

Charismatic beliefs you thought were scriptural but aren't; 1 can put 1000 to flight. 1 of 3 – 19 februari 2022

Hi all,

When I was a teenager and just getting to know the Father and Lord, I was reading the gospels for the first time in my life. I was amazed at the success Jesus had when dealing with people. Healings, miracles, individual challenges like the Rich Young Ruler and Lazarus' sisters all yielded different results, but the results always seemed to be the most He could get for any given situation. He was effective limited only by the faith or unbelief of others.

Why is the Lord so effective?

I asked the Father: "Why was the Lord so effective (in the gospels)?" and His immediate response was: "Because He is 100% the Word, with no traditions of men, therefore He got 100% results in any situation according to how He was allowed (He hasn't changed)."

In Matthew 15:6 Jesus criticized the Pharisees saying: "...you have made the Word of God of no effect by your tradition." The Greek of 'made no effect' is one word, 'ekyrosate' from the root 'akyrōo' and 'kyros' meaning 'authority'. Jesus is saying they make God's Word null and void by the authority of their traditions. In other words, they placed their traditions in authority above the Word of God.

Requires intellectual honesty

The degree to which a person has placed a tradition of man above God's Word in their heart is seen by how quickly they will remove that idol from their heart when they hear the truth of the Word. To do that requires a heart that is genuinely seeking the truth. It requires intellectual honesty born of humility and teachability (meekness).

Some if not most just want to argue. These are the ones in house church where no matter where the discussion or study is going, they find a way to insert their favorite doctrine. They become evangelists for the truth as they see it. But truly walking in the fullness of the Word means a willingness to learn, leaving man-made tradition aside.

One such stronghold that has been around for decades is this: If 1 can put 1,000 to flight, 2 can put 10,000 to flight.

It is so commonly expressed it is taken as gospel truth. If a preacher wants a loud 'amen' from the congregation, all they have to do is proclaim that to make the point their victory is coming, and all go away feeling good. The passage says this, based on Deuteronomy 32:30:

"How can 1 chase 1,000 and 2 put 10,000 to flight except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord shut them up?"

Somewhere, years ago, someone lifted that verse out of context, put it in a sermon saying it was a promise for God's people, and it became foundational to thousands of believers struggling for victory in various areas of life. They have taken it as a promise from God that they will rise up and chase 1000 demons and together in the prayer of agreement with another, they two will put 10,000 to flight, thus gaining the answered prayer and victory.

Wrong. That's not what it says. And by believing that and praying that and standing on that, they haven't realized they are standing on traditions of men, actually having the opposite effect in their lives, making the Word of God of no effect. All because they have placed the traditions of men in authority over the Word of God.

What is the context?

The book of Deuteronomy is the re-telling of the Mosaic law to the children born in the wilderness from the people who had come out of Egypt. Their parents came out of Egypt to the edge of the Promised Land within a few months, but rejected the Lord's will, refusing to enter into the Land. Rejecting Him, He gave them what they had continually said, that they would rather die in the wilderness than take the Land. So they wandered for 40 years until they had all died out of that generation, except for Joshua and Caleb.

Deuteronomy means 'words' and is Moses' last words to those born in the wilderness, it is the retelling and summarization of much of Exodus and Leviticus to those 'kids'. In chapter 32 Moses is retelling the failures of their parents and warning them not to live by their example of unbelief. He explains why after God told them they would wander the wilderness in Number 14, they tried to enter the Promised Land on their own and were soundly defeated.

The whole of Deuteronomy 32 is a song Moses sang because music is easier to remember I am guessing, so that it could be sung repeatedly to remind them how to act and not act. Notable verses include v4: "He is the Rock, His ways are perfect. Just and right is He", which was a popular 1970's prayer meeting song back in the day.

By v15 Moses sings warnings, saying: "...he (Israel) forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his (Israel's) salvation." and in v18: "Of that Rock that gave you birth you are unmindful, and have forgotten God who formed you." He is talking about how Israel worshipped the Golden Calf and other idols along the way.

