

2 Timothy - Part 22

“In a tenement district in New York City, a boy in ragged clothes was seen with a small piece of broken mirror in his hand. Holding it high in the air he moved it slowly back and forth, watching the narrow slit of a window above him as he did so. ‘What are you doing?’ a man suddenly demanded as he shook the youngster roughly by the shoulder. ‘Like most boys in this neighborhood, you're probably up to some mischief, aren't you?’ The boy looked up into the stern face of his accuser and said, ‘See that window up there? Well, I have a little brother who has a room on that floor. He's a cripple. The only sunlight he ever sees is what I shine up to him with my mirror!’
 “Do we reflect the light of the Son so that someone in darkness may see?”¹

Those people in Galilee, as all people who hear the gospel, were to some extent aware of who and what Jesus was; **but few of them believed in Jesus.** They had factual information. They saw Christ, they heard His message from His own lips, and they saw His miracles with their own eyes. They had firsthand opportunity to see God's truth in the flesh,² an opportunity that only a few thousand people in all of history have had. The Light of the gospel had broken in on their darkness.”³

John 12:35-36 (NLT):

³⁵ *Jesus replied, “My light will shine for you just a little longer. Walk in **the light** while you can, so the darkness will not overtake you. **Those who walk in the darkness cannot see where they are going.***

³⁶ ***Put your trust in the light while there is still time;** then you will become children of the light.” After saying these things, Jesus went away and was hidden from them.*

“Life for them could never be the same again.” Their lives were permanently affected by the impression Jesus must have made on them. Yet many did not believe in Him.

John 12:37-40 (NLT):

³⁷ *But despite all the miraculous signs Jesus had done, **most of the people still did not believe in him.***

³⁸ *This is exactly what Isaiah the prophet had predicted: “LORD, who has believed our message? To whom has the LORD revealed his powerful arm?”*

³⁹ *But the people couldn't believe, for as Isaiah also said,*

¹ *6,000 Plus Illustrations for Communicating Biblical Truths*, (Omaha, Nebraska: Christianity Today, 1997), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Light".

² God took the form of human flesh and came to earth in the man, Jesus.

³ Op cit., MacArthur.

⁴⁰ *“The Lord has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts— so that their eyes cannot see, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and have me heal them.”⁴*

“In spite of all the clear evidence that was presented to them, only a few actually believed and accepted that truth. The ‘*arm of the Lord*’ had been revealed to them in great power, yet **they closed their eyes to the truth**. They had heard the message (report) and seen the miracles, and yet **would not believe.**”⁵ They had the knowledge but were not saved. Consequently, they were in danger of losing all opportunity of being saved, and of becoming apostate.⁶ It is of such people that Peter speaks in his second letter.

2 Peter 2:20-22 (NLT):

²⁰ *And when people escape from the wickedness of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and then get tangled up and enslaved by sin again, they are worse off than before.*

²¹ *It would be better if they had never known the way to righteousness than to know it and then reject the command they were given to live a holy life.*

²² *They prove the truth of this proverb: “A dog returns to its vomit.” And another says, “A washed pig returns to the mud.”*

Because of their unbelief, the light that was given to save them became a judgment against them.

John 4:10:

*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.**"*

Jesus was speaking of **the gift of salvation**, the "*living water*" that leads to "*eternal life*."

John 4:13-14:

¹³ *Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again;*

¹⁴ *but **whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the***

⁴ When a person starts to resist the light, something begins to change within him; and he comes to the place where he cannot believe. There is "judicial blindness" that God permits to come over the eyes of people who do not take the truth seriously. (This quotation is found in a number of places in the New Testament. See Matt. 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; Acts 28:25-27; Rom. 11:8.) It is a serious thing to treat God's truth lightly, for a person could well miss his opportunity to be saved. "*Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near*" (Isa. 55:6). Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary – New Testament, Volume 1*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2001), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 343.

⁵ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary – New Testament, Volume 1*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2001), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 343.

⁶ A person who forsakes his faith.

*water that I will give him will become in him a well of water **springing up to eternal life.**"*

“Those who drank it—not sipped it or just tasted it, but drank it—would be saved.” Listen again to the words of Jesus in:

John 6:51:

"I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."

John 6:35:

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst."

