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Teachings in Perea (Part 1)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this teaching, Steve Gregg discusses the concept of being a disciple of Jesus and the importance of striving to follow him in every aspect of our lives. He touches upon the idea that it is not enough to simply claim belief in Jesus and attend church, but rather we must actively make him the priority in all of our pursuits and use our time, skills, and resources for his purposes. Gregg emphasizes the importance of taking our judgment seriously and not waiting until the final judgment to examine our actions and motives.

Transcript

I had hoped that we might have covered more in our session yesterday in the Gospels than we did, but to tell you the truth, we covered as much as the schedule called for. I was just hoping to get a little ahead of the schedule, so we didn't do badly. But we did not complete our studies of Luke 13, which I had hoped we would.

And just so you'll get an idea of how much lies ahead of us here, we need to take the remainder of Luke 13, which is verses 22 through 35, and all of chapter 14, which is 35 verses. So there's a good amount to cover. Now, as was the case with some of this stuff in chapters 12 and 13 of Luke we've already seen, there's a fair amount of overlap between the material here and the material we've covered in other places.

Usually in Matthew, a lot of the things that Matthew has gathered into some of the combined discourses in his book, for instance, in the Olivet Discourse and the Sermon on the Mount and the Missionary Discourse and even the Parables Discourse. Four of the five discourses that Matthew has arranged his material around have borrowed from things in Luke chapters 12, 13, and 14, and so we have already covered all those discourses in Matthew before, and that means that we're going to come upon familiar material. For example, in Luke 13, verses 18 through 21, we have the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven.

I will not even take the time at this point to read that, simply because we've covered it when we were talking about the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, and it would be better for us not to belabor it, although it's good material. When we come to verse 22, we have

material that's very much like material found elsewhere in the Gospels, but it's not identical. It's a little bit like the close of Matthew chapter 7, the close of the Sermon on the Mount.

Not the exact close, but material near the end, where Jesus talks about striving to enter through the narrow gate. And you remember in Matthew chapter 7 how Jesus said, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of my Father. For many will say, Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name, we cast out demons in your name, we did many mighty works in your name, and also I never knew you.

Well, this passage sounds like that passage, though it's different in its details, and that means it's probable Jesus spoke on two different occasions in the same vein, but didn't say exactly the same things on both occasions. So there will be a familiar ring to the passage we have to look at here, and it'll resemble something we've studied in Matthew 7, but there's a few differences, of course, that I'd like to bring out. Starting at verse 22, Luke 13, 22.

Then you will begin to say, We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets. But he will say, I tell you, I do not know you, where you are from, depart from me, all you workers of iniquity. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.

They will come from the east and the west, and the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last. Now, there's actually several different passages in Matthew that this resembles.

There is the case where it sounds a little bit like, as I said, the close of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus said, Many will say, Lord, Lord, and he'll say, I never knew you, depart from me, you workers of iniquity. Obviously, we have those exact lines here, although in somewhat of a different kind of a story line. There is also here the business of, in verse 28 and 29, many of the Jews being cast out of the kingdom of God, while Gentiles coming from the north, south, east, and west are drawn into the kingdom of God and sit there with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This statement is found in Matthew, and we've covered it previously, and it is given in Matthew in the context of the centurion in Matthew chapter 8, who showed exceptional faith. The man who said, Lord, my servant's sick at home, I'm not worthy to have you in my home, so why don't you just speak the word from here and it'll work. And Jesus marveled at this man who said, surely I've never seen this kind of faith in all of Israel.

The man being a Gentile, this gave Matthew the opportunity, or Jesus, or the other, to

record this statement of Jesus about many Jews will not be in the kingdom, but many Gentiles will. And the reference to them coming from the east and the west and the north and the south in verse 29 means just from all over the world, Gentiles coming into the kingdom or into what we call the church. So there's that parallel with Matthew 8. Then there's another thing that it's reminiscent of, and that's a little bit like the parable in Matthew 25, which is part of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew, about the ten virgins.

Now, there's not too many parallels, but it's very similar in this respect that the door becomes shut and people are knocking outside and let us in, and he basically says, no, you're going out of here and there'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth. You're not going to be admitted. The door is shut.

And that, of course, sounds like the parable of the ten virgins. Now, I'm not suggesting that Matthew has taken this particular passage, reworked it, and put it in three different contexts. More likely, Jesus said similar things on many occasions.