By v30-31 the Lord is talking about the enemies of Israel, asking how it could be that a single enemy man could chase 1000 (Israelites) and how 2 of them could make 10,000 (Israelites) flee, 'except their (Israel's) Rock had surrendered them and sold them (to allow them to be taken by their enemy)? For their rock is not as our Rock..."

In v36-37 the Lord says: "For the Lord will judge His people...and when He sees their power has left them (Israel) He will ask them; "Where are their gods? Where is the rock they trusted?" After that the song concludes with a promise of ultimate victory for Israel after their repentance, and that the Lord will take vengeance on their enemies.

So when a Christian uses that passage to justify their spiritual strength, they are actually using a passage about God's enemies putting 1000 and 10000 Israelites to flight because He surrendered them to give them what they wanted - to die in the wilderness. Yikes.

Let the weak say I am strong (let the poor say I am rich)

A similar lifting out of context is the passage from Joel 2:9-11, which is actually about the Battle of Armageddon. Years ago there was a popular song with the lyrics as seen above: "Let the weak say I am strong. Let the poor say I am rich, because of what the Lord has done..."

But the verse it is lifted from is about the enemies of the Lord preparing to fight Him at the last battle: "Proclaim this among the Gentiles (God's enemies); Prepare war. Wake up the mighty men (professional soldiers). Let all the men of war come up, let them prepare for battle. Beat your plows into sword and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weak say I am strong. Assemble yourselves you heathen, and come round about (Jerusalem)..."

And yet how many of you are singing that old song right now as you read this, singing it to the Lord, never realizing the Lord is talking to heathen people who fighting Him?

I hope this has been food for thought, and an exhortation that we examine what we think is just and right in Him. Very often we say we believe the Word, when in fact much of what we believe is man-made, which makes the Word of God void in our lives in those areas. Isn't this fun? More next week, lol. Blessings,

John Fenn

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Beliefs you thought were scriptural but aren't; about the tithe, 2 of 3 – 26 februari 2022

Hi all,

To hear some pastors you would think you are under a curse if you give 9.999% of your income to their church, but pass into blessing if you give 10.001% or more. What does scripture actually say about tithing?

First mention

Genesis 14:18-20 is the first mention of tithing, where Abram gave 10% of the spoils to Melchizedek, Priest from the nearby city of Salem. I personally believe Melchizedek was a pre-incarnate appearance by the Christ for several reasons. First is Hebrews 7:4-7 makes the point the lesser gives to the greater. His name means 'king of righteousness' and 'king of peace'. Hebrews 7 says he was 'made like the Son of God' and brought bread and wine to Abraham, which is a type of the body and blood of Jesus to be shed centuries later. He has no genealogy. He was King of the city of Salem. In Hebrew the word 'Jeru' means 'city of' and Salem or shalom means 'peace'. Melchizedek we are told was King of the city of peace, Jerusalem. Just some thoughts...

Back to the tithe

Abraham's tithe was given voluntarily, not of coercion, nor to get something from God. If we believe Melchizedek was the Lord giving Abram a picture of Him coming as the Lord Jesus centuries later, the passage shows that the tithe is given in the heart first to God, in voluntary giving.

God's problem

The word 'righteous' in Hebrew is tzedakah. It is also the word 'charity' or giving with good reason. Righteousness is both vertical in our walk with God where He gave to us, and then horizontal to our fellow man as we give of this Life to others. The idea is that because we have been made righteous vertically, that Life flows horizontally to our fellow man. Righteousness is more than just being right before God, it also means being right with your fellow man.

That is why the whole of the OT law hangs on 2 commands, as stated by Jesus in Mark 12:29-31: "You will love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and strength, and the second is similar; You will love your neighbor as yourself." Tzedakah. Love fulfilled the Law. Love God, love your neighbor. Romans 13:8

But Israel wasn't born again. They were unbelievers whose forefathers had entered into covenant with God. How does the Lord incorporate care for one's fellow man to a people who only care about themselves? Enter the tithes and offerings of the Old Testament, which were and remain to this day, vertical AND horizontal. Tzedakah is at the very heart of the tithe - giving vertically and horizontally.

