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In our first session, we saw the wonderful promise that is available in terms of inheritance and the fulfillment of God's covenanted promises, both in the Old Testament and in the New. We've seen the comparison that God dealt similarly with people in the Old Testament and in the New in terms of providing an opportunity to believers to be at the forefront of His purpose, to be fulfilling His plan through faith. By trusting God, God is able to demonstrate His power and His glory through the lives of His creatures, specifically through us.

And it's a wonderful opportunity and it's a great calling. It was a great calling in the Old Testament and it is a wonderfully great calling in our day. Sadly, because of the misunderstanding of many of these passages, today most of us as believers are not aware of the opportunity that exists.

We're not aware of what is on the line in terms of fulfilling or not fulfilling God's calling for us. We have taken the scriptures that deal with this and compressed and flattened them so that we tend to take any warning passages to unfaithful believers to be talking about unbelievers. And we conveniently explain away God's unhappiness and God's wrath and God's discipline and the loss of good things as things that are applicable only to unbelievers.

And we tend to take the reward passages and the passages that talk about what God has in store for those who love Him and we broaden those to apply to all believers. What we want to do is continue our look at the two sides of this coin, the two ends of the spectrum. We have seen through studying Abraham and through comparing the seed of Abraham motif in scripture, the principle by which God chooses whom to have mercy upon and whom to harden, whom to discipline, whom to make the object of His deep unhappiness.

It's based on faith. It's based on our response to the truth of the Word of God. We want now to look at the warning passages and see for ourselves whether these passages refer indeed to unbelievers or whether they refer to us as believers when we fail the grace of God, when we fail to heed the call that God gives us as believers.

So let's begin, and the title of this particular study is going to be The Outer Darkness. What is it that scripture is talking about when it talks about darkness? Our proposition, just as we had in our first session, I'm going to propose that this is a consequence of unfaithfulness for believers and that the darkness is not a synonym for the lake of fire, and therefore it's not a possible fate for unbelievers. It instead is a possible fate for believers.

Now that immediately sounds harsh and strong and unlikely, so let's go to the scriptures and see what they say. So again, this is under the heading The Outer Darkness. We're going to see in reality that a good translation for this phrase from the Greek is slightly different, but we'll cover that when we get to it.

Turn with me to Matthew chapter 8 and verse 10. Matthew chapter 8 and verse 10. This is in the

context of the Roman centurion who had a servant or a son, we're not real sure of which, who lies at home paralyzed and tormented.

Jesus says, I will come and heal him, and the centurion says, you don't need to come. I know that you have the authority to speak a word and he will be healed. And Jesus is very impressed with this man's faith.

Now, let's stop right here and think about this. What is the issue between Jesus and the Roman centurion? Has Jesus presented the gospel and has this Roman centurion walked the aisle, as it were, and come forward and said, Lord, I believe to the saving of my soul or whatever? Is that the issue between the centurion and Jesus? It's not, is it? What is it that the centurion is trusting Jesus for? He's trusting him for the answer to a request, the answer to a prayer, as it were. He already knows who Jesus is and believes that, and he's making application of that as a believer, isn't he? He says, this is the Lord of glory and all he has to do is speak and my servant will be healed.

So, it's important for us to see that this is not a salvation context. This is trusting God for a blessing, trusting God for an improved circumstance, for a wish that's very close to this man's heart. Jesus heard it in verse 10.

He marveled and he said to those who followed, Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel. Notice Jesus talks about the quality of this man's faith and the quantity of his faith. He says, I've not found this great faith in Israel.

And I say to you that many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. And a good translation here is the darkness which is outside. Outside what? When it says outer or outside darkness, what is it outside? It's outside the kingdom.

That's the area that we're referring to here, isn't it? Because there are these who come from the east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom, but the sons of the kingdom will be cast into the darkness which is outside, i.e. outside the kingdom. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And we've already seen that righteousness through faith, the calling that believers have after salvation, responding to that call and producing that faith and being credited with that righteousness, makes us the seed of Abraham.

We inherit. We receive the blessing. We inherit the promises.

What is the inheritance for Old Testament saints? We've talked a lot about how they could obtain that, how they could be the seed of Abraham in our first session. What is it that they inherit? What is the promise? What were the promises to the Old Testament saints? Do you recall your Old Testament covenants? We had, of course, the Noahic covenant. You had the Abrahamic covenant.

You have the Palestinian covenant. And what is that? That's the promise of the land. God promised Abraham, whatever ground you set your foot on here, I will give to you as far as your eye can see.

And so Abraham walked up and down and established the historical boundaries of what we call Israel. And it extends all the way up to just south of Tyre and Sidon in the north. It extends east to the Jordan River.

It extends south to Beersheba. You remember they used to refer to the north and south boundaries. They would say from Dan to Beersheba.

Dan is up in the far north and Beersheba is down in the south. These are the historical limits of the land. When Christ comes and sits on the throne of the millennial kingdom, what country is he going to rule? Officially, the nation that he will rule is the nation of Israel.

He's going to sit on the throne of his father, David, and he is going to rule and be the king of Israel. There are going to be many other nations, and we don't have time to go look at the Old Testament passages that document that, but read through Isaiah, read through Ezekiel, look at Zechariah, and you'll see that the descriptions of the millennium talk about the fact that there will be kings and nations and that they will send emissaries and pay tribute and come and be subject to Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the king of Israel. They are separate nations, but they are suzerains.

They are subjugated and under the broad authority of Jesus Christ. Everyone in the world is not going to be a citizen of the kingdom, the kingdom proper, the kingdom of Israel. And this is what Jesus is talking about here.