Teachers who hope to be remembered for what they say usually do indulge in a fair amount of repetition, and Jesus probably said similar things or even identical things on more than one occasion. So we'll treat this as if it's a separate passage, although there's much in it that we already know what it means. We've discussed the essential meaning of a lot of this in other contexts.

One thing I would like to point out is that this discourse or this section of discussion of Jesus was called forth by somebody asking him in verse 23, Lord, are there few saved? Now, when you read what Jesus said in many places, including the material we're going to study in this session in chapter 14, I'll just draw attention to it now so you'll know what I'm talking about. In chapter 14, verse 26 and following, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and his mother and his wife and his children, his brothers and sisters, yes, in his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Verse 27, and whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

And then down in verse 33, so likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has, he cannot be my disciple. Now, a disciple is a Christian. The word disciple and Christian are used interchangeably in the Bible.

And therefore, it sounds like Jesus is saying a person can't be a Christian unless he is somewhat extraordinary in his commitment. Extraordinary, that is, in terms of what we usually think of the average Christian because there are many people that we generously regard as fellow Christians with ourselves. In fact, maybe we're too generous with ourselves in the way we define our own Christianity.

But the fact is, out of generosity, we want to consider a large number of people to be true Christians. But when you read what Jesus said is involved in being a real disciple and the degree of commitment it takes, we have to wonder, you know, Lord, are there

very many of these people really saved? Am I even saved? You know, I mean, when you think about it, you could get the impression in this country that it's quite easy to be saved. Because this country, for example, is full of mega churches.

Churches that have more than a thousand members are, I mean, there's hundreds, if not thousands of churches that have over a thousand members in this country. And some very huge churches exist in this country that have over 10,000 members. One could get the impression, boy, an awful lot of saved Americans.

However, one does not sense from the degree of godliness in our culture that there's very many Christians who are having an impact for righteousness here. And even if, and I have been in a mega church before, I don't prefer them, but it just so happens that a church I was in became one. No thanks to me, I guarantee you.

But not all the people in there would measure up to what Jesus said are the requirements for being a disciple. And I suspect this is true in all the mega churches. In fact, it's even probably true in most of the little churches.

There's an awful lot of people who are churched, but when they read those verses in Luke 14 I just read, they feel vaguely uncomfortable, if not acutely. Because it calls into question whether these people are really Christians or whether they're just what our culture calls Christian. Whether their Christianity is that which is defined by Jesus in the Bible or that which is defined only by the traditions of men and of denominations.

And that question is unsettling to anybody who cares about his soul, I should think. And when you begin to read those statements, the question in Luke 13.23 becomes a very relevant one. Lord, are there only a few people saved? Now, of course, the children of Israel in those days numbered in the millions.

It is estimated the population of Jews in the planet were about three million in the time of Jesus, of which about 700,000 lived in Palestine. And many of the Jews thought they were going to be saved just because they were Jews, of course. They thought Israel, the nation, was God's chosen people.

And in a sense they were, but that didn't mean chosen to necessarily be saved on the basis of being Jewish. And perhaps this person asking the question, we're not told that it was one of his disciples, but it was apparently one of the crowd raised this question, are there few saved? Apparently this person had heard enough of Jesus' teaching to get the impression that maybe not all Jews were saved. And what percentage can we expect? How many of us are likely to qualify? And what's the total number going to be? Now, if you wonder whether there's going to be few saved or many saved, we could turn, in a sense, for some answers, of course we're not told the relative numbers, but to Revelation 7. And in Revelation 7, verse 9, John said, and he was caught into heaven and he saw certain things there.

In Revelation 7, 9, John said, After these things I looked and behold a great multitude which no one could number of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice saying, Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and unto the Lamb. Now, here's a great multitude innumerable from every nation, kindred, and tongue who are apparently saved, even apparently in heaven at this point. Now, that being so, one could say, oh, well, the answer is that many are going to be saved.

And that is the correct answer if you take into consideration the entire period of time that the group is being gathered from. That is to say, of course, from Abel to the present time has been at least 6,000 years, if not longer, and over that period of time there have been some saved. But at any given period of time, that might have been a very, very small percentage of the people who thought they were saved or who had some vague interest in being saved or pretended to be saved or who thought they had reason to believe they were saved.

We think, of course, of Elijah's day. In Elijah's day, he thought he was the only one saved. He was certainly wrong in that.

There were 7,000 who had not vowed they needed Baal, but even that's a pretty small percentage of the many hundreds of thousands, if not millions of Jews that were around. God knew of only 7,000 that had not sold out to Baal worship. And it's possible that at other times in Israel's history the number was comparably smaller, smaller still.

