

# On The Frontier

“For the glory of God and the furtherance of the Gospel”

## In Search Of Truth

by Linus A. Mathis III

There's a wonderful record in God's Word that I would like to call to your attention.

Matthew 19:16-22

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

This may be a question that you have asked at one time in your life. The answer for us is, of course, found in Romans 10:9. That is, we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God has raised him from the dead. With that single confession and simple belief we are granted salvation. God makes us whole by giving us holy spirit. We are born again of incorruptible seed and have passed from death unto life never more to come into condemnation. In short, we have received eternal life and that life is in His gift to us. Of course (at the time of this record) Jesus had not yet been crucified let alone resurrected. Consequently, holy spirit had not yet been poured out for the day of Pentecost was yet future. The outpouring of God's gift was to come ten days after the Lord's ascension into heaven. Prior to this, Jesus would spend forty days in his resurrected body right here upon Earth. For the young man mentioned in Matthew 19, all of these events were still future. Nevertheless, it's clear that eternal life was available to him if he would but keep the commandments of God.

Spiritual life is always in direct correspondence to our obedience to Him. Since flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, it's spiritual life that we must have to enter eternity.

Mankind has always been in need of God's provisions. When Adam chose to disobey God in the Garden of Eden he catapulted mankind into a dire situation. Man's need was multiplied exponentially placing him on the road to sin and death. Being separated from God meant that darkness and spiritual ignorance would reign. Notwithstanding, most men are aware to some degree of the need to be made "right." Both Adam and Eve were painfully aware of their "nakedness." It may be hard for the unsaved to "put his finger on it" but he definitely knows within himself that he lacks something and that something is righteousness. Acknowledging the need for righteousness has never been in question. The debate has always been HOW to obtain it.

Most men are aware that righteousness is a quality and state that comes from God and God alone. Even those steeped in unbelief often concede that "if" there's a God, He's righteous. Wise men desire to join themselves to Him while fools seek to work out or establish their own righteousness. Either way, the pursuit to be righteous is common to man. The question this young man asked the Lord was not an unusual one. It's not unlike what I might have asked before I was saved and came unto a knowledge of the Truth. I also

would have wanted to know what "good" thing I should do. Thankfully, God has provided for man's need to be righteous in the life's work of His dear Son. Aren't we blessed that eternal life isn't earned by our righteous works but rather freely given by His grace! So, it isn't the question that has arrested my attention - but the answer.

Verse 17:

And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

What a response!!! "Why callest thou me good?" So much for striving to be "good." Does this put things into perspective, or what? Today people don't really know who Jesus Christ is. Just listen to them pray. The Lord however, wasn't confused. He knows who he is. He knows he isn't the Father. Isn't it funny how some people confuse the two. Even as I write this there are numerous Christians who don't know the difference. Yet, look at all the Scripture we have available to us. All of it clear, all of it readily accessible. Why do you suppose so many folks can read this verse (and others like it) and not have it sink in? Do you think that perhaps they don't want it to sink in? You know, it's awfully hard to change religious behavior. A lot of folks won't accept Scriptural Truth for fear of "rocking the boat," so to speak. A "churchy" but Word-less lifestyle makes for a very comfortable non-confrontational existence. However, God's Word is

confrontational and confrontation begs change. And change often requires sacrifice. Most of us resist change and avoid sacrifice as we shall see was the problem with this young man. Now sacrifice is the bed-fellow of commitment and that's what our God is after. He doesn't want us for one hour on Sunday morning. He doesn't seek us for our tithes and offerings. That's not what He wants. He wants our hearts and lives. He wants you, ALL of you!

The Lord knew that this man's question was a "safe" one, which is perhaps why he answered him as he did. Many people say that they want the Truth but few mean it. In my years as a minister I've heard many excuses for not doing the Word. The world may offer millions of reasons for not doing the Word, but you will find none of them in the Word. It may have sounded religious to call the Lord good, but let's not forget that it was the Lord this man was talking to. It's no easy matter to pull the wool over the eyes of a man who walks with God. In rare instances a slim possibility for deceptive success might exist, but never with the Son of God. The potentiality for tricking him is nil. Hence, "Why callest thou me good?" Simply put, this dude was stroking him and it didn't work! I guess flattery doesn't always get you what you want. Yet, flattery and bribery are oftentimes used to ply God's men. Shamefully, it sometimes works. In which case, that individual is no longer God's man. He's not sold out for God but he has sold out. Thank God the Messiah could never be bought!!!

Along with bringing this man a moment of clarity the Lord also gave him the answer. That is, keep the commandments. To this the man

responded:

Matthew 19:18

He saith unto him, Which? . . .

