

Message #9 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

"Grace - Why Do We Abuse It?"

With Randy Smith
(269) 763-2114

Preparation Ministries, Inc

PO BOX 475 OLIVET, MI 49076

preparationministries@gmail.com

(Please feel free to call, write, or send e-mails)

Web Site: <http://www.preparationministries.net>

Broadcast Schedule

WOLY AM 1500 - Battle Creek, MI - Sat. 10am - Sun. 9:30am

KFNX AM 1100 - Phoenix, AZ - Sun. 9:30am

KXKS AM 1190 - Albuquerque, NM - Sun. 8:30am

KWDF AM 840 - Alexandria, LA - Sun. 12:00pm

WLQV AM 1500 - Detroit, MI, Sun. 10:00am

Also, Internet Stream - www.am1500wlqv.com

WFPM

99.5 FM in Battle Creek - Fri. 3:30pm

99.9 FM in Albion - Fri. 3:30pm

103.7 FM in Jackson - Fri. 3:30pm

Also, Internet Stream - www.wfpmradio.org

Hello, thank you for joining us again for Scripture Beneath The Surface. For those of you who may be new to the program, let me give just a little explanation of what we're all about. The messages we bring to you are not necessarily the most evident things of scripture. That's why we call the program, "Scripture Beneath The Surface," because we're attempting to give more depth of understanding than what you get when you just skim the surface, when you just read it and take it at only face value. Scripture contains both the evident message on the surface, and also those things which underlie the surface. It is the digging beneath the surface which we need so much, for it is the hidden things of scripture which bring out the real flavor of Jesus' words. Jesus taught many things in parables, and even his closest disciples expressed difficulty in understanding them. But Jesus made one thing perfectly clear. The word he spoke was not meant to be understood by those who skimmed the surface, but by those who searched for the deep hidden things of God.

This doesn't have to be mystical, and shouldn't be, except in the sense that the wonderful power of God is a mystery to most, but powerful to those who seek God and his Son Jesus Christ with all their heart, as it says in Jeremiah 29:13. If we want to be powerful in God, then we must come to know him. We can only do that by coming to know the truth of his word. It is in knowing him that we are strong, for it's the truth which sets us free.

Also, just to let you know, in future programs we'll deal with a variety of topics, such as: baptism, being beheaded for the witness of Christ, the two witnesses of Zechariah 4 and Revelation 11, the two beasts of Revelation 13, on what day of the week was Jesus crucified, the Tower of Babel, Leviathan and Behemoth, antichrist, the rapture concept, the left behind concept,

the Great Tribulation, end time events, the Abomination of Desolation, the Second Coming of Christ, cults, etc.

In all of these topics, we intend to point out and explain the meaning of each one to the best of our understanding. Not just the logical physical surface view, but in keeping in line with the scope of our program, we're going to look beneath the surface in order to bring to view the hidden symbolic meanings as well. For it isn't the superficial or apparent sense of parables and allegories that we're looking for, but the underlying meaning. A simple example of this is Jesus' parable of the "leaven of the Pharisees." In Matthew 16, Mark 8, and Luke 12, Jesus spoke to his disciples about being wary of the leaven of the Pharisees, and his disciples assumed that he was chiding them for not bringing bread with them. In order to explain to them that he was talking about the hypocritical doctrine of the Pharisees and not their leaven, Jesus' response was to question whether or not the disciples had hard hearts, because they apparently didn't have 'eyes to see' nor 'ears to hear'. The term, 'ears to hear' is repeated several times in scripture to indicate that there is a subsurface meaning that can only be discerned by those who can look past the apparent outward statements.

Now, it seems to us that it's a simple thing to understand this parable, but we must remember that the disciples weren't stupid. In fact they were the hand-picked of Jesus. They just had not applied themselves to looking for the understanding other than that which was plainly stated. I would even suggest that if we didn't have Jesus' explanation in scripture, we would probably tend to miss the true application as well. But the key to understanding a parable lies in recognizing that it is indeed a parable, and not just some evident instruction. You can't see the hidden meaning of a parable if you don't look to see if it is a parable. It is easy, just like the disciples, to take everything at face value.

But we at Preparation Ministries want to share the view of scripture beneath the surface, hence the name of our program. Hopefully the messages we bring will give some insight into things that you may not have thought of before, and therefore be of some benefit in understanding other scriptures as well. Remember, when Jesus was asked why he taught in parables, his response was essentially that he didn't want anyone to understand who didn't want to get VERY VERY close to God. He doesn't want to bless the wicked with knowledge, he wants to bless those who sincerely seek him with all their soul, all their hearts, and all their strength.

Well, let's go on now to today's message, and have a look at James, Chapter 4, verse 7. If you have your Bible handy, you may want to turn there. This is a very simple statement, for verse 7 just says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

This is a common scripture in most Christian circles, but putting it into practice successfully is not quite so common. If you're anything like the rest of us, you struggle with resisting successfully. We all struggle with temptation, and we've all experienced failure from time to time in the process. Maybe the failure seems to come again and again until we become so frustrated and guilt ridden that we are beside ourselves. You're not alone. In fact, this is everyone's concern. At least, everyone who admits to it. Let me give you an example of someone being tempted by Satan, and see if this rings a bell. The example goes like this.