In Jesus' own day, the inhabitants of Judea that followed Christ and didn't reject him was relatively small, at least until the day of Pentecost, and it grew to about 3,000, then 5,000, then we lose track of the numbers. But the fact is that while there may be an innumerable multitude ultimately who are saved in the end, we have to realize that's a cumulative number. That number has been accumulated over the many millennia during which God has had this remnant and that remnant in any generation saved.

Sure, it adds up. But that reference to a great multitude is not any occasion for us to assume that it's real easy for people to be saved or that the vast majority of people who claim to be saved are. I'm afraid that isn't likely to be the case.

Now, when Jesus was asked this, are a few saved, notice he didn't answer that quite directly. What he did say is there's going to be many who are not. There's going to be many who would like to be, but will find themselves excluded.

He didn't say whether there would be many saved or few saved, he just said there's going to be many who hope to be saved who won't be. And he says your concern should not be in speculating what number of people are going to be saved or what percentage of the apparent saved people are really saved. Your concern should be striving to be one

of the ones who is because there will be many who are not.

That's his answer. He doesn't say no, only a few are going to be saved or there's going to be many saved. He doesn't answer that.

He doesn't satisfy the curiosity on that point. All he says is what you need to know is it's going to take some striving to be one of them who is. And in fact there will be many who have not striven adequately and they find themselves excluded.

So we don't know if there's few or many saved in any given generation, but there are certainly many who won't be. And if you want to be among the ones that are, it's going to take more than ordinary dedication. And when I say more than ordinary, I don't mean more than ordinary Christian dedication because there's just some normative Christian dedication that is Christian.

Anything less than that isn't really Christian at all. Let's just say more than the average religious person's level of dedication to the task of being saved. Look what he says.

He says strive to enter through the narrow gate for many I say to you will seek to enter and will not be able. Wait a minute, they're going to try to get in, but they won't be able. Why? They'll have waited too late.

When once the master of the house has risen up and shut the door and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. He'll say, I don't know you. Where are you from? And their answer will be we ate and drank in your presence and you taught in our streets.

Now, this answer differs from that which we read in Matthew 7. In Matthew 7, they say, Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name. We cast out demons in your name. We did mighty works in your name.

That's not the kind of claims we read here. Those persons in Matthew 7 appear to have been Christians of a charismatic sort. You know, they prophesied, they cast out demons, they do mighty works in Jesus' name.

Those were Christians. But who are these people? This is apparently a different group of people who are not admitted. A different group of people who thought they had grounds to be included, but found themselves sadly not to be included.

These were the people, what do they say? We ate and drank in your presence. You taught in our streets. Oh, in whose streets did Jesus teach? In Jerusalem, in Galilee, in Israel really.

And who ate and drank in his presence? A lot of people, but the Jews principally. He's talking about here, he's not saying the Jews are more likely to be lost than other people.

He's just saying the Jews are more likely to think that they deserve to be in when they have no such claim than other people.

Now, as I said, the almost parallel passage in Matthew 7 does not focus on the Jews, but presumably on people who regard themselves as Christians. But here it would seem to focus on Jesus' own contemporaries, his own countrymen, who thought that since he had been among them, since they had heard him teach, and even had them in their homes for meals and stuff, that this had shown sufficient interest on their part in the things of the kingdom to qualify them as entrants. And he said, no, that takes more than that.

Just to have heard me speak, just to have had me over for dinner, that is not what it takes to get into the kingdom of God. Now, he does not say here what it does take, although that's quite clear in other places, including the closing verses of chapter 14 that we looked at a moment ago and we'll look at again before this session is over. But he does talk in other places about what it does take to qualify.

But here he's saying there will be many who, on the basis of a casual acquaintance with him, will think that they have their ticket. And, in fact, they'll be sadly disappointed, to say the least, because they don't have a ticket. They have not done whatever it is necessary to do to enter the kingdom of God.

Now, the only thing I'd focus on here in this passage is that while Jesus does not say in this passage exactly what it takes to get into the kingdom of God, he does in many other places, while he doesn't stress here what it is you do to get into the kingdom of God, what he does stress is that whatever that is, you've got to strive. It's not going to be something you just kind of fall into the kingdom of God by accident. You're not just going to ride in on someone else's coattails.

You're not just going to cruise in. You've got to make an effort. It's got to be your concentrated, determined desire.