First of all, he's talking about living faith when he talks about this centurion, not saving faith. And he says many will come from the east and west, and they're in this same category of the centurion. They trust God for daily things.

They trust God for the fulfillment of his promise. They trust God for the answers to requests and the solutions to needs. And they don't expect extraordinary things.

They expect this as a routine thing. The centurion takes it for granted that Jesus can speak a word and that his request will be fulfilled. And Jesus says, this is great faith, and I haven't found the like of this faith in Israel.

And what's his point? People outside of Israel are going to come in the millennium and sit down in the promised kingdom. They're going to be heirs of the promise in terms of living in the land and being in close proximity to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, as he rules from Jerusalem and the sons of the kingdom, those who are believers and who should have inherited, who had the opportunity but disregarded it like Ishmael, like Esau, like those who dropped in the wilderness wandering for

40 years instead of going into the land of Canaan, will be outside. This is not a synonym for going to the lake of fire.

It's not a synonym for destruction. This means that they're going to be denied the privilege of living in the kingdom much as their forefathers were when they dropped in the wilderness and didn't go into the land. It's an exact parallel.

Did the Israelites who dropped in the wilderness after wandering for 40 years lose their salvation? They did not. They were all redeemed under the blood of the Passover lamb, but they lost the blessing of going to the land of milk and honey. And that's what Jesus is talking about here.

And that's why he says the sons of the kingdom will be cast into the darkness which is outside and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. What is this weeping and gnashing of teeth? That is the disappointment, the chagrin. Many of these people are self-righteous and expect that they are going to be honored by the Lord and that they are going to enjoy the blessings of the kingdom.

They believe that their self-righteous acts and their consciously orchestrated righteousness that was seen by others and was in many cases touted by others is also going to be seen and touted by God. And they're going to weep and they're going to gnash their teeth when they discover that they're not even in the kingdom, that they're living on the outside. They have eternal salvation and it's a wonderful thing to live into the eternal future, but they lose the potential blessing and reward of living in the kingdom.

And that's the parallel and that's the illustration that Jesus gives in Matthew chapter eight in verse 10. Notice just down in a few pages here in Matthew chapter 10, verse 32. Matthew chapter 10 in verse 32.

Jesus is talking to the disciples. You'll notice up in verse 24, the beginning of this section, a disciple is not above his teacher nor is a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher and that a servant be like his master.

This entire section that we're about to look at in Matthew 10 is clearly addressed to believers. Look at verse 27. Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak it in the light.

What you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. Do not fear those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul and so forth. Verse 30, the very hairs of your head are numbered.

Do not fear. You're of more value than many sparrows. Look at verse 32.

Therefore, now Jesus is drawing a conclusion from the truth that he's just communicated. Remember verse 27? I'm telling you this in the dark, speak it in the light. You hear it in your ear, preach it on the housetops.

What's going to be the result? If you confess me before men, I will confess him before my Father who is in heaven. The one who confesses me before men, I will confess him before my Father. Now, we typically look at this and we say, well, this is Jesus naming those who are saved.

But that's an assumption on our part, isn't it? Confessing Jesus Christ leading us by the hand up before the throne of the Father and introducing us, naming us by name to God the Father. This is one of the honors for the faithful. This is not a synonym for salvation.

If you go to Revelation, you have the chapter 20 incident of the great white throne and so forth. But you don't have any mention of the saved there because the great white throne is a judgment on unbelievers. And if you go to the judgment seat of Christ where believers are evaluated, we don't have any mention of Jesus Christ leading the saved before his Father.

In fact, there's no place in Scripture that talks about salvation from the lake of fire in terms of Jesus introducing the saved to his Father. This is an honor and it is similar to those that are mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3 as the honors that are due to the overcomers. To him that overcomes, I will grant.

Jesus says, I'll give him a new name that is known only to him and myself. I will give him the white stone, the hidden manna. He'll walk with me in white.

He'll rule with me on my throne and so forth. Verse 33, whoever denies me before men, him I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven. And this is going to be denial of privilege, denial of inheritance, denial of those things that could have been ours by right of birth, but that we forfeited because we shrunk back.

Notice that this would make much more sense in the traditional understanding if it was in a salvation passage. Believe in me. Him who comes to me will never hunger and thirst.

I am the living water. I am the son. I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. And if you confess me before men, I will confess you before my Father. Then we would be tempted to take this in a salvation context.

But if you look at everything that comes before, verse 32 and 33, and everything that comes after, it's all addressed to believers. Look at what comes after. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

Man and father, daughter and mother, daughter-in-law and mother-in-law, man's enemies will be in his own household. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. This is discipleship, isn't it? You don't have to love Christ more than your family to be saved.

There's no love requirement for salvation, is there? It's a faith requirement. But to be a disciple, to be an overcomer, to be an inheritor, to be a seed of Abraham in the sense of inheriting the

promises, you do have to love Christ. You do have to do what verse 38 says, take up your cross and follow after him.

And if you don't take up your cross, you're not worthy of him. This doesn't mean you're not worthy of salvation, but it means you're not worthy of the inheritance. You're not worthy of the rewards that go to the overcomers and to the faithful.

So watch for this as a pattern as we go forward. Now, look at Matthew chapter 22 and verse 7. Keeping in mind, as we look at the words of Jesus Christ, what age does Jesus live in? And to what kind of believers is he speaking? He's in the Old Testament age, isn't he? He's in the age of Israel. Even though the Gospels are in the New Testament, Jesus did his teaching before the cross and he is living under the Mosaic law.

He's living in the Old Testament economy. And the believers that he teaches truth to are Old Testament saints. So his teaching in the parables talks about their promises, their covenants, their opportunities before God.