The 4 tithes of the Old Testament; 'tithe' means 'the tenth'

The first is 'terumah', or the 'first fruits offering' - it went to the Levite priests who served in the temple. The second is 'ma'aser rishon', or first tithe - it went to the people of the tribe of Levi not serving in the temple.

The third is 'ma'aser min hama'aser, the tithe of the tithe - the Levites gave the tithe of what they received to the priests who served in the temple.

The fourth is 'ma'aser sheen', or the second tithe - this was given back to the people who gave it.

These 4 were offered at different times over a 6 year period, with no tithe given that 7th year, a Sabbath year.

On years 1, 2, 4 and 5 the 'second tithe' was taken to Jerusalem and offered to the Lord, and after the priests took their portion, what was left over was given back to the people who offered it. When they received the remainder of their tithe back, they used it to provide a big party for all, to celebrate God's goodness.

On years 3 and 6 the 'second tithe' stayed within the community, not even going to the temple, and was used to care for the poor, fatherless, and widows and all in need around that person's community and neighborhood. It was the responsibility of each tither to spend the tithe on those around them in need, as they saw fit.

The priests had no inheritance of land or other business, so they were considered the same as the poor, entitled to be supported by the community. The purpose of the tithe therefore was in large part the support of the people. Tzedakah or righteousness is demonstrated in giving both to leaders and to each other, as seen in the OT tithe. But remember, its foundation is grace, for one first gives to God in their heart, and then to the people.

Paul mentioned this same thing in NT giving in II Corinthians 8:4-5: "They urged us to take the donation, so they could participate in serving the saints in what we are doing, and this they did after first having given themselves to God, and then to us."

Freedom to give 10% and more; You and Christ in you must decide

When the temple became obsolete on the day of Pentecost because God moved from the building into people, the people just transferred their tithing and giving to leaders and those around them. They realized with Christ in them, they had become living temples and a kingdom of priests to God, so they could both give and receive from other people who have Christ in them for they were all living temples of God.

So they and we are justified in giving to leaders, to each other, as needs arise. Ancient Israelites gave an estimated 22% in tithes and offerings. When Christians set aside their tithe or offering, and remain open to give to those in need as they are able, they will find they give over and above 10% as well.

Paul told the Corinthians in I Corinthians 16:2 to 'set aside something weekly according to how God blessed you'. It's up to us and Christ in us to decide who we give to. If you are moved by a mix of discipline to set aside a percentage and also have some uncommitted money to give, you'll find you will end up giving more than 10% and will be blessed and surprised by the freedom.

For the historical record: The first mention of Christians tithing came after they moved out of homes and into buildings for their meetings, which required giving to maintain the buildings. First formal mention of a rule was Charlemagne in the 788 AD, king of France, who imposed the tithe on those he had conquered as a requirement to support the 'church'. From there it became imposed on all.

Yet it still exists today in the form of the grace and free-willed giving as did Abraham. Today, you and I are living temples of God and a whole kingdom of priests. We have the freedom to set aside 10% and more coupled with the freedom to give to one another that there be no needs in our midst.

Set aside money to give as God has blessed you. You are a temple of God, you are a priest of God. We have a responsibility to be righteous vertically and horizontally, but the Father relates to us through the blood of Jesus, not your bank account.

New subject next week, until then, blessings,
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Beliefs you thought were scriptural but aren't. Prayer of agreement, 3 of 3 – 5 maart 2022

Hi all,

Is there anyplace in the 30 years the book of Acts covers where we see teaching that if 2 pray together they will have Jesus in their midst and receive whatever it is they are praying about? Is there any teaching from Romans through The Revelation teaching us to do that, and that Jesus will be in our midst if we do so? No.

Jesus made the statement in Matthew 18:19-20 that if 2 agree as touching anything, it would be done, and He is there in their midst. But that's not the doctrinal statement many take it to be. Those 2 verses have been lifted out of context to become one of the planks of church teaching, yet Jesus never intended to make a blanket statement covering everything that if 2 agree in prayer whatever they ask will be done. Nor did He mean that whenever 2 or 3 gather in prayer He will literally be in their midst.