“Get out of here, you devil. I don’t want to do that.”

“What do you mean, you don’t want to do that. You certainly do. I wouldn’t be tempting you with it if you didn’t like it. What do you think I am, stupid? Come on. You know you want to do it. You always want to do it.”

“No, no, no! I mean it. I’m resisting you. You have to go.”

“Oh, come on now. Don’t be so grouchy about it. It’s not like you’re losing your salvation or something. Remember, everybody sins.”

“But I don’t want to sin. I feel so guilty. I’m such a crud.”

“Yeah, sure you’re a crud. That’s why you’ve got grace. Remember? You can go ahead and do it, as long as your conscience is bothering you, because you have forgiveness. So, go ahead. You like this.”

“No, no, no! And I really mean it this time. I really really mean it. I really really really mean it. Get out of here in Jesus name.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. Go ahead and say all that stuff that you want to. But the honest to goodness truth is that you like this. You can’t be perfect, remember? You’re not perfect, just forgiven. And besides, what’s such a big deal about just one more time? Look at all the other stuff you’ve overcome. So, come on, you can deal with this another time. Come on. Yeah . . . that’s it. Yeah.”

“Oh, what am I doing. Oh my, I can’t believe myself. Here I go doing this all over again. Oh, I hate myself. I really really hate myself.”

And so the example comes to an end, but the frustration remains. Have you ever experienced something similar to this? I think that probably we all have. What’s a person supposed to do? Victory seems to be completely out of reach sometimes. Why?

Well, maybe its because we WANT to do those things. We SAY we resist them, but inwardly we are craving them. This IS a problem, for our flesh is a very strong adversary to the Holy Spirit within us. What can we do?

Well, maybe one reason we have such difficulty resisting is that we think that resisting something is just saying we resist it when down deep inside we aren’t really resisting it. In fact, when we succumb to temptation, it’s always something we like. No, we never succumb to temptation that we hate. If you think a person can be tempted into doing something they detest, just try tempting a kid to eat his spinach. Can’t you just hear this? “Come on, kid. Nobody will know the difference. You can eat this spinach and nobody’ll know about it. Just pretend you hate it. Come on, kid. Yeah! That’s it. Scarf it down. You only live once, you know.”

Well, back to reality here. We can only be successfully tempted by things that appeal to us, that appear pleasant to our eyes and to our flesh. The key in resisting is *actually* resisting. That means we have to NOT desire it. In fact, we have to want it to be gone, not only because we think that’s what we should do, but because we have actually come to the place that the temptation has no significant hold on us, **BECAUSE** the things of God outshine worldly things.

When Jesus was tempted, Satan could find nothing with which he could successfully tempt him. Jesus wasn’t interested in anything Satan offered, and so the resistance was effective, and Satan had to vacate the premises. We also have to feel as Jesus felt about worldly lusts if we are to

successfully resist the devil. We have to renew our minds to the extent that the things of this world are no longer desirable. Remember the scripture in James 4:4, where it says that a man who is a friend of the world is an enemy of God. How can we ever expect to have God on our side in the war of resistance until we begin to renew our minds, and finally begin to love the things of God, and hate the things of the world. Early in my Christian walk the Lord showed me a great truth. And that is, “If you have a choice to make, you will always choose to do the thing you like to do the most. The only way to make the right choices, is to retrain yourself to like Godly things instead of worldly things.”

We read in Matthew 16:24 where Jesus told his disciples that the only way to follow him was to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him. This doesn't mean to deny yourself of what you really want, but to deny yourself of the things that appeal to the flesh, so that you might make room for that which comes through the Spirit of God, so that you can get that which you treasure so much more.

Then what does this mean for Christians? In Romans 12:2, it says, “And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” Notice it said, “Be Transformed **BY** the Renewing of your mind. Unless you change the desires within you, how can you resist the temptation? Temptation brings choices. Choices bring decisions. Decisions bring results, and you're left with what you really wanted. If we are to get what we really want, then we must first make certain that what we THINK we really want is truly what we really want. Then, when you resist the devil, he'll know there's no use hanging around, and he WILL flee from you.

If you don't renew your mind, and you continue to be friendly toward the world, you'll continue to be the enemy of God while at the same time confessing to be the child of God. I don't think the ending to that kind of story will be, “and they lived happily ever after.”

But maybe the greatest problem Christians have in resisting, lies in the fact that Christians are so caught up in worldly things that they have given up trying to separate themselves from the worldly lifestyles and entertainments.

It says in 2 Corinthians 6:17, “Therefore come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty .”

Because we Christians are no longer under the law, as were the Israelites, but are under Grace, it's a temptation for us to just accept a low level of commitment where we don't fail so much in the area of resisting temptation.