And we see a very strong parallel between theirs and ours. Look at Matthew chapter 22. This is the parable of the king who arranges the marriage for his son.

And in verse 3, he sends out his servants to call those who are invited to the wedding and they were not willing to come. Now this invitation, it pictures the offer of salvation. He sends out other servants, tell those who are invited, I've prepared my dinner, my oxen and fatted cattle are killed.

All things are ready, come to the wedding. But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully and killed them. When the king heard about it, he was furious.

He sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers and burned up their city. Now that destruction and that burning is a picture of no salvation. It's a picture of destruction in the lake of fire.

The invitation goes out and they refuse. They completely disregard the word of the king. They are destroyed and their cities are burned.

Now he says to his servants, the wedding is ready. Those who are invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.

So the servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. These people are not self-important. They don't have more important things to do.

Some of them are good, some of them are bad, some of them are laying in the ditches by the side of the road. Others of them are simple travelers or householders or whatever. They're a motley crew.

The whole point here is that they're willing to come. They accept the invitation and that's what distinguishes them from the ones who are killed and whose cities are burned. They respond whether they're bad or whether they're good.

They respond and they come. So the wedding hall is filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment.

So he said to him, friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he is speechless. The king said to his servants, bind him hand and foot, take him away and cast him into the darkness which is outside, the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Once again, we have now a discerning between believers, the people who are in the wedding hall. Of course, the wedding banquet is a picture of the wedding supper of the lamb. Where and when does the wedding supper of the lamb take place? Who is the lamb? Jesus Christ.

He's the groom. Who is the bride? It's the church. Who are the invited guests who come to the wedding feast? Old Testament believers.

Old Testament saints are resurrected at the beginning of the millennial kingdom. And those who are qualified will be in the kingdom and enjoy the banquet and the feast and the celebration of the marriage supper of the lamb which is going to take place in Jerusalem in the historical nation of Israel in the millennial kingdom. And this is a great privilege.

What does it take to be there? You have to have the wedding garment. This garment, the white linen garment, you may recall this from Revelation and other passages where Revelation tells us that the white linen garment are the righteous deeds of the saints. Now, this man is a friend.

The king addresses him as friend and he says, friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And of course, he's speechless. He has no answer. He has no excuse for not having a wedding garment.

He doesn't say I'm too poor. He has no excuse. So the king says, bind him hand and foot, take him away and cast him into the darkness which is outside.

This is an exact parallel to what Jesus was talking about in Matthew 8. There will be Old Testament saints who because of their apathy and their disregard and in some cases their open rebellion to the call of God, they have their salvation. They believe in God. There's no doubt in their mind and they trust God for their salvation but they completely disregard his plan and purpose for their lives.

And because of that, they will arrive in the eternal future beginning at the time of the millennium with no robe of righteousness, no wedding garment and they will be disqualified from entering the

land. They will be on the outside watching many come from the east and west and north and south but they themselves are cast out. Just as a point of confirmation, you may also think of this in terms of your resurrections.

Jesus tells the Old Testament believers in several places that they will see. He tells the Pharisees in another passage, you will see many coming from the east and west, north and south sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom that you yourselves cast out. Now, to see this take place, you have to be there, right? You have to be present on the scene.

You have to, in the case of an Old Testament saint, you have to have been resurrected. Now, if you were an Old Testament person and you were an unbeliever and you died, when is it that you're going to be resurrected? Are you resurrected at the beginning of the millennium? And will you be resurrected to see these people coming from the northeast, south and west? You won't. Look at Revelation 20, the rest of the dead, those who are unsaved, live not until the thousand years are finished.

And it's not until the great white throne that the sea and the grave and Hades give up the dead that are in them. So, the unbelievers can't be the ones that Jesus is talking to when he says, you will see these coming from east and west, north and south because they're not even resurrected yet. They're not present to witness these things.

So, now these are, it takes sometimes a little getting used to, to realize what an awful consequence a believer can suffer in the future after his resurrection if he's been unfaithful in this life. But there's no point in glossing over it and ignoring it and hoping it will go away. This is the clear teaching of scripture.

Notice that the king who represents God the Father in verse 12 calls this man a friend. Now, God does not call unbelievers friend. Notice also that even when this individual is bound hand and foot and taken away and cast outside, he's not killed.

He's not destroyed. His city is not burned up, which was the fate of those who disregarded the invitation up in verse 7. His fate is different. He's not killed.

His city is not burned, but he's cast outside. He's not permitted to remain in the wedding feast because he doesn't have the garment, the righteous deeds of the saints. And notice what Jesus concludes us with in verse 14.

Many are called, but few are chosen. And in the millennial age, Jesus Christ is going to rule in the kingdom. He's going to fulfill the new covenant to Israel.

You remember, I believe it's in Ezekiel 37, the new covenant. He says, I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. I will cut out your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

There will be no need for anyone to teach you. Every one of you will have the spirit. You will understand my words and keep them.

That's a promise to the nations of Israel and Judah. How is God going to populate Israel and Judah in such a way that they have a heart of flesh and that they know his words and keep them and that they love him and obey him out of a true heart and full assurance of faith? How is that going to happen? In the millennial kingdom, the historical boundaries of Israel are going to be populated by those Old Testament saints that made that decision and followed that path of faith in their earthly life. And the nation will be cleansed.

Those who are hard-hearted, those who are indifferent and apathetic won't be in the nation. It doesn't mean they won't be saved or that they won't be resurrected, but they won't be in the land, the land of Judah and the land of Israel. God says, I will cut out your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh, which means a soft, responsive heart.