Context is everything

The disclaimer here is that there is power when 2 pray together. I know when Barb and I pray together about something it carries more weight, more spiritual power than when we pray individually. We can feel it, we see the results. And we've agreed in prayer with others and see answered prayer. But maybe it's the prayer that matters and not the number of people praying.

In Matthew 18:11-14 Jesus tells the parable of the Lost Sheep. Briefly: The Shepherd has 100 sheep and 1 goes off into the wilderness. The shepherd will leave the 99 to go into the wilderness to find that 1 lost sheep. When it's found he rejoices. Then v15 continues:

"Moreover, if your brother trespasses against you, go to him, you and him alone, to seek reconciliation."

The 'Moreover' comes right after the Parable of the Lost Sheep, meaning Jesus continues to make His point: "Moreover, if your brother trespasses against you..." That brother who trespassed is that lost sheep of the parable. Jesus is still teaching about the lost sheep but stating it in a different way.

"If he listens to you then you've gained your brother. If not, go and get 1 or 2 others, so that by 2 or 3 your claim can be established."

He doesn't say to avoid or shun them

"If he won't listen to 2 or 3 of you, tell the situation to the leaders of the church." (Remember they met in homes, so this would have been something told to the core leadership couples and individuals.)

"If he won't listen to them, treat him like a heathen and tax collector."

How do you treat the (heathen) unsaved? You love them: "...the goodness of God leads to repentance" Romans 2:4 says. In Matthew 5:43-48 Jesus said to love and do good and to pray for those who are against us that we can be people of love as our Father is, without partiality. So He had already taught how to treat the unsaved.

Jesus isn't saying to shun or ostracize the person who refuses to reconcile, He is saying love them as you would love someone unsaved, trying to show them the love and forgiveness of God. How many pastors have misunderstood the context and told their congregation to avoid the _____ family because they have left the church, or avoid _____ because they are in sin. I've actually had people come to me who experienced this, explaining they work with the person their pastor named and how should they handle it? (I told them ignore the pastor for his is ignorant, and carry on your work relationship as before, and just love the person.)

Jesus continues:

"I tell you that whatever you bind or loose on earth shall have already been bound or loosed in heaven. Therefore if you 2 or 3 (that originally confronted the brother that sinned) will agree on touching anything they will ask (to restore that lost sheep in accordance with what has already been bound or loosed in heaven) it will be done of my Father in heaven."

"For when you two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in your midst (to go into the wilderness to find that lost sheep that has strayed)."

The context is all about the lost sheep and when all our efforts have been exhausted to bring reconciliation, the original 2 or 3 gather to ask the Great Shepherd to go into the wilderness to find and restore their friend.

What it is, what it is not

This is why you don't see any examples in Acts or teachings in the letters that when 2 people agree in prayer anything they ask will be done. The context was those 2 or 3 gathered to pray for their offended friend who refuses to be reconciled. If they ask the Father to restore him, He will, and when they agree the Great Shepherd is in their midst to take it from there. They've done all they can, now only the Lord can reach that stray sheep.

Is it good and right that 2 or 3 agree in prayer? Absolutely. Is it right to teach Jesus will literally be in their midst and anything they ask will be done? No. The asking is in context about the restoration of a brother, the lost sheep. Stick to that context when you have such a situation, and indeed the Good Shepherd will set about His task of going into the wilderness that sheep has found themselves in, and meet them there.

I hope this helps....more next week, until then blessings,

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Correctly understanding Malachi 3 windows of heaven – 19 maart 2022

Hi all,

The lady came into my office with emotions running high; part scared, part frustration and anger. "I've done what the pastor says; I tithe and I work hard and I don't see the windows of heaven opened to me. What am I doing wrong?"

Once calmed down a bit I learned she was making minimum wage and barely getting by. She had upcoming bills and was afraid how she would pay them. She realized if she had taken her tithe and spent it on paying her bills, she would have enough to live on. Yes, she saw a grace others around her didn't have, but she struggled.