"Eternal life comes from eating, not simply tasting. God's gift of salvation in Christ."⁷

“One of the pre-salvation ministries of the Holy Spirit is that of giving the unsaved a taste of the blessings of salvation.” This is part of His ministry of pointing people toward Christ. But **tasting is not eating**. “The Holy Spirit will give us a taste, but He will not make us eat.” God placed the blessing of salvation to the lips of these New Testament Jews, but they did not eat. The tasting was what they saw and heard concerning the Gospel, as many today have seen and heard about the transforming power of Christ through the Gospel, and yet did not believe.⁸

“These Jews had never possessed the Holy Spirit, they simply were around when He was around. It is possible to have an association with the Holy Spirit, to share in what He does, and not be saved. As we have seen in Hebrews 2:4, these Jews had heard the word and had seen and even participated in numerous signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit. They were actually involved in some of His work.”⁹

Hebrews 2:1-4 (TLB):

¹ *So **we must listen very carefully to the truths we have heard**, or we may drift away from them.*

² *For since the messages from angels have always proved true and people have always been punished for disobeying them,*

³ *what makes us think that we can escape if we are indifferent to this great salvation announced by the Lord Jesus himself and passed on to us by those who heard him speak?*

⁴ *God always has shown us that these messages are true by signs and wonders and various miracles and by giving certain special abilities from the Holy Spirit*

⁷ Op. Cit., MacArthur.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

to those who believe; yes, God has assigned such gifts to each of us.

“The Bible never speaks of Christians being associated with the Holy Spirit. It speaks of the Holy Spirit being **within** them. Here, however, are some persons who are simply associated with the Holy Spirit. Like perhaps most of the multitudes whom Jesus miraculously healed and fed, they partook of the Holy Spirit's power and blessings, but they did not have His indwelling. They did not possess the Holy Spirit, nor did the Holy Spirit possess them.”¹⁰

These folks had been taught some things about God. It is possible that they even attended church every week. They may have even listened and thought about what they heard. But they could not say with Jeremiah,

“Your words were found and I ate them, and Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.” (Jeremiah 15:16)

“They tasted but they did not eat, just like the nation to whom Jeremiah spoke many hundreds of years earlier. Herod was like this. In spite of the hard-hitting message of **John the Baptist**, including accusations directly against the king, Herod enjoyed listening to John preach.”¹¹ It seems that he enjoyed sampling the message of God but never took it seriously. He later ordered John beheaded.

“When eating something new it is very common to taste it first. In Psalm 34:8 David said: *“O taste and see that the LORD is good.”* Everyone needs to taste the gospel before they accept it. The problem is stopping with tasting. Like so many who hear the gospel for the first time, these Jews were attracted to its beauty and sweetness. It tasted very good to them. But they did not chew it or swallow it, much less digest it. They just kept tasting. Before long, its appealing taste was gone and they became indifferent to it. Their spiritual tastebuds became insensitive and unresponsive.”¹²

Have you truly *“eaten”* the Gospel? Or have you merely tasted it?

Do you recall the illustration that we opened with? About how false teachers were teaching wrong facts and then giving out high school diplomas to their students? That was bad enough, but think of how much more dangerous it is for false teachers to be dispensing their ideas about the Bible.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

“After the cessation of conflict with the regular Iraqi army in April 2003, the U.S. found itself engaged in a guerrilla war against terrorists. The terrorists started making booby traps and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). These IEDs have accounted for a majority of those killed in Iraq. The IEDs are hidden in everything from rusty oil drums, to plastic toys, to dead animals, to heaps of rotting refuse.

“‘A bomb can be hidden anywhere,’ said Captain Jean-Pierre Brown. ‘I have come to hate garbage in a whole new way,’ Brown said. ‘Everywhere else in the world, litter is unsightly and garbage smells. But in Iraq, it kills.’

“The world is a ‘minefield’ of deceptive, garbage philosophies and religions. There is only one safe place and that is found in Jesus Christ.”¹³

God has a feast waiting for you. But you have to get past the appetizers and hors d’oeuvres in order to consume it. Salvation through Jesus Christ will assure you a place at the table when the wedding feast of the Lamb is served. Don’t miss it!

Promises Never Broken

2 TIMOTHY 2:12-13:

¹² *If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us;*

¹³ *If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for **He cannot deny Himself.***

“Disregard for a moment your convictions about gambling, and take note of something special in this news story.

“On Friday, March 29, 1984, Robert Cunningham ate a meal of linguine and clam sauce at his favorite restaurant, Sal’s pizzeria, where he had been a regular customer for seven years. His waitress, Phyllis Penza, had worked at Sal’s for nineteen years.

“After his meal Cunningham made a good-natured offer to Penza. He said she could either have a tip or split his winnings if his number was drawn in the upcoming New York lotto. Penza chose to take a chance on the lottery, and she and Cunningham chose the numbers together.

“On Saturday night, Cunningham won. The jackpot was six million dollars. Then he faced the moment of truth. Would he keep his promise? Would he give the waitress a ‘tip’ of three million dollars?

¹³ Peter Kennedy, *Preaching Illustrations Vol 1.*, WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 20.