And the responsive believers are going to be the ones that populate the historical boundaries of the kingdom. And many of the sons of the kingdom who had the opportunity to be there and should have been will be outside. And by comparison, with the immediate presence of Jesus Christ on the throne of David, being outside the kingdom is darkness.

Christ is the light. I am the light of the world and so forth. And being far away from Christ, by comparison, is darkness.

OK, that's what we have in Matthew chapter 22. Turn a few pages over to Matthew chapter 24. Jesus in the latter part of Matthew 24 tells the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servant.

Look at verse 43. Know this, if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

This is enjoining watchfulness for believers. If you participated in the study we did a while back on watch and pray, we went to all the passages that encourage believers to watch and pray. This was one of those passages.

Look at verse 45. Who then is a faithful and wise servant? Blessed is that servant whom his master made rule over his household to give them food in due season. Stop and think about this.

There are many households, there are many people in a city, but in one household you have a master and his servants, and they have a unique relationship. Those servants of the master have a relationship to that master that no one else has, and they have the same relationship. They're all servants and he's their master.

That's what we have here. Verse 46. Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes

will find so doing, being faithful and wise.

I say to you, he will make him ruler over all his goods. And you can see the parallel here. Jesus is saying those faithful servants in this life, God is going to reward with rulership in the next.

If you demonstrate that you're faithful and wise in this life, more is going to be given to you in the next. Look at verse 48. But if that evil servant says in his heart, my master is delaying his coming.

Notice he has the very same relationship to the master. This is a believer, this servant, this evil servant. He begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with the drunkards.

And don't we see that today? How many fellow believers do we see taking advantage through emotional appeals, through false miracles, through bad teaching, through wrong and distorted emphases, through ripping scriptures out of context and wheeling people out of money and out of time and out of devotion and so forth. Beat his fellow servants, eat and drink with the drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.

Now, being cut in two is parallel to being bound hand and foot in our previous illustration. This is loss of power, loss of privilege, loss of opportunity. When you're bound hand and foot, you can't do the things that you want to do.

And it tends to make you weep and wail and gnash your teeth. When you're cut in two, this means you're powerless. You have no authority.

This servant had authority over some of his fellow servants and he abused it. So now he's cut in two. He has no authority.

And it says he will be appointed his portion with the hypocrites. What is this in contrast to? It's in contrast to verse 47. The faithful and wise servant will be made ruler over many goods.

The foolish and abusive servant will be appointed a portion also, but it's not going to be rulership. It's going to be the same portion that the hypocrites get. We're going to see in some of our other passages what the portion of a hypocrite is.

And look, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, great disappointment, great sorrow, great regret for that foolish servant. This is a believer. Notice he's not thrown into the fire and burned.

That would be a picture of the lake of fire. Instead, he is made small, made least, and is appointed the same portion as the hypocrites. Just in the very next chapter, Matthew 25, you have another example of masters and servants, the parable of the talents.

It begins in verse 14. Most of us are familiar with it. He's talking to the unfaithful servant who had received the one talent.

In verse 24, that servant says, Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you've not sown and gathering where you've not scattered seed. And I was afraid. Now notice, this servant doesn't know his master, does he? He doesn't know what his master is like.

His master is very benevolent in entrusting his servants with these talents and so forth. And we're going to see that he's going to give one of the servants even more because he's been faithful. But this foolish servant doesn't even know his master.

I know you to be a hard man and you reap where you haven't sown, gather where you've not scattered seed. That's actually not the case of the master at all because this master is a picture of God. And I was afraid and I went and hid the talent in the ground.

Look, there you have what is yours. His Lord answered and said to him, you wicked and lazy servant. You knew that I reap where I've not sown and gathered where I've not scattered seed.

In other words, these were your assumptions. This was the knowledge you were operating on. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers and at my coming, I would have received back my own with interest.

Therefore, take the talent from him and give it to him who has 10 talents. For to everyone who has more will be given and he will have abundance. But from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away and cast the unprofitable servant.

Notice he's a servant just like the others, same relationship to the master, but he's unprofitable. Where does he go? To the darkness which is outside. And what does he do? He weeps and gnashes his teeth.

Very consistent picture of what happens to an unfaithful servant, a servant that doesn't respond to the opportunity, doesn't respond to the call. Something is given to him and he does nothing with it or he abuses it. We see the same thing in Mark chapter 8 in verse 38.

This parallels what we saw in Matthew. Mark 8, 38, Jesus says, Now, do we have to not be ashamed in order to be saved? Is there some lack of shame component to salvation? There's not, is there? But as a believer, if you are ashamed of Christ, He says, if you're ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of Him, the Son of Man, also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. It's possible for a believer to be in this category, for Jesus Christ to be ashamed of us when He comes, if we are ashamed of Him.

And that parallels what we saw back in Matthew, chapter 10, verse 32, those who confess Christ before men. And that confession is not just a verbal confession, but living our lives and not being ashamed of the fact that we're Christians and that the reason we make the decisions and set the priorities and live life the way we live it is because we honor the Lord and He's the most important

thing in our lives. Luke 14, 34 is our next passage.

Luke 14, 34. This is very familiar to all of us. Remember the salt? We always talk about people, He's the salt of the earth and so forth.

And we are to be salt and light in the earth. Luke 14, 34, Jesus says, salt is good, but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Real salt, real sodium chloride, can't lose its saltiness. But Jesus says, we who are supposed to be salt are supposed to be functioning like salt. We've been called to be salt, we're supposed to act like salt.

If we don't act like salt, we're not even fit for the dunghill, where men will throw it out. And Jesus says, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. This is a warning passage.

Anytime Jesus says that, when you see Jesus say, he who has ears to hear, let him hear, that's a warning. He's saying, pay attention. In the military, they say, listen up.