To properly understand the infamous Malachi 3 you first have to understand this

Righteousness is more than just 'right standing before God'. It is also horizontal: The reason we love our neighbor as ourself is that we have this river of life from the Father flowing into our spirit. Once in us that river of living water naturally flows outward to others. I covered this a couple weeks ago when outlining the 4 tithes of the OT.

When we give ourselves, our talents, our time, our resources to others, we are letting our walk with God flow outward to our neighbor. Jesus said in Luke 6:38 that if we give it comes back to us, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over. If I pay for food, that money is gone forever because it's an expense. But Jesus said when you give to another it enters into your future and will be given back to you good measure, pressed down, and running over. "He that gives to those in need lends to the Lord, and He will pay him back." Proverbs 19:17

That gift enters into our future and at some future date will flow back to us. That means giving is an investment, not an expense. If I spend money at the market that money is gone forever. If I give to God and God's people, that money will come back to me and more than what I gave.

Paul put it another way in II Corinthians 9:6-15, telling us to give not because we are being pressured, but because we want to. Only give he said, to the point you can do it cheerfully. In the previous chapter he said not to give out of your need, but as you have in hand, and out of your extra. "If it is figured according to what you have, not what you don't have, because I don't want you to be burdened while meeting someone's need." 8:12-13

In chapter 9 he says that God will provide seed to be sown and bread for our food - our job is not to eat our seed but at the same time, don't try to plant your food. God will give you something to give and give you food too - don't eat your seed but don't give your food. Paul said: "And God is able to make all grace abound to you that you, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good thing." v8

Now that we understand that, on to the dreaded "Let's all turn to Malachi 3 this morning..."

3:10: "Bring all the tithes into my storehouse (temple) that there may be food in my house. Prove me in this, see that I will open the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing which you won't have room enough to receive it."

A law of Bible interpretation is that we understand the Old Testament through the eyes of the New Testament. The reason is clear. The cross acts like a giant filter. Anything making it

from the OT through the filter of what Jesus did on the cross, is for us today and taught in the pages of the NT. If it didn't make it through the filter, then it isn't written about in the New Testament, so we take anything filtered as an example to learn from, but not for us today. Paul stated 2x in I Corinthians 10:6, 11: "These things (that happened to Israel) were written as examples for us..."

In Mark 4:13 Jesus said if you don't understand the Parable of the Sower you can't understand any of His parables - it is that important. In that parable the earth stands for the human heart, the seed is the Word of God (the person of Christ in your heart, not the printed Bible), and the devil tries to take or hinder the work of the Word (Jesus) in our hearts. That's the basics.

So in Malachi 3 we understand through the filter, that the ground is the human heart, the water is the Holy Spirit (John 7:37, rivers of living water will flow out of us by the Spirit). The seed or crop is the Lord and all we do in life.

When we lived in Colorado we saw irrigation at work. A borrow ditch worker would open the floodgate (that is the Hebrew word translated 'windows' in Malachi 3) and the water would flow to a field, and down the furrow in the field. The water would soak the ground which watered the seed, causing the plant to grow. Then the water was always more than could be contained, so the excess ran off one field and onto another, and repeated from farm to farm.

So we understand when we give we shouldn't expect an immediate increase in our wages. No, that's not what it says. It says when we give God pours out His Spirit to water our field (heart) and the water of the Spirit then causes our crops to grow - family, work, relationships - and those things in turn grow up and provide abundance for us, as even what we have of the Spirit is beyond containment and flows to other hearts and their crops, and so on and so on....(I cover this in more detail with Biblical examples in the Balanced Biblical Prosperity series on our site)

And that is how to understand Malachi 3:10 through the eyes of the NT. I had previously taught on the different tithes of the OT law and how 4 of the 6 types of tithe went back to the people who gave the tithe. And we see the NT equivalent in Acts and what Paul wrote. You and I are a royal priesthood - we are a kingdom of priests - so we give to each other. Just do as Paul said in I Corinthians 16:2 - let everyone set aside something according to how God blessed them that week. When you give, it never leaves your life, but enters into your future and will return back to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over....