“Cunningham, a police sergeant, husband, father of four, and grandfather of three, said, ‘I won't back out. Besides, friendship means more than money.’

“Promises are to be kept no matter what the cost.”¹⁴

The age to come is the future kingdom of God. The powers of the kingdom are miracle powers. The Jews in Jesus' Day had seen the same kind of miracles that are going to come when Jesus brings in His earthly kingdom. They saw the apostles do signs and wonders like those that will be reproduced in the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ. They saw miracle after miracle. And the more they saw and tasted **without eating** (believing), the more their guilt increased. Imagine the hatred and unbelief that must have consumed them when they saw a resurrected Lazarus, or the blind given sight and the dumb given voices. Even though they saw these miracles performed before their eyes, they still rejected the One (Jesus) who performed them. We would not want to be in their shoes at **the Great White Throne judgment.** ¹⁵

These Jews had been blessed by God's enlightenment, by association with His Holy Spirit, and by tasting of His heavenly gifts, His Word, and His power. Still they did not believe.¹⁶

The Holy Spirit has in effect given a warning to the unsaved who have heard the truth and acknowledged it, but who have hesitated to receive Christ as Savior: You had better realize that if you do not now come to Christ, there will come a point in time when it will be **impossible** for you to do so. You see these Jews had been given full knowledge of the truth about Christ and when that occurs, those so blessed should repent and invite Christ to be their Savior. Not to do so runs the risk of sealing their fate outside of the Kingdom of God forever; and there is no way of knowing exactly where that point of time might be for you.

Many commentators on the Bible consider this warning to apply to Christians and that the passage teaches that salvation can be lost. However, Christians are not being addressed in this passage and it is not salvation that can be lost, but rather **the opportunity for receiving salvation.** Note the wording in verse 13, especially *“If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.”* It means that even if a person does not believe the Bible about eternal judgment and does not come to faith, God's Word is still faithful and true. **Judgment will happen**, even if a person does not believe it will.

However, **a believer will never lose their salvation.** The Bible makes that clear.

John 10:27-29:

²⁷ *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;*

²⁸ *and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and **no one will snatch them out of My hand.***

¹⁴ Craig Brian Larson, ed., *750 Engaging Illustrations*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, under: "535. Promises".

¹⁵ Op cit., MacArthur.

¹⁶ Ibid.

*²⁹ "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and **no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.***

And in Romans 8 Paul has this to say:

Romans 8:35, 37-39:

³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul also wanted the people of Philippi to understand this:

Philippians 1:6:

*For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.***

Peter also emphasized this point:

1 Peter 1:3-5:

*³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be **born again to a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

*⁴ **to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,***

*⁵ **who are protected by the power of God** through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

There is no reason for a Christian to believe His salvation can be lost!

Romans 5:10 (NLT):

¹⁰ For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son.

If by Christ's death we can be saved, certainly by His life of power and intercession we can be kept saved. It is the unbelievers who are in danger of losing salvation; that is, they are in danger of losing the opportunity ever to receive it. This is the one-and-only way to salvation. There is no other salvation message that can save anyone. We hope any of you who might read or hear this message, if you cannot at first believe the gospel message of Christ that you at least tell Him that if He is the one-and-only God, it is your desire to know the truth. If you will then keep an open mind and heart, He promises that He will reveal that truth to anyone who asks! Remember what Matthew 7 tells us.

Matthew 7:7-8 (NLT):

⁷ ***“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.***

⁸ ***For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.***

You certainly have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

The Jews in New Testament times were so blessed with every opportunity to know God's Gospel, and what did they do? They rejected Christ again just as they had done when they demanded His crucifixion from Pilate. **Anyone who rejected Christ during his or her lifetime is eternally lost.** They reside in Hell and in Hell they will stay forever. There is no purgatory; there are no second chances once you are dead. You can only seize that opportunity while alive. If you are a member of any faith other than Christianity and hate me for speaking this truth, I would simply ask that you take the opportunity to get away where you are totally alone and spend some time talking to this God of the Bible. You can tell Him you do not believe in Him, that your god is the only god. You can tell Him anything you want, but at the end tell Him that if you are mistaken, you want to know the truth and you want to know how you can be assured of eternal life in Heaven. Then sit quietly for about half-an-hour and see what happens. If nothing happens, do the same thing the next day. If something still does not happen, do it every day for a month, and if at the end of the month you have had enough and want to stop, then stop. You have now demonstrated that you want to know the truth, and someday, somehow, you will find it.

The longer a person resists the Gospel message of Christ, the more they become immune to it. They become unresponsive and insensitive. So if they do not accept Christ's message they will eventually become so hardened that the opportunity will never come back.

End of Sermon for 9/7/14

Part 22