What is the context here? Look at verse 33 right before that. Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple. This is a discipleship, a follower passage.

A seed of Abraham passage. Do you want to be a disciple? Do you want to fulfill your calling? Then act like what you've been called to. You have the authority to be called a son of God.

Act like a son of God. Live like a son of God. Pursue righteousness by faith.

John 15, 5. That wonderful teaching passage. Jesus in the upper room with the disciples. I am the vine, you are the branches.

He who abides in me and I in him bears much fruit. For without me, you can do nothing. Who is Jesus talking to here in the upper room? Does he have a mixed crowd here? Some people that need evangelizing, need to hear the gospel.

There's just the 11 there, right? Judas has already departed. Everyone in the room is a believer. And Jesus is giving a teaching and an exhortation to abide in him.

This is an exhortation for believers. Abiding in the vine is a synonym for not salvation, but faithfulness. It's not like if we stop abiding in the vine, we're no longer saved.

If we stop abiding in the vine, we are no longer fruitful. Look at verse 6. If anyone does not abide in me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered. Cast out.

Isn't that a consistent theme that we have seen in Jesus' teaching? The unfaithful servant, the guest with no wedding garment is cast out. He is outside. He is cast out as a branch and is

withered.

They gather them and throw them into the fire and they are burned. The produce of the life is burned. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire and it shall be done for you.

By this my father is glorified that you bear much fruit. So you will be my disciples. This is the difference between being a disciple and not being a disciple.

Being the true seed of Abraham or not. Look at 2 Timothy chapter 2. Paul quotes a truth that is in stanza form. He does that several times in Timothy.

In 2 Timothy 2, this is a saying. It was something that could have even been the words to a hymn or to a poem or something. This is a faithful saying in verse 11.

For if we died with him, we shall also live with him. If we endure, we shall also reign with him. Notice reigning with Christ is conditioned on endurance.

Salvation is not conditioned on endurance. But the reward and the opportunity of reigning with Christ is conditioned on endurance, faithfulness. If we deny him, he will deny us.

That's what we just saw back in Matthew. But if we are faithless, he remains faithful. He cannot deny himself.

We are still saved. We don't lose our salvation, even if we are faithless. You know what the word faithless is there? It's apostasia.

You can equally well translate that unbeliever. If we are unbelievers, we tend to always say an unbeliever is someone who's headed for the lake of fire. But we can be unbelievers.

We can be apostasia as Christians, meaning that we don't trust God on a daily basis. We don't develop any righteousness by faith. And if we are faithless, he still remains faithful.

He cannot deny himself. We have been entered into union with Christ at the point of salvation, and Christ cannot deny himself, even if we are faithless. It's possible to be a very terrible reprobate as a believer and lose reward, lose blessing, wind up being outside.

The Old Testament believers will end up being outside the kingdom in the outer darkness, the darkness which is outside as a penalty for their apathy, their rebellion, their disregard of God. You may recall in 1 Samuel, the first few chapters there, Eli and his sons, and God sends the word to Eli, I will honor those who honor me, but those who dishonor me, I will lightly esteem. And of course, that's an understatement.

It's a figure of speech implying that there will be great calamity for someone who disregards the Lord God. We have Hebrews chapter six and verse seven. We've talked a little bit about Hebrews

six.

It's very clear here, talking about those who are believers, who have tasted of the heavenly gift and so forth. If they fall away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, change of mind. And as we saw just a little while ago, this is the first step of growth for a believer.

In the beginning of chapter six, he says, let's go on to maturity as believers. Not laying again the foundation. And what is the first building stone in the foundation of truth that a new believer learns? Change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God.

Dead works don't produce righteousness. Faith toward God does. It's the fundamental foundational first point of truth for believers.

A lot of people look at that and they think that that is the point of salvation, that people are relying on their works for salvation instead of faith. But that's not what it's talking about. This is the foundation for maturity.

This is the foundation to move forward from as a believer and become complete. The first thing we have to learn as believers is not to rely on works for righteousness or works for approval of God. We have to change our mind away from dead works and operate in faith toward God.

Righteousness by faith is our calling. Now, what is he saying in verse six? He says, look, it's impossible. If you've been enlightened, if you've tasted the heavenly gift, you've become a partaker of the Holy Spirit and you've tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, you've started growing and learn these things and fall away.

It is impossible to be renewed again to repentance, to the very first principle, change of mind away from dead works. So long as you continue to crucify again the son of God afresh and put him to an open shame. And that's exactly what we do if we try to gain approval by works instead of by faith.

It makes the cross of Christ of no effect. We become enemies of the cross because the message of the cross is the death Christ died. We saw it in Romans.

The death that he died, he died to sin. And the life that he lives, he lives to God. That's the point of the cross.

Not only does it secure our eternal deliverance from the lake of fire, but it also is the means of separation from sin and righteousness by faith before God. And if we start growing and then peel away from this, no one can renew us to that change of mind. No one can get us back on righteousness by faith so long as we persist in doing the very opposite, crucifying Jesus Christ afresh and putting him to an open shame.

Look at verse seven, the earth, which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it and bears herbs

useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned. This field is owned by God.

God cultivates the field. God waters the field. That field is either going to bear herbs useful to the cultivator and receive a blessing from God, or it's going to be rejected, near to being cursed, and all the stuff that grows in that field is going to be burned.

The thorns and thistles, which are parallel to the wood, hay, and stubble over in Corinthians. And this is why the author of Hebrews here in the sixth chapter of a book that he's writing to believers about the life of faith says, beloved, we're confident of better things concerning you. He's not saying I'm confident that you're saved.