God pours out His Spirit to water our hearts, and from our heart our crops of life grow...and He give more than enough of His Spirit to water our heart/field, providing enough to flow into the hearts of our neighbor....

New subject next week, until then, blessings,
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Beliefs you thought were scriptural but aren't; Eye for an eye – 26 maart 2022

Hi all,
Modern Israel lives by 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' as it relates to protecting their nation.
In film, books, and popular culture 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' is understood to be 'you hit me, I hit you back'. Revenge. Retaliation. Vengeance. Everyone assumes that is

what God said...right? Partially right, but not quite. Jesus tried to set the record straight, but it remains a confusing subject for many Christians.

Context, context once again

In Matthew 5:38-48 Jesus deals with walking in love. He is comparing what the Pharisees taught versus what scripture actually says, what it actually meant.

In the middle of Matthew 5 Jesus talks of anger without a reason, equating lust with the action, and then switches in the last part of the chapter to talk of walking in love. He acknowledges that it has been said, 'An eye for an eye', and then talks of no longer retaliating an eye for an eye, but rather love one another.

The first mention of an eye for an eye as a matter of Israeli law is found in Exodus 21. It was in Exodus 20 that Moses received the 10 Commandments, and what followed was the moral and health parts of the 'law of Moses'. It is generally agreed there were 613 laws given to Moses by God, summed up by the 10, which itself was divided into 2 parts: The first 4 had to do with honoring God, the last 6 with honoring man. Those 10 and their 2 parts were summarized with: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, strength and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself.

The example the Lord gave Moses is also a key verse to understanding God considers a baby in the womb to be a human being, in 21:22-25:

"If two men are fighting and a nearby pregnant woman is injured so that she loses her baby, yet it wasn't an assault on her, the man will be fined accordingly, as the woman's husband and the judges determine. If however, he intended to do her harm, then he will forfeit his life for the baby's. Eye for eye, hand for hand, tooth for tooth..."

On the one hand we can see the husband and injured wife would be rightfully angry at the man who assaulted her, resulting in her miscarriage. An eye for an eye could in their hearts be seen as exacting revenge on the man who killed their baby and assaulted the woman. Justice served, and that's correct as far as it goes.

But look closer.

At its core, 'an eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth' is restitution, not revenge. That the man would forfeit his life for the one he took from the couple, is a repayment, blood for blood. The larger context of chapter 21, v18-19 tells us if a person causes injury to another, they must pay for the full recovery of the injured person, including the loss of his time. That is eye for an eye - if I injured your eye then I will pay for the doctor's bill and pay for your time off work. That is the context of an eye for an eye.

In v33-34 it says if one were to dig a pit and the neighbor's ox or donkey falls into it, and the one who dug the pit didn't warn his neighbor, he must restore the animals to health, or pay to have them replaced according to their injury. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hoof for a hoof. It is restitution, not retaliation, as the original intent.

Fast forward to Jesus' time

By Jesus' day courts for misdemeanors required a man face his accuser. If the defendant was found guilty by the judge, the plaintiff would often be given the opportunity to slap the defendant on the face. A slap was to be disgraced, and then the defendant would also be fined by the judge. It was common practice. By medieval times a person would slap another to dishonor them and goad them into a duel or joust, but you get the idea.

Matthew 5:38-39: "You have heard it said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'; but I say to you that you don't resist evil, but offer the other cheek as well."

This is about restitution. Understand that Matthew 5:1 tells us the Sermon on the Mount begins as private instruction between Jesus and His disciples, so He is telling them how to walk in love, and how to get through potential tough situations. In this case, turning the other cheek was understood that if they are insulted or even taken to court and found guilty, and the winner of the case wishes to slap you, offer the other cheek just to make sure they feel justice has been met - that is how to walk in love towards them.

But notice that turning the other cheek places limits on how much you are expected to attempt to reconcile and/or make efforts to be at peace with the person you offended. Just 1 slap. Not 2 or 3, but 1 only. Similarly, Jesus uses examples of someone wanting in need being given 1 coat out of your closet, not your whole wardrobe.