Certainly, the more a person strives to overcome sinful pleasures, the more times he will experience failure. However, he will also experience more times of success. But it is the failures which seem to discourage us into going forward. And also, there is a strong subliminal message in the church today which says, “You're O.K., just as you are. Grace will take care of the rest of it.”

That statement is true in the sense that when we come to Jesus, he accepts us just as we are. But it is a great error to think that he accepts us just as we are when we continue to just stay in that place of his Grace. This concept is called, "Easy Grace." It is a concept where Christians come to the Lord in their sins, and because he covers those sins with his blood, there comes a lack of concern to put away the desires of the flesh, and to settle in to a lifestyle that hovers between wickedness and righteousness, and let Grace take care of our sins. We're all, to some degree, in in this place between wickedness and righteousness, and that's acceptable. But we shouldn't 'settle in' there and never continue forward in our Christian growth. The problem isn't being sinners, the problem is the 'settling in', and no longer striving against sin, but expecting God's Grace to take the place of striving against sin.

I'd like you to listen to a comment I received, which I think says it very well. This is from Kim Schlehuber. Listen to what she says.

[Kim Schlehuber's Message]

First, what is Grace? Love, mercy, and good will. It is God's gift to mankind. The carnal definition is, privileged, or favored position, a pleasing or admirable quality, polite and decent behavior.

If Grace is a gift from God, and so precious, why do we abuse it so easily without a second thought or a shudder?

We are taught God's love is so huge and great. Then why do we take advantage of it? Why do we just shrug our shoulders and say, "isn't God good?"

We are supposed to love God in return for His love. For His precious gift; His Son. Why do we slap Him in the face? Why do we insult Him, abuse Him, when He loves us so much?

Think about this! Would you continually cheat on your husband? Lie, disrespect your parents? Why do we continually do this to the one who loves us so much that He won't ever give up on us?

Maybe we should stop and really think this through and search our hearts. Stop looking at Grace as a free, undying, long lasting, never ending gift; even though it is. Like anything else, Grace isn't free. It cost Jesus His suffering and death.

Stop looking at God's constant forgiveness as being easy for Him.

Grace abounds, but we don't have to abuse it. We need to look closer at our lives and think: Is what we are doing, or about to do, honoring God, or are we going to expect Grace to cover it one more time?

Thank you, Kim. I think what you said should be considered by all Christians. We live in a world today that is comparable to the 'Days of Noah'. The worldly system drags men, women and children into destruction by surrounding them with evil. It's a major temptation to settle in to a place where we can enjoy the lifestyle that the world offers, and yet maintain a hold on eternal life. At least, that's what the temptation promises.

However, we must remember the scripture in Matthew 7:21-27, which tells us how Jesus looks upon those who claim to be Christians, but who don't put much effort into building themselves up in their most holy faith. Let me read it to you.

“Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but only he who does the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? And in your name have cast out devils? And in your name have done many wonderful works? 23 And then I will profess to them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity. 24 Therefore whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will compare him to a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. 26 And every one that hears these sayings of mine, and does not do them, shall be compared to a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”

This is a powerful scripture, and sometimes the significance is overlooked. But notice a couple of things about it. The statement starts out with someone who is claiming to know the Lord, and therefore assuming that the Lord knows them. Jesus describes them as someone who claims to know him to the point they have even prophesied in his name. There are many who claim to speak a word in the name of the Lord, but the true test isn't what you claim to do, but what actually is taking place. The Lord also says that these people might be claiming to have the power of God to cast out devils. Again, this is no little thing, even for a mature Christian. If you think about it, the indication is that the persons he is referring to would include those who were considered by other Christians to be mature in their Christianity; probably even leaders, such as overseers, preachers, deacons, etc. But deception not only comes to baby Christians, but also to church people who have been around a long time, and are confident in their salvation. But yet, they won't be accepted by Christ unless they have truly come to know him.

I don't want to be someone who trusts in Easy Grace. I don't want the Lord to look upon me one day and say, “I never knew you.” And I don't want to be the kind of professing Christian that is self-satisfied with a lifestyle that comes short of pleasing God. My ultimate aim for eternity is heaven, but here on Earth my ultimate aim is to be pleasing to God. I can't please God if I am constantly taking advantage of him, without giving as much in return as I can. I can't do what Jesus did for me, but I can give him my whole heart, instead of half of it. I want to separate myself from the world as much as possible, so that I might concentrate fully on what he wants me to be, and what he wants me to do. What we need to remember is one basic truth. And that is, “It isn't all about us, it is all about him.” If we can remember this, then the focus of our hearts will demonstrate our love for him, and will show our appreciation for all he has given us.

This concept of making God's will the focal point of our lives is what is meant by, ‘going through the narrow gate’. Today's church seems to be moving more and more toward the broad gate by focusing on their own desires instead of striving to enter into heaven through that narrow gate. Isn't it time we took God's word at face value and set ourselves to the task of pleasing him instead of pleasing ourselves? I think it is. I hope you do too!

Well, thanks for listening to Scripture Beneath The Surface, and may God bless you as you seek Him with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.