He's saying I'm confident that because you're saved, you're going to persist in the life of faith and not fall back into righteousness by works, righteousness by ritual, righteousness by observing the law. That's why this book is called Hebrews. It was written to Jewish Christians who were in danger of falling back into the law and crucifying Christ all over again in their ritual observances.

Turn over a few pages in Hebrews to chapter 12, verse 14. Now here is a sobering passage. Hebrews 12, 14.

The author says pursue peace with all and holiness without which no one will see the Lord. Now we think of the righteousness that we receive at salvation and that righteousness enables us to stand before God in the eternal future. And that's a true principle, but that's not what this passage is talking about.

This is a righteousness that is pursued. We don't have to pursue the righteousness that saves us. There's no pursuit component to salvation, is there? But we are exhorted here.

And notice this is chapter 12 of a book that's written to believers. If this were an evangelism passage, it wouldn't be here. He says, pursue peace with all and pursue holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

What's he saying? If you don't have the righteousness that comes from faith, you're going to be on the outside. You're going to be at a distance from the Lord. If you expect to be introduced by Jesus Christ to God the Father, if you expect to walk with him in white, if you expect to enjoy the blessings of the overcomers, you've got to pursue peace.

You've got to pursue holiness. Without that holiness, you're not going to see the Lord. He's going to be ashamed of you.

He's not going to call you up and say, well done, now good and faithful servant, if you've been apathetic and indifferent and have tried to build yourself up in the eyes of people and tried to

make much of yourself in your own eyes or in the eyes of others, you'll not see the Lord. Look at verse 15. Looking carefully, lest anyone fall short of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled, lest there be a fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.

Our birthright by virtue of our birth into the family of God is the inheritance, the promises to the overcomers. That's our birthright. But we can sell it for something that stimulates us for a short time, just like Esau did.

And that's the exhortation here. This is not talking about salvation. This is talking about the possibility of being a complete reprobate and losing much, both now and in the days to come.

And Peter says in the latter days, there will be teachers among you, teachers within your ranks, believers, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies. And secretly, as soon as you start teaching something, it's not a secret. It means that it's subtle.

Nobody's going to recognize it as a destructive heresy. And I would submit to you that one of the destructive features of Christianity today is that we have so blurred and obscured the judgment seat of Christ and the evaluation of God and the possibility of failure and its consequences that we have been lulled into a false sense of security. And there is going to be a lot of wailing and a lot of gnashing of teeth because people have not paid attention to the clear teaching of the Word of God, even as we have seen it tonight.

But read through 2 Peter 2. That is talking about believers. And the consequences are severe. He compares it.

He says if God did not spare the angels that sinned, if he didn't spare the ancient world, and he turned Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, then in verse 9, the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. And those are believers. And Peter is saying if God can sort out the good and the bad all through history, it's going to be no different in the family of believers.

They will receive the wages of unrighteousness in verse 13. Notice in verse 14, they have a heart trained in covetous practices and are accursed children. They're children of God, but they're cursed.

Remember that field in Hebrews 6? Fit only for burning, near to a curse. Look at verse 15 here. They have forsaken the right way.

Now, you can't forsake something unless you started out with it. They were on the right way and they forsook it. It doesn't say they have never known the right way or they rejected the right way.

They forsook it. They were on it and left. They went astray following the way of Balaam, the son

of Baor who loved the wages of unrighteousness.

You remember Balaam? Balaam was a believer. Balaam was a prophet of God. The angel appeared to Balaam and communicated with him and God gave him oracles to bless Israel with.

God doesn't do that with unbelievers. Balaam was a believer, but Balaam erred. Balaam eventually died for that.

Notice verse 17 there. Wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Doesn't say the lake of fire is reserved for them.

It's darkness. It's the darkness which is outside. Now, that is really strong stuff, isn't it? To think that this could be the fate of a believer.

It's one of the reasons people just refuse to even consider the possibilities. Oh, that just can't be. And they don't look at what Scripture says.

But you look at that 2 Peter chapter 2. There's no getting around it. They are bought by the blood of Christ. They are accursed children.

Children of God. And if you turn over a few pages to Jude, we have an equally sobering passage. Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, brother of James, to those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ, mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

So, he's talking here to believers when he says, Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you, concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you, exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. Now, this faith that was once for all delivered to the saints, this is the Christian life. This is why you were saved.

What do you do after you're saved? You have to contend for it because there are people who are distorting it. Certain men, in verse 4, have crept in unnoticed. Remember what we saw in our other passage about secretly bringing in destructive heresies? Certain men have crept in unnoticed who long ago were marked out for this condemnation.

Ungodly men who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Very similar to what Peter is saying over in chapter 2. I want to remind you, though you once knew this, notice he says you used to know this and now you seem to have forgotten, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. Now, remember our cardinal rule of interpretation in the Old Testament.

What do the Israelites represent coming out of Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb? They represent believers. And that's what Jude's referring to here. The Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe, i.e. those who

were unfaithful.

This doesn't mean didn't believe for salvation, this means they weren't trusters in the daily experience sense. Why did they drop in the wilderness? Because they didn't trust God for food, they didn't trust God for water, they didn't trust God for deliverance. Notice verse 6, the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, he has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.

And he goes on in verse 7 to talk about the true unbelievers like Sodom and Gomorrah, who are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise, these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, speak evil of dignitaries, and so forth. The point here is that this condemnation that these men will suffer, these ungodly men who turn the grace of our God into lewdness, they are recipients of the grace of God, just like the Israelites in verse 5, who were saved out of the land of Egypt, but afterward were destroyed because they did not believe.