And striving would suggest that it's going to have to be a high priority. And I dare say that from other things that Jesus said that it has to be the highest priority. And you're not going to get into the kingdom by having a half-hearted or even a 90% hearted desire to be in.

You've got to press in. You've got to lay aside every weight, as the writer of Hebrews put it in Hebrews 12, lay aside every weight in the sin that easily besets us and run with diligence and with patience and endurance the race that's set before us. Now, someone might say, but that makes it sound hard.

I thought we were, you know, salvation is a gift. It's free. You know, you're just supposed to believe in Jesus and that's all.

Well, that's true too. That's exactly right. But we have to define what it means to believe

in Jesus.

If Jesus says that many are going to go to hell who thought that they were converted, we should believe Him. Believing in Jesus is part of being saved. We should believe that.

If Jesus says if your right hand caused you to stumble, it's better to cut it off than to go to hell. It's better to lose your right eye. Then we should believe Him.

That's part of believing Jesus, to believe that that is true. And if someone says, oh, I believe in Jesus, therefore I'm saved, but they don't believe these things He said, in what sense do they believe in Him? If He says you need to forsake all that you have to be a disciple and you don't do it, in what sense can you be said to believe what He's saying? Believing in Jesus doesn't simply mean you believe in His finished work. And that's what we often hear.

You know, I mean, we are saved by our faith in the finished work of Jesus. That is true, but it's not the whole truth. The more general truth statement is that we are saved by believing in Jesus.

His finished work, by the way, which is a term not even found in the scripture, but is a term preachers use, and I have no objection to it, it's just not a biblical term. Believing in Jesus' finished work is not really, nowhere in the Bible does it say just believe in His finished work. The Bible throughout says believe in Jesus.

You have to have your faith in Jesus. And certainly what He has finished at the cross is of primary importance as far as what you need to believe about Him. You need to believe in the significance of His mission.

You need to believe in the significance of His life and His death and His resurrection. But that's not all. You have to believe in Him.

You have to put your faith in Him just like you put your faith in anyone else, only more so. That means if He says something is true, then you believe it. If He says you must do something, then you consider that you must.

If He says that He is the Lord, then that means you can, if you believe that, then that means you see yourself as His servant. And that being a servant of Jesus Christ means at least as much as being a servant of anyone else does, if not more. If Jesus said that every idle word a man speaks, you're going to have to give account of it in the day of judgment, then you believe that because Jesus said it.

Believing in Jesus is more than just believing that He died on the cross for your sins. That's, of course, perhaps the central thing, the most significant thing that He came to do. But I don't think anyone could really be said to believe in Jesus if they ignore His warnings, ignore His commands, profess to believe in His Lordship, but don't do the

things He says.

He Himself is the one who says that those things are necessary to really be saved. And I want to tell you something. If you are going to take the Lordship of Jesus seriously, and if you are going to believe what He said and do it, and let me put it this way, if you're not, then you're really taking your chances, because Jesus said not everyone who says Lord, Lord is going to enter the kingdom, but those who do the will of my Father.

If someone wants to take his chances that Paul had it right more than Jesus and say, well, when I go to heaven, I'm going to plead Romans, not Luke, you know, well, you're going to have to go. I have a feeling that when Jesus said in John 12, 48, when Jesus said in John 12, 48, that he that rejects my words has one who judges him, the words that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. That may come as a surprise to many people, because some people think they're going to be judged by the words of Paul.

Jesus said, no, you're going to be judged by the words I have spoken. Now, frankly, I don't think Paul and Jesus were at cross purposes. I think Paul was in agreement with Jesus.

But Paul didn't stress all the same points that Jesus did, and some people find the points Paul stressed to be the easier ones to embrace. But Paul, of course, was fully in line with what Jesus said and lived according to everything Jesus said and no doubt taught everyone those things too. The point I'm making is that many Christians are hoping against hope that, you know, Romans 3.23 and Romans 6.23 are all that's going to matter on the day of judgment.

And Jesus said, no, the words I spoke to you, that's what's going to matter. And if you've made no effort to make the Lordship of Christ the priority in your life, if your pursuits, if your administration of your opportunities and your monies and your time and your skills and so forth have not been given over to Christ completely. And, you know, if you've not really basically, here's what Jesus taught to do.

If you've not accepted the notion that all of your life here is for nothing except to do the will of God. You're not here to do the will of God on the side and then have your own way some of the time. See, Jesus' teachings give us the impression distinctly that this whole earth life is just probation for eternity.