Another cultural example from this passage is the 'walk an extra mile' of 5:41. Back when Persia's empire expanded beyond a day's ride on a horse, a law was made that any messenger from the king could borrow anyone's animal so the messenger can continue his message to get news from the king to the far reaches of the empire. But the law stated such a messenger can only borrow the animal for 1 mile, and the owner of the animal had the right to accompany the messenger so that he could retrieve his animal. (The Greek word for mile in 5:41 is 'million'. A Roman mile was 1478.5 meters or 5820.9 feet, or 1,000 paces)

This passage is all about making things right - from the 1 extra slap on the face to 1 coat from the closet to walking 1 extra mile - Jesus is teaching about love and how to love those who aren't easy to love. After this He told them that sinners love those easy to love, and to do so is no credit to His disciples. Loving those you don't feel like loving is what Jesus wants us to do: "Be like your Father in heaven. Your Father in heaven causes the sun to shine on the just and unjust, and causes the rain to fall on the just and unjust....therefore be mature and complete in love, as is your Father." v43-48

On practical terms for today's use

How do we offer someone we offended the other cheek? How do we give them an extra coat or walk an extra mile for them, when those aren't our customs today?

Once you apologize to that person you offended, perhaps take them to get a coffee or tea, or perhaps to lunch and pay for it. Or perhaps send them a card in the mail - the turning of the cheek, giving the coat, and walking the mile was about doing something to communicate to that other person you want to be sure things are good between you, or at least you can say you did more than necessary in an attempt to build a bridge towards them. If they build a wall when you build a bridge, then that is on them. At least you tried. But you don't have to keep trying. 1 slap, 1 coat, 1 mile. Then they are on their own.

These things and much more are covered my series Sermon on the Mount 1 and 2, if interested. New subject next week, until then, blessings,
John Fenn

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Teachings you thought were scriptural. Not everyone who says Lord, Lord..

Hi all,

The way error breeds is when a person piles one error on another and then draws a conclusion, which is of course in error. But because they don't know what they believe is built upon layers of error, they think their conclusion is scriptural.

One such case is when a person is afraid they have lost their salvation. They read Matthew 12:31 that blaspheming the Holy Spirit can't be pardoned, and will say they spoke bad about a pastor and are

now afraid they have lost their salvation as that is in their thinking, to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Or perhaps they spoke against someone who they didn't agree with theologically, and become afraid they have offended the Holy Spirit.

Actually, to 'blaspheme' the Holy Spirit is to reject the Lord Jesus, which is what the Pharisees were doing in Matthew 12. The work of the Holy Spirit was in their midst, yet they rejected Him, thus rejecting Jesus. Because Jesus died for others and not for Himself, the one sin not covered by the cross was the rejecting of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the agent of salvation, the one who recreates our human spirit, so to reject Jesus is to reject or blaspheme the Holy Spirit. But some think if they found fault with a pastor or in ignorance thought the gifts of the Spirit died with the apostles, or something like that, they have committed that unpardonable sin. That isn't the case.

From there they jump to the passage for today, 'Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven...', doubly convinced they have lost their salvation. They sometimes include from Matthew 8:8-12 which we will also cover, when the Lord said '...the children of the kingdom will be cast into outer darkness...', and are convinced the Lord has cast them out, that they've lost their salvation.

What about Matthew 8 and the children of the kingdom being cast out?

The book of Matthew was written for Jewish believers, and Matthew was led to include specific phrases, stories, and parables that a Jewish reader would immediately understand. Among those phrases is 'kingdom of heaven'. Matthew uses the word 'kingdom' 55 times, more than any other gospel. By contrast, John only has 3 uses and Mark 19. Luke comes next closest with 44, but his gospel is longer and part 1 of a 2 part volume, Acts being part 2.

In Matthew 8:5-13 Jesus is in Capernaum and approached by a Roman Centurion who asks Him to heal his servant. 'Capernaum' means 'Nahum's village', and had a population estimated to be about 1500, situated on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus said, "I will come and heal him."