And there is the possibility of great reprobation, great unbelief on the part of believers, and the consequences are severe. And it is compared to Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them. In a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality, Jude is reminding these believers of what God's attitude is towards sexual immorality.

Sexual immorality has been introduced into the lifestyle of the church as something that's okay. That's what he's talking about in 4, when he says they turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. This was something that had crept into the church.

And that's why he encourages them down in verse 17, You, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus, how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts, sensual persons who cause divisions not having the Spirit. But you, beloved, in verse 20, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God. Don't fall into this category and falling into that condemnation.

Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. That doesn't mean salvation eternal life. That, as we have seen, is the eternal life package.

Life that partakes of the eternal. How do you get this eternal life? Keeping yourself in the love of God. Looking for the mercy of Jesus Christ.

Building yourself up on your most holy faith. Praying in the Holy Spirit. Those are not the means of salvation, but they are the means of living life.

The life that results in righteousness by faith. On some have compassion, making a distinction. The others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the

flesh.

And he concludes with that wonderful doxology, to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you faultless before His presence, the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. That's a possibility. That's the opportunity that we have, but it's not going to be true of all believers.

Not all believers will be presented faultless before the presence of His glory. Some believers are going to be faulted. Jesus Christ is going to be ashamed of some believers.

He's not going to confess them before His Father. And it's a very sobering thought. Turn just a page or two over to Revelation chapter 2. The letters to the seven churches.

These are wonderful. These are the last words of Jesus Christ. And they're the only words of Jesus Christ that we have recorded in the New Testament that are directly quoted for Him and directly addressed to the church.

Did you ever think about that? Everything in the Gospels, Jesus spoke to His disciples or spoke to Old Testament believers. And we have wonderful things in the epistles that were communicated through the apostles. But these are direct words of Jesus Christ to the church, and they are so important.

And in each of these seven churches, He evaluates them. And this is a foreshadowing of what's going to happen at the judgment seat of Christ. Jesus Christ pronounces condemnation on some of these churches.

And He also pronounces approval on some of them. The church at Thyatira down in verse 18 and following, He says in verse 20, I have a few things against you. Revelation 2:20 You allow that woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

That's what Jude was talking about. Sexual immorality introduced to idols. I will cast her into a sickbed and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation unless they change their mind about their deeds.

This is addressed to believers. I will kill all her children with death and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

The judgment seat of Christ is a judgment of works. The judgment seat of Christ is a judgment of works. What we do after salvation.

Verse 25, Hold fast what you have till I come. It parallels all of the other passages in the New Testament that talk about He that endures unto the end will be saved. You have need of patience

and endurance so that you can inherit the promises.

We will reign with Him if we do not fall away and so forth. He who overcomes and keeps My works in verse 26 until the end. Notice the endurance.

Not just doing the works a little bit. Keeping those works until the end. To Him I will give power over the nations.

He shall rule them with a rod of iron dashed to pieces like the potter's vessel as I also have received from My Father. And I will give the morning star. All of these, that's just an example, but all of the letters to the seven churches, the promises to the overcomers are conditioned on enduring to the end.

Forsaking, abandoning, staying away from those evil things. While we're here, take a look in chapter 3 and verse 5. This is the promise to the church in Sardis. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments.

Reminds us of the garment at the wedding feast. And I will not blot His name from the book of life. We will study this in greater depth in an upcoming lesson, but I will steal my own thunder here and tell you that this book of life is not a salvation book.

This book of life is a book of reward and it is possible to be blotted out of this book. We'll see this again before our study concludes this evening. But there have been many ways of trying to explain this away.

Everyone's name starts out and if you die without having accepted Christ, your name is blotted out and so forth. But notice here, we're talking to believers and we're talking to overcomers. And if you're an overcomer, you remain faithful, you'll walk with Christ in white because you're worthy, you'll be clothed in white garments, and your name will not be blotted from the book of life.

But I will confess His name before my Father and before His angels. Doesn't that remind us of Matthew? If you confess Me before men, I will confess you before my Father. Not a picture of salvation, a picture of a tremendous reward, a tremendous honor from Jesus Christ in the eternal future.

I will not blot His name from the book of life. And this is life in the sense of production. This is the book of the faithful.

The book of those who are credited with righteousness. Who were alive in the experiential sense. Who abode in the vine.

To verify that, turn over with me to Revelation 22. It's very important when you get to Revelation 20 and following to keep track of your chronology. There are places in Revelation where you go back and forward in time.

But starting in chapter 20, you have a chronological sequence that begins with the end of the rebellion and ultimately the inception of the millennial kingdom. They live and reign with Christ in verse 4 of chapter 20. Those who did not receive the mark of the beast and so forth, they live and reign with Christ for a thousand years.

But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. The resurrection of the saints at the inception of the millennial kingdom.

Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such, the second death has no power. They shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

When the thousand years are expired, Satan is released. You have the Gog Magog rebellion. Verse 11, you have the great white throne judgment.

The dead, small and great, stand before God. The books are opened. And another book was opened which is of life.

This is not called the book of life. If you look closely, you'll see that the word book is in italics. Another book was opened which is dealing with life.

And this is a different book than the one we saw in Revelation 3. This is a salvation book. The dead are judged according to their works. The things that are written in these books.

Anyone not found written in the book of life is cast into the lake of fire. Now, new heavens and new earth. The first heaven and first earth have passed away and there is no more sea.

All of the unbelievers are in the lake of fire, right? Everyone who is going to the lake of fire is in there now. The holy city, the new Jerusalem. This is the new heavens and the new earth.

God wipes away every tear. No more pain. No more sorrow.

No more crying. The former things have passed away. Notice that is not true in the millennial kingdom.