And the person who really believes in Jesus stops looking at this life as an opportunity to play. I'm not talking about you guys go and play Frisbee. There's no sin in playing.

There's no sin in a certain amount of recreation. I'm not trying to put that down. I'm just saying that some people look at life in general as, you know, the world's a playground.

And as long as they pay their dues, give their tithes to church, attend church on Sundays, you know, avoid really bad things and stuff, then the rest of it, it's okay just to

have them, you know, pursue their own things. Now, of course, if you do that, you'll be in good company, but not in Christian company. I mean, let's just put it this way.

You'll have a lot of decent folks who are pursuing the same things you are. But if heaven is one of the things they're pursuing, they'll be disappointed when they come to the gate. Because Jesus has taught that nothing matters.

Nothing matters but the kingdom of God. And as long as we haven't died to self, as long as we're still hoping that for the rest of our lives we're hoping to pursue a little happiness for ourselves, a little bit of comfort, a little luxury. If we pay our dues and give a certain portion, maybe even 20% to God, you know, if we're rich enough, or 30, then we'll be okay.

And we can still go out and do our own thing. We still aren't thinking in the biblical categories. This whole life, from now until the day you die, according to Christ, is nothing but a preparation for your death.

Nothing but a time for you to get in the kind of activities that you'll be, look back on your deathbed and say, I'm sure glad I spent every moment the way I did. For the eternity ahead of me here. To live with either the regrets or rejoicing over the things I did.

If every word I spoke is going to be brought up in the judgment, if every dollar I've ever spent, every moment I've ever spent, I'm going to give account of that in the judgment, then it's going to be important to me that I don't lie there on my deathbed looking back and say, boy, did I ever squander a lot of stuff. I'm not saying that you can't get to heaven without, you know, unless you've done everything perfectly. We are saved by grace.

And I've tried to make this clear all the way through the school. My view is I'm not teaching salvation by intense obedience or salvation by sacrifice or anything like that. That's not it.

We're saved by grace through faith, but we have to understand what saved means. Saved means we've been saved from our selfish life. We've been saved to follow Christ.

We've been redeemed from hell so that we can pursue the things of the kingdom of God with all our heart. And if we are saved, those are the things that we want to pursue. Therefore, all we're saying is, you know, people who just feel like, well, I say a sinner's prayer.

I have a vague belief that Jesus is God and that he died for my sins. Therefore, I'm in. And yet they don't strive with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, which is the command Jesus gave you at the level of all your heart, mind, soul and strength.

That's a lot. All of your heart, all of your soul, all of your mind, all of your strength.

Doesn't seem like that leaves very much left over to pursuing anything other than your pursuit of the love of God.

And Jesus, if you love me, you keep my commandments. So striving to enter in is very agreeable with the entire teaching of Jesus here, although he doesn't tell us what the what the paces are. He tells us that many will be disappointed who thought they should be in and their failure will be that they had not really striven to enter.

I thought I was supposed to rest. Yeah, that's true. We rest and strive at the same time.

We I love what Keith Green said in one of his most some might think one of his more juvenile songs, but I think theologically profound that one where he said, you just keep doing your best, pray that it's blessed and he'll take care of the rest. Now, there's a lot in that. Because doing your best just means that you are fully committed to Jesus as best you know how to be.

You're not perfect. You'll fall short from time to time. Everyone does.

Peter did. Paul did. Everyone did.

And you will from time to time. But you're still doing the best you can. You're still it's still your commitment as best you can make it.

You're committed to follow Jesus Christ, period. No turning back. OK, that's that's the best you can bring to it is your desire and your commitment to do that.

You'll succeed in varying measures and fail in very measures. But that's not what you're judged on. You're not judged on your failures.

Remember, Jesus said about the disciples, the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Fortunately, the spirit was willing because that's what Jesus cared about. The flesh was weak.

He acknowledged that and he didn't even take that very much into consideration in his assessment of them. It's the willingness. It's the heart.

You just keep doing your best to pursue after Jesus. And you pray that God's grace will do what make up for what you can't do. Pray that it's blessed.

And then leave the rest in his hands. I mean, it's really quite a leisurely state of mind in a sense. You're striving, but you're resting at the same time.

You're striving to do everything you know to do, but you're not striving with worry and with stress and with and with fear and paranoia and insecurity. You're resting in the fact that all that you can bring to it is all that God expects and that he'll take care of whatever's deficient in your doing it. And I've often wondered, I don't know, I never

asked Keith about this, but I wondered if when Keith Green said, he'll take care of the rest, if the word rest had a double meaning here.