My, my, selective wasn't he? This is not unlike people everywhere. We tend to be selective about God's Word. Most men treat God's Word as if it were a side of beef. In other words, they choose what they deem to be the "select" parts and discard or grind up the rest. Listen, all of God's Word is Grade A Prime! No one has the right to decide which is to be believed and which is not. Yet, it happens all the time. In fact this is how denominations are born. A verse or phrase from a verse becomes the foundation for a preferred belief system. Many of us are familiar with the story of the folks who argued over whether or not Adam had a navel. This controversy resulted in a split with one group emerging as the "Navelites." Sound silly? Maybe, but it's been happening for a very long time. You even have factious behavior over which Bible version to use. Imagine that! As if that isn't picayune enough, there are even those who elevate the red letters in their red letter editions above the letters printed in black. Bless your heart, either it's all God's Word or none of it is. Furthermore, our attitude towards His Word in no way authenticates or invalidates it. It's His Word, that alone makes it credible.

II Timothy 2:11-13

*It is a faithful saying [literally rendered; the Word is faithful]: For if we be dead with *him*, we shall also live with *him*:*

If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us:

If we believe not, *yet* he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

Look at how tenderly the Lord continues to deal with this man:

Matthew 19:18 (cont.)

. . . Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

Verse 19:

Honour thy father and *thy* mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

It's interesting to note that Jesus only mentioned six commandments of the ten. These are the ones that address that which is sin against man.

Verses 20,21:

The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect [lacking nothing, full grown, mature, i.e. finish the job] go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me.

As I said earlier, what the Lord really wants is us. Nothing less than our all will ever do. Look at the reaction of this fellow who *seemingly* has been searching for Truth.

Verse 22:

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

He had the Truth but it apparently wasn't to his liking. So very human of him, so much like many of us

today. The thought of discomfort and personal sacrifice didn't appeal to him. Instead of rejoicing over the words of the Master, he sorrowed. This is a sad story indeed. In this record we find some of the saddest words in all the Holy Writ, ". . . he went away." Only three little words but what a tale they tell! A man in the very presence of the Saviour who chose to retain material goods as the subject of worship rather than believe the greatness of God's Word. He went away! So near and yet so far! He went away! It was a simple confrontation regarding priorities and he went away. If you were confronted in such a manner what would you do? Would you go away? And if you did, where would you go? I for one have no other place to go. I want to keep my priorities straight. I want to keep God first in my life. Don't you?

Next, the Lord relates to his disciples how hard it is for a rich man to allow God to rule in his heart. The reason being, the trust of and love for money. The truth is, you can't take it with you. Riches are uncertain whereas God is eternal. Money grows wings and flies away toward heaven! How can we trust that? Yet, it's the material realm which often stands in the way of our trusting God. We can't pick and choose what to believe. If we really want to walk with God we must believe His Word, all of it!

#### II Timothy 3:16

All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

We all love doctrine. Oh man, I love it, don't you? But reproof and

correction, now that's a different story. How many love that? Still, ALL of it is given by inspiration of God and ALL of it is profitable for instruction in righteousness. So, be it doctrine, reproof or correction, lay it on me!!! I want it all. Hopefully, most of it will be doctrine. But if not, so be it. The Truth is the Truth and it's never altered by my acceptance or rejection of it. Therefore, I want the Truth.

Contrary to popular Christian belief, not all Truth is positive. We know that not all true facts are positive. But when it comes to the Word, somehow we think it must all be positive. Consider the following:

#### Isaiah 38:1

In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.

This doesn't sound too positive, does it? To make matters worse, Isaiah was a proven prophet of the Lord. When Isaiah said, "Thus saith the Lord," it came to pass. Obviously then, not all Truth is positive or positive sounding. What then was the profit in this?

#### Verses 2,3:

Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD,

And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done *that which is* good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

There it is! Hezekiah sought the Lord, he turned to God in prayer. The result:

#### Verses 4-8:

Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying,

Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.

And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.

And this *shall be* a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken;

Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.

Hezekiah was healed and Israel enjoyed his leadership for many more years. A great profit to them and certainly to Hezekiah. But what if he hadn't prayed? In that case he would have had the knowledge of his impending death and an opportunity to prepare Israel. It would have been disastrous for Israel to be without godly leadership. Either way God took care of His people with the majesty of His Word.