This is the promise for the new heavens and new earth. We typically think that as soon as we die, there will be no more tears, no more pain, and so forth. This promise is specifically after the old heavens and earth have passed away.

After the millennium. After the great white throne. I think many of us are going to weep when we see loved ones and see the mass of humanity that goes into the lake of fire.

But after that, God will wipe every tear away. Notice in verse 6, He says, It is done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall

inherit all things. I will be his God.

He shall be my Son. Another promise to the overcomers. Verse 8 is a contrast.

But the cowardly, unbelieving, and this is untrusting, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, all liars, shall have their part, their portion, their inheritance in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. It doesn't say that they're in there, but that's where their inheritance is. That's their part.

Remember the unfaithful servant that Jesus talked about? He will have his part with the hypocrites. Appoint him his lot with the hypocrites. That's what happens here.

You see the same thing in 22, 18 and 19. Remember the penalty for adding to or taking away from the book of Revelation? If you add to it, God will add to him in verse 18 the plagues that are written in this book. If anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the book of life.

That's the reward book for believers from the holy city and from the things which are written in this book. Believers can lose the privilege of access to the holy city. You can lose the privilege.

And that's why He says outside the gates are the abominable. Look in chapter 21, verse 27. There shall by no means enter into the new Jerusalem anything that defiles or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Only those who qualify for reward. Look in 22, 14. Blessed are those who do His commandments that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter through the gates of the city.

Outside are dogs, sorcerers, sexually immoral, murderers, idolaters, whoever loves and practices a lie. And it couldn't be any plainer as we look at Revelation 22, 16. Jesus says, I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches.

I am the root and offspring of David, the bride and morning star. The Spirit and the bride say come. Let him who hears say come.

Let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. And then He goes back into that section of warning for adding or taking away from the book.

The privilege of access is one of the blessings of the inheritance, not only in the millennial kingdom, but even in the kingdom of the Father that follows it. Jesus will surrender all rule and authority to the Father at the end of the millennial kingdom, following the rebellion and the great white throne. And that's the new heavens and new earth, the kingdom of the Father.

And we still have consequences of what we've done in this life. In verse 11, He who is unjust, let him be unjust still. He who is filthy, let him be filthy still.

He who is righteous, let him be righteous still. He who is holy, let him be holy still. Verse 12, Revelation 22, Behold, I am coming quickly and My reward is with Me to give everyone according to His work.

How could we have missed this in our learning and teaching and studying of the Word of God? It's critically important for us to realize that there's a lot on the line in terms of whether or not we respond to our calling. We have the opportunity to inherit, to be rewarded in a parallel fashion to what we've seen talked about in the Old Testament, the fulfillment of the covenant blessings to Abraham and his seed. Similarly, the passages that Jesus taught with regard to the outer darkness and the possibility of the unfaithful servant and his punishment, there's a parallel for believers in this age as well.

And we, through neglect and apathy, if we walk in darkness in this life, you look at 1 John, walk in the light as He is in the light. We have fellowship and the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. It's possible for us to walk in darkness.

And if we walk in darkness in this life, relatively speaking, compared to the presence of Christ and blessing and reward, we can walk in darkness in the next. We can be outside the gates. And this makes sense to us, doesn't it? Because salvation does not depend on what type of sins we commit or refrain from committing.

Why is it that sorcerers and sexually immoral murderers, idolaters? Remember, Paul told us that covetousness is idolatry. Whoever loves and practices a lie, whoever disregards the truth of God and accepts something else, goes after some false system of life, will be outside the gate of the New Jerusalem. And unfortunately, there's going to be many outside.

You recall as we've reviewed so many times the teaching of Jesus Christ about the narrow way and the straight gate that leads to life, and few there be that find it. And he's talking about believers. So I hope that as we've reviewed these passages, as we've taken this brief look, we could go many different directions and pursue many subjects from this point.

But I hope as we have seen both the concept of being a seed of Abraham through the righteousness that comes by faith as a believer, the opportunity to inherit and receive the fulfillment of the promises, what a tremendous opportunity we have as believers to fulfill our calling and fulfill our purpose. And as we continue our study through Romans 9 and the entire book of Romans and see the thrust of that message, from God through Paul, that is our calling. That is the high mark toward which we press.

And we cannot afford to let ourselves be distracted by fellow believers who wish to lead us astray through some system of righteousness by works or some seemingly well-motivated and yet misguided plan for the Christian life. It's our pursuit and it's our calling to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, to be strengthened in the inner man through the Word of God, the ministry

of the Spirit of God, and to become Christ-like in our thinking. All of these other things that we know are good such as evangelism and ministry and the doing of good deeds flows from the sanctified heart, the heart that has been sprinkled from an evil conscience and has been purified by the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

That has to be our first and foremost pursuit. And we have to want it. We have to decide that pleasing God in this life is the most important thing.

The rewards are great. The privilege of reflecting the glory of God both now and in the eternal future is too good to pass up. That's our opportunity and that's our calling to follow in the footsteps of our Savior in that way.

Let's close in prayer. Father, we thank You for the truth of these things. We thank You for the clear communication of them in Your Word.

We thank You for the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We pray that He will continue to minister these things to our hearts, to remind us, to rebuke, correct, and instruct us, to show us where we are either consciously or unconsciously slipping into righteousness by works, the attempts to please people, to look good in front of others, and to satisfy our own need for gratification or for approval. We pray that we will be constantly reminded of the righteous standard that You measure us by and that as a result of these things, we will be that good and faithful servant that is faithful, that is wise, that fulfills the mission that the Master has assigned, and that on that day when we stand at the judgment seat of Christ, we will be approved workmen, thoroughly furnished for every good work.

We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.