We think of, I mean, in that statement, he'll take care of the rest. Sounds like he'll take care of the remainder. That is the absent portion, the part that you can't bring, God will bring.

That would be true, entirely true, and that would be good if it meant nothing else than that. But I wonder because the word rest can also mean repose or, you know, come unto me all you who labor and have laid, I'll give you rest. If you do what you can, the best you can, you pray for God's blessing on what you can't do and even on what you can.

You just pray that God blesses the whole enterprise of your life for his glory and he'll take care of the rest. That is, he'll provide the rest that you need, the rest to your souls. You will find rest to your souls, Jesus said, if you come after me and learn of me and take my yoke upon you.

So, frankly, I don't know how much Keith Green understood how profound that was, but in my opinion, that little chorus, that song, really is a summary of what the life of faith is. It's doing the best you can, but it's also resting in God, knowing that the best you can isn't good enough in itself, but God, that's what Jesus is for, he's there to make up the difference. But as an old Puritan writer, I used to read a lot, said frequently in his writings, his name was William Law, really a challenging writer, I always loved him.

Some people thought he was legalistic, I don't quite understand him that way, but he said that no doubt there will be many people in heaven who fell very short of perfection in their lives, but there won't be any there who didn't make perfection their goal. You've heard me say things like that, too. He said it's one thing to fall short of perfection after making every human attempt and relying on the grace of God as much as possible as you could to reach it.

It's one thing to have sought it with all your heart and fall short. It's another thing to fall short because you never attempted to and you never cared to, and it was never your goal. And the Bible makes it very clear that being just like Jesus is the only goal that's worthy of Christians to pursue.

You won't probably become just like Jesus before you die, but if you aren't trying, if that's not what you want, then it's hard to know in what sense you can be called a follower of Jesus. I mean, that's what a disciple is. Jesus said no disciple is above his master, but he that's completely trained, completely disciplined to be even as his master.

So what is a disciple but one who's got his objective of being just like his master, just like Jesus? And while many sincere disciples probably fall greatly short of being just like Jesus, that's not the issue. Your weakness, your failure, those in my opinion will not even

count in God's assessment. The only thing he's looking for is was this your wholehearted objective? Did you want this more than anything? Not how far short did you fall, but how much was your heart into it? Were you striving in that sense? And if you weren't, then Jesus doesn't give much encouragement here.

Are few saved? Well, let's not talk in those categories. Let's talk about how many won't be and what you can do to make sure you're one of the ones who are. Strive to enter in.

Good question. I not only have thought about that before, but I've actually taught on it before, though maybe not this year here. There is what appears to be a dilemma or a contradiction to settle here.

And one is that Jesus said every idle word a man speaks, he will have to give account of it on the day of judgment. And yet the Bible teaches that there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And we have nothing to fear from the judgment and so forth.

And all of our sins are forgotten, as it were, and all that kind of stuff. So how in the world can God follow both policies? How can he forget my sins and also bring me up to give account on the day of judgment? There's two aspects of that. One is that all sins, excuse me, not only all sins, but all behavior is going to be given account for one way or another.

When Jesus said every idle word a man speaks, he didn't mean every bad word. An idle word is just one that's made carelessly, whether it's a good word or a bad word, out of the abundance of the heart. It's the same context in Matthew 12 says a man speaks.

So whatever comes out casually out of his mouth is reflectible to his heart. Therefore, all his casual, careless words he speaks will be a good basis for judging him because it'll show what's in his heart. And we should be paying attention to those things.

There is going to be detail in the judgment. But the assumption there is not that all your idle words are going to be bad ones. If you've got a good heart, there won't be anything to fear from that.

If you are, in fact, if you have a regenerated heart, then what's going to be coming out of your mouth is going to be things, most of the time, things that you're not going to have to worry about giving account for. I mean, when they're played back, or whatever the procedure is at the judgment, you know, you'll have nothing to be ashamed of. Maybe an occasional thing here or there that you wish you hadn't said.

But those occasional slips or whatever they are, faux pas or sins, let's call them that, those you will repent of before you go to the judgment, I presume. I mean, if you find yourself speaking unkindly or doing something, anything you regard to be sin, whether it's something you say, something you think secretly, something you actually end up

doing, and you regard those to be sin, those are things for which you must give an account to God. But you can do it now and not wait until the judgment.