You may not at first like what you hear from God's Word. It may at times cross the grain of what you believe. In fact if it doesn't, I'd be very surprised. But if you make up

your mind to believe it, you will never regret it. Years ago, when I first heard the Word, I made a decision. I'd been resisting the Bible and those who witnessed it to me for quite a while. Then in a moment of lucidity I was forced to admit to myself my ignorance. I got honest and the realization came upon me that I didn't know a thing about the Bible. I wouldn't have argued on any other topic of which I was ignorant. Why was I resisting something about which I knew so little? I decided then that I wanted to know what the Bible had to say. I wanted to know Truth. I knew that my liking what I heard or not wouldn't change the Truth. So, I made up my mind right then and there that I wanted to know the Truth. I set out in search of it. I found that God's Word is the Truth, just as Jesus Christ had said. The Bible is the Truth, believe it! But if you don't, it's still the Truth!

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## The Counselor's Corner

With Rev. Linus A. Mathis III

### Oil For The Creaky Hinge

It's summer time, school's out! Do you remember what a thrill that was? I do! I always had such **BIG** plans. The bulk of which, had to do with having fun. However, the need for a summer job always took top priority. No job, no dough. No dough, no fun. It was as simple as that. So, for me, it was all important that I secure employment. Since my dad was in the motor trade this was never a problem. Though, from time to time, I saw it as one. Work got in my way, especially on Saturday.

This was dad's busiest day. Sadly, this was fun's busiest too. Be that as it may, I still had to work. If I didn't, I wouldn't have felt very good about myself. Having that job gave me a feeling of self-worth. Even though it cut into my "fun-time," the dollars earned and the lessons learned made it worthwhile. Most of my friends weren't as blessed as I was. Not everyone's dad was a tradesman. Only a few of us were so privileged as to get to work side by side with our dads. Nevertheless, all of my friends got jobs. A few worked on the local golf course as caddies. Some worked in the supermarket stocking shelves. Each of us had uniquely different situations. But we all had one thing in common, we worked.

As my generation grew so did the desire for leisure time. This may have begun in my dad's generation but it's reaching the crescendo in mine. Today entertainment seems to be "pulling rank" on work time. Aside from the obvious need to work, the value placed on amusement is inordinate. Somewhere along the line we lost the balance. This has manifested itself in our children. For many of them the equation is as follows: length of vacation = length of summer. Work's not factored into this formula. One child recently shared their thoughts with me on this subject. She said, "I worked hard in school all year, I'm owed this vacation." Does this sound like any child you might know? If so, where do you suppose they were given that idea? We could place all responsibility on the parents but society has done its share too. Get this necessary evil we call work out of the way so we can get down to the business of having fun. By the way, just how long have we been saying, "TGIF?" That attitude has done

much to devalue work and foster laziness. We need to reverse this thinking for the sake of our children. Then perhaps they wouldn't get bored so easily.

In nature we see the great value of a diligent work ethic. God has demonstrated this truth for us both in the creation and in His Word.

#### Proverbs 6:6-8

Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, *and* gathereth her food in the harvest.

How sad, that for many, this has been so belittled. Once hard workers were plentiful, now they're rare. If you think I'm exaggerating just ask your boss. Better yet, be a hard worker and watch the rewards come pouring in.

#### Proverbs 13:4

The soul of the sluggard desireth, and *hath* nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

Thankfully, a simple solution is at hand. Help your children discover the joy of work. Teach them to value and love work. There's nothing like a job well done! Is there? Show them what an honor it is to be strong and healthy enough to work. And, along these lines, the profit of getting up early.

#### Proverbs 10:4

He becometh poor that dealeth *with* a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

There's much to be said about; "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise."

Even in Alaska! Speaking of which, we here in Alaska are home to many hard workers from all age groups. And I have great respect for our Alaskan youth and the diligence that they exhibit daily. I've seen more capable hard working teenagers here than anywhere I've ever lived. Notwithstanding, today's culture is rapidly eroding the nobility of an honest day's work. We therefore must steadfastly resist this attack on our children and not deny its existence.

Have you ever noticed the youthful propensity to stay in bed during the "teen years?" Why is it the little ones want to get up at the crack of dawn? Where does that zeal go? In a perfect world, the young adults would get up with the sun and the little guys would sleep in (sigh). Some people sleep to escape boredom. Work will help cure this. May I encourage all of us to help our children obtain age appropriate work. Be supportive as a parent and open as an employer. Give that young man or woman a chance at work and help with the building of our Nation's future work force. Work is the oil for the creaky hinge of laziness.

Proverbs 26:13,14

The slothful *man* saith, *There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets. As the door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.*

-*"The Counselor's Corner" also appears in Alaska Parenting Magazine in an edited version and under a different title"-*

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