from his ways and live?”

24 “But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die.

25 “Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair? **26** When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies. **27** Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. **28** Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. **29** Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ O house of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair?”

30 “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways,” says the Lord GOD. “Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. **31** Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? **32** For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord GOD. “Therefore turn and live!”

22 Matthew 19:16-26, A rich young man

16 Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?”

17 So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

18 He said to Him, “Which ones?”

Jesus said, “‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ **19** ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

20 The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?”

21 Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

23 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. **24** And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

25 When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?”

26 But Jesus looked at them and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

²³ **Acts 15:1-29, First Jerusalem counsel**

1 And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” **2** Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.

3 So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. **4** And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. **5** But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”

6 Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. **7** And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: “Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. **8** So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, **9** and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. **10** Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? **11** But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.”

12 Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. **13** And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, “Men and brethren, listen to me: **14** Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. **15** And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: **16** ‘After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; **17** So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the LORD who does all these things.’

18 “Known to God from eternity are all His works. **19** Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, **20** but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. **21** For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

22 Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

23 They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: greetings.

24 Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law”—to whom we gave no such commandment — **25** it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our

beloved Barnabas and Paul, **26** men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **27** We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. **28** For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: **29** that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

²⁴ Hebrews 8:10, Law written on the heart

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

²⁵ Hebrews 10:16, Law written on the heart

16 “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,”

²⁶ Mark 7:14-23, Food does not defile

14 When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, “Hear Me, everyone, and understand: **15** There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. **16** If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!”

17 When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. **18** So He said to them, “Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, **19** because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?” **20** And He said, “What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. **21** For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, **22** thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. **23** All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”

²⁷ Acts 10:9-16, All food declared clean

9 The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. **10** Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance **11** and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. **12** In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. **13** And a voice came to him, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.”

14 But Peter said, “Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.”

15 And a voice spoke to him again the second time, “What God has cleansed you must not call common.” **16** This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

²⁸ Hebrews 10:1-10, God has no desire for sacrifice

10 For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. **2** For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would

have had no more consciousness of sins. **3** But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. **4** For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

5 Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. **6** In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. **7** Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God.’”

8 Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the law), **9** then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may establish the second. **10** By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

²⁹ **Luke 6:1-5, Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath**

6 Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands. **2** And some of the Pharisees said to them, “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?”

3 But Jesus answering them said, “Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: **4** how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?” **5** And He said to them, “The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”

³⁰ **John 5:16-17, God is still working**

16 For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath. **17** But Jesus answered them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.”

³¹ **Colossians 2:16-23, Free from the laws of religion**

16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, **17** which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. **18** Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, **19** and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— **21** “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” **22** which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? **23** These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.