And that's what you do when you repent. When you confess your sins, he's faithful and just to forgive your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Once you've confessed a sin, you will never have to give account for that sin at the judgment again as far as I know, because you've already given account of it.

You've come to God about it. And I base that on a number of factors, one of which is in 1 Corinthians 11, I think around verse 30 or 31, where Paul said, if we would judge ourselves, we would not have to be judged. That is, our sins are going to have to be judged one way or another.

Either God's going to have to judge them, or if we're smart, we'll judge them ourselves. We'll come to grips with our own failures and our own sins and we'll repent of them. We'll bring them to judgment as it were already and say, God, I judged that this was a wrong act.

I'm judging this act of mine. I repent of it. And then there's no further judgment on that particular point.

It's been given account of. But those sins that have never been repented of, they have to be accounted of someday. And they'll be accounted on the day of judgment.

So in my opinion, it is true that everything you do, every thought, every word, every action, you've got to give account of it one way or another to God, because there just aren't any days or any moments of your life or any categories of your life that you don't owe God full obedience for. And if you don't do it, there's a day of reckoning about that. But that day of reckoning can happen the moment after you've sinned.

That is, you can reckon with it in repentance and in confession and so forth. And that's why Jesus made such an emphasis on doing that kind of thing. It's not as if you escape judgment.

You just escape God's judgment. You judge it yourself and you won't have to be judged by God. And that's what I think Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11.

I think it's on verse 30 or 31. 31, thanks. Is that clear? Okay, great.

So again, it's not like we have this big scary day of judgment to look forward to. The fact of the matter is I don't know of any unrepentant sin in my life. If there is any that God still is holding against me, I don't know of it.

And I'm sure that he's faithful to convict me of it. He's not going to try to keep it a secret from me so that he can nab me on it on the day of judgment. He actually would prefer

that I settled it here.

He's not a capricious God who says, Steve's got that old sin back there that he doesn't even know about. I'm just waiting to jump on him about that when he dies. If he's got any case against me, I'm sure that he wants to talk to me about it now so I can settle it now.

And I have every confidence that God's attitude toward us is friendly. God's attitude toward us is... If he can find any excuse for showing mercy, that's what he wants to do. Judging people harshly is what he is only forced to do.

It's not his preference. And if there's anyone whose heart is cooperative, if he finds anyone whose heart is inclined to him and wants to be obedient, I'm sure God will cooperate in every way possible to make sure that they stand before him on the day of judgment without any unrepentant sin to account for. Now you might say, but before I was saved, I must have done thousands of sins that I don't even remember any of them.

But you put those all under the rug when you were converted. You might have even done some that you've forgotten since then. But no doubt, I mean, if you're sensitive, from time to time you may remember something that you did wrong, and no doubt when you do, you repent of it now.

I mean, God will take care of the rest. You do the best. You know how.

Basically, you just keep your heart inclined toward loving God, wanting to be obedient and humble before him, and he'll take care of the rest. And you won't have to worry about a thing. I don't worry about a thing about the judgment because I do try to keep short accounts, you know, on things like that with God.

And I think that's normal, not exceptional. OK. Now, verse 31.

On that very day, some Pharisees came saying to him, get out and depart from here for Herod wants to kill you. Now, Jesus, I believe, was in Galilee at this time. Luke is not explicit as to Jesus whereabouts, but it is generally assumed that Jesus was in Galilee, which is the region east of the Jordan, not technically in Palestine.

But this region, like Galilee, was under Herod's jurisdiction. Now, the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin did not have any jurisdiction in Galilee and Galilee. And we know there were plots against Jesus' life already.

And it would appear that these people were saying, Jesus, you know, you're here in Herod's jurisdiction and he wants to kill you. Now, we don't know if this is true or not. We have no record of Herod ever wanting to kill Jesus, but they may have known something that, you know, that was true, or they may have been making this up.

They may have known that their motivation in saying this was to get him scared so that he might flee into Judea where the Sanhedrin, who wanted to kill him, could get their hooks on him. They couldn't come after him in Korea or Galilee. They just didn't have any jurisdiction there.

So it sounds like they were trying to intimidate him into fleeing from Herod's jurisdiction into theirs so that they could kill him. And Jesus answered with poise, as usual, and with contempt for the apparent threat, and he said to them, in verse 32, he said to them, go and tell that fox, behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected, or the word perfected can mean finished. The margin of this Bible says resurrected, but the Greek word doesn't mean resurrected.