Hearing that, the Centurion stops Him and says he is not worthy for Jesus to come to his house, but speak the word only and he knew his servant would be healed. He explained that like Jesus, he too is a man under authority, and gives commands. He knew all Jesus had to do was command it, and the servant would be healed.

Jesus is amazed at the faith of this Roman officer. "I have not seen such great faith, no, not in Israel." The Jewish reader would have immediately understood the sentence structure - This Gentile Roman soldier has great faith, greater than anything Jesus had yet found among the Jews. To some listening or reading, Jesus' comments would have wounded their pride - the idea a Gentile could have greater faith than a Jew!

"And I say to you; Many will come from the east and west (Gentile nations) and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom (Jews) will be cast out into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

He isn't talking about you...

Jesus made the statement in the presence of the Roman and His Jewish disciples. The Jewish people who heard Jesus' statement must have been amazed. The idea that some of the people to whom the kingdom firstly belongs would be cast out, had to be a new thought for them. It was the first glimpse of hope for Gentile believers, and a promise of something to come.

I will add a cultural note. The use of the phrase 'cast into outer darkness' and 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' was in the day a reference to a person who tried to crash a party. Back in the day when houses were lit by olive oil lamps and streets were not, the phrase 'cast into outer darkness' was a phrase used for someone kicked out of the light of the party and into the street.

They were sent off the property, the first level of darkness, then to outer darkness beyond the light of the home where the celebration was being held. It was said that person would be angry, so angry they would be in tears, thus the phrase 'weeping and gnashing of teeth', cursing as they were rejected and ejected. We read it and we think 'hell', but they understood it to mean Jews were going to be kicked

out of the wedding feast where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are going to be. We miss that wedding feast understanding and just see the 'darkness'.

This phrase painted such a picture that Matthew was led to include it not only here in 8:12, but also in 22:13, 24:51, and 25:30. In 22:1-14 it is used in the parable of the wedding feast. A man tries to crash the feast without having a wedding garment on. The Revelation 19:8 & 14 tells us the wedding garments are given for the righteous saints at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and are 'fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints.' This is also referenced in The Revelation 3:4-5, 18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9; 7:14.

In the parable of the wedding feast the man was given the chance to speak, but he was speechless and was thrown out. Psalm 107:2 says, 'Let the redeemed of the Lord say so', and Romans 10:9-10 says we believe with the heart but confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus to our salvation. The man in the wedding feast was silent, and not clothed in white linen, so was arrested and thrown out off the property into 'outer darkness' (unlit area). He was not righteous and would not confess his salvation, so he was rejected from the wedding feast.

Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord'.

When covering Matthew 7:22-23 some think they might be one who says 'Lord, Lord' and yet be cast out. I ask them: Does Jesus always tell the truth? The response is of course an emphatic 'yes', of course. So then I ask why they believe the claims of those cast out rather than believe Jesus. This comes as a shock for most, that they have done so. That revelation of their unbelief and unsound Biblical understanding is a shock to many. Is Jesus telling the truth here?:

"I will have to admit to them, I never knew you. Depart from me you who work iniquity (Live a lifestyle of sin)."

Is He telling the truth? If Jesus says 'I never knew you', is that the truth? He never knew them. They live lifestyles of sin and deceit. That means their claims of casting out demons and doing miracles in His name is all lies. They were playing a game. For further proof (as if believing Jesus' words isn't enough) go back to the context of the passage.

It starts in v15: "Beware of false prophets (false believers)." So that sets the context. The subject is false believers. Those playing the game, the religious who don't really know Jesus. Jesus goes on to say look at the real fruit of their lives. A good tree brings good fruit, and a bad tree bad fruit. Look at their personal life, look at how they treat people. Then He goes right into "Not everyone who comes to me saying 'Lord, Lord', will enter heaven..."

He isn't talking about you or me. He is talking about false believers. False ministers and prophets.

The summary is that the 'children of the kingdom' in Matthew 8 is a reference to unbelieving Jews, who have first right to salvation, and in Matthew 7, false believers, not you or me...more next week, until then, blessings,

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