That's the interpretation of the translators here. The word just means completed, which means, it could mean my work in this area will be done in a few days. I think the reason that the translators in the margin of this Bible have put resurrected for perfected is because of the reference to the third day.

The third day I'll be perfected. Sounds like a cryptic allusion to his resurrection on the third day, and it could be, but there's another way of understanding it that's much less esoteric. We'll talk about it in a moment.

Nevertheless, I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside Jerusalem. That was a sarcastic remark. Basically, what they were saying to him is, you're not safe here in Herod's jurisdiction.

You should flee to Jerusalem, where you'll be safe among your own countrymen. And he says, don't worry, guys. I know you guys are trying to fool me into going in there.

You don't have to fool me. I'm going to go there. God forbid that a prophet should die anywhere else than Jerusalem.

In other words, I'm going to die, but I'm not going to die at Herod's hands. You don't have to resort to these ruses and deceptions and intimidations to try to get me to come to Jerusalem. It's only proper that I should die in Jerusalem.

You've killed all your prophets there. Now, his statement is an overstatement. There are prophets who died outside of Jerusalem.

In the Bible, we read of the prophet who prophesied against the altar of Bethel, who was killed by a lion before he returned to Judea. I mean, obviously, Elisha, the prophet, died in Galilee, not in Jerusalem. But when Jesus said, it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside Jerusalem, he was making a sarcastic slam on the Jews themselves that, you know, far be it from Jerusalem to allow any of their prophets to die other than at their own hands, you know.

And so he was saying, you don't need to, you know, you don't need to threaten me like this. I'm going to Jerusalem anyway in a few days from now. And he says, you can go and tell that fox.

Now, it almost sounds like they were serving as messengers for Herod and he's sending them back to Herod. Now, whether this was so or not, I can't say. In fact, there's no reason to believe that they, that Herod had told these Pharisees to go tell Jesus he was out to get his, to kill him.

Nor to believe that if Herod had secretly made plans against Jesus to kill him, that the Pharisees would be interested in warning Jesus about this. I mean, for Herod to kill him would be just fine with them. They wanted him out of there and they were having a hard time, you know, finding an excuse to kill him down in Jerusalem.

And the reason was phony. And their information may have been phony also. But Jesus takes them at their word, whether he believed them or not.

He just, he just responds in kind. They said they act as if they've been in communication with Herod. So he says, well, you can go back and tell Herod this.

Now, he calls Herod that fox. The Jews use the word fox as a term of contempt when speaking, when applying it to a person. They sometimes use it of a person because of his shrewdness.

And we even think of that in our own culture. We think of a fox as a shrewd creature. I'm not sure why.

I mean, I'm sure there's other animals that are shrewd in their hunting or whatever as fox are. But for some reason, the fox in our mind has become associated with shrewdness. And the Jews in their rabbinic literature sometimes would use the term to refer to somebody who is shrewd, but not necessarily in a positive sense.

That is not a compliment to them. But more often, the rabbinic literature use the word fox to refer to somebody who is worthless. A fox was an unclean animal, usually a menace.

But it was, in every case, a term of contempt. That is to say, a term of not taking somebody very seriously and certainly not flattering them. And Jesus seemed to be saying, I'm not the least bit intimidated by this fellow, Herod.

He's just a little fox. People are not afraid of foxes. Wolves, a pack of wolves, that would be a little different.

But a fox is a small animal. It may be, you know, a thieving, shrewd kind of a creature, but it's insignificant relatively. And another surprising thing is that Jesus used the word

for a female fox, vixen.

The Greek word that's used here, of course we don't know what Aramaic word Jesus used, but presumably it's equal to the Greek. The Greek word that Luke used here is the female form of fox. So it's like a female fox rather than a male fox.

Surprising, since Herod was a male. However, some have felt maybe Jesus was referring to the fact that this Herod was hen-pecked. And that he was somewhat effeminate.

He was not only a worthless person, but he was also sort of an effeminate, weak kind of a ruler, overruled by his wife. Of course, on the other hand, he might have been speaking about Herodias, Herod's wife, that vixen. She was a bit.

And it's hard to know exactly how Jesus meant it, but it's clear that it's the only time Jesus ever used this kind of a term of contempt for anyone. Of course, he did call the Pharisees hypocrites, but that's a little different kind of thing. That's more of a descriptive term of what kind of sin they were guilty of.

This is more just a slur. This is more of just calling someone an abusive name or a contemptible name. And it's the only case we know of Jesus actually using a term of contempt just to show his disregard for somebody.

But it shows that Jesus was