



## Is the Power of the Gospel Fading?

**Matthew 28:19:** (NASB) *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*



Hasn't it been long enough? It is 2,000 years since Jesus walked the earth with the promise of change, the promise of righteousness and the promise of his kingdom. So, where is he? Where is the change - the good - he promised? All we can see now is a world that slowly walks away from Christianity and walks towards self - self-satisfaction, self-gratification and self-worship. Has the power of the message of Jesus quietly faded into the sunset? Is the gospel lost and gone forever?

 **Survey, Americans Losing Their Religion, CBS News (2015)**

- *A new study on the changing U.S. religious landscape shows we are losing our religion. The number of Americans who don't affiliate with a particular religion has grown to approximately 56 million in recent years. Christianity is still the dominant faith by far in the U.S. Seven in 10 Americans identify with the tradition, but it is down by almost eight percent. By contrast, atheists and agnostics have nearly doubled, making the unaffiliated have the most growth, a 6.7 percent increase. The survey of 35,000 people was conducted in English and Spanish from June 4th to September 30th of last year.*

To begin, let us establish the context of our theme verse, for it was nearly the last thing Jesus said to his followers before being taken up into heaven. It is therefore important! We will compare the King James Version (KJV) with the New American Standard Bible (NASB).



### Accuracy matters!

**Matthew 28:18-20:** (KJV) <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. <sup>19</sup>Go ye therefore, and **teach <3100> all nations <1484>**, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: <sup>20</sup>Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

**Matthew 28:18-20:** (NASB) <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and **make disciples <3100> of all the nations <1484>**, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

**Make Disciples:** Strong's #3100 matheteuo (math-ayt-yoo'-o); intransitively, to become a pupil; transitively (an adverb with a specific focus), to disciple, i.e. enroll as scholar

**Nations:** Strong's #1484 ethnos (eth'-nos); a race (as of the same habit), i.e. a tribe; specially, a foreign (non-Jewish) one (usually by implication, pagan)  
KJV - Gentile, heathen, nation, people.





A *disciple* would be one who seriously followed Jesus instead of just being there for the free food!

### Just before the ascension, Jesus said:

Luke 24:46-47: (NASB) <sup>46</sup>and he said to them, thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be **proclaimed <2784>** in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

**Proclaimed: Strong's #2784** kerusso (kay-roos'-so); of uncertain affinity; to herald (as a public crier), especially divine truth (the gospel) - announce



### Observations - Jesus instructs four things:

1. Preach/proclaim repentance and remission of sins everywhere.
2. *Make disciples out of all nations*, but start at home in Jerusalem.
3. Baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This would symbolize the disciples' source of life, of redemption and of enlightenment.
4. Teach Jesus' words to these new followers.

The obvious mission here is to preach the gospel to the world - the not-so-obvious mission is that this preaching, while bringing disciples, will not convert the world. We do not believe Jesus was instructing his disciples to convert the whole world.

**Why would we say that worldwide conversion is NOT the plan?  
How is this a good thing?**

Jesus clearly explains via a parable (and explanation) that *conversion is selective and NOT universal*.

### The Parable of the Sower:

Mark 4:3-8: (NASB) <sup>3</sup>Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; <sup>4</sup>as he was sowing, **some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up.** <sup>5</sup>**Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil** <sup>6</sup>**And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.** <sup>7</sup>**Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop.** <sup>8</sup>**Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.**

Jesus tells us *the seed* represents the gospel and describes four types of ground it falls upon:

**FAILED**

- Beside the road: Birds eat it so the seed never takes root.

**FAILED**

- Rocky ground: Since there is no deep soil, the seed springs up and withers in the hot sun. It takes root but dies.

**FAILED**

- Thorny ground: The seed is choked; even though it does not produce a crop, it does not necessarily die.

**SUCCESS!**

- Good ground: The seed thrives and produces an increase of 30, 60 and 100-fold!



## The gospel *looks* like it is *supposed* to meet with massive failure!

**Mark 4:9-12:** (NASB) <sup>9</sup>And he was saying, He who has ears to hear, let him hear. <sup>10</sup>As soon as he was alone, his followers, along with the twelve, began asking him about the parables. <sup>11</sup>And he was saying to them, to you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, <sup>12</sup>so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive, and while hearing, they many hear and not understand, otherwise they might return and be forgiven.

Jesus specifically spoke in such a way the people would not understand.

## The source of Jesus' words: (We will come back to this shortly...)

**Isaiah 6:8-10:** (KJV) <sup>8</sup>Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. <sup>9</sup>And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. <sup>10</sup>Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.


Jesus is saying that he does NOT want to convert the masses! But why would he say that?

**Mark 4:13-14:** (NASB) <sup>13</sup>And he said to them, do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? <sup>14</sup>The sower sows the word.

 Young are "Unaffiliated," *Here's What's Making America Less Religious, PBS (May 2015)*

- (Interviewer) Let me ask Allen Cooperman (Director of Religious Surveys at Pew Research) about what the survey does touch on, the Unaffiliated (with any religious denomination), this rise. Because it, too, is fairly widespread. We have a graphic of age demographics.
- (Allen Cooperman) It's especially concentrated among younger generations. While it's true it's taking place among older adults as well as among younger adults, it's really startling. Among the youngest Millennials, 36 percent are Unaffiliated, whereas in the country as a whole, it's down 23 percent. Among much older generations, it's much smaller percentages. So, a lot of what's happening, Jeff, is what we call "generational replacement." It's a nice way of saying that the older generations, which were very heavily Christian, are passing away and they are being replaced by younger cohorts that are far more Unaffiliated, not only than the older generations are today, but than those older generations ever were.

UNAFFILIATED GROWTH ACROSS GENERATIONS			
	2007	2014	Change
<b>Baby Boomers</b> (b. 1946-1964)	14%	17%	3%
<b>Generation X</b> (b. 1965-1980)	19%	23%	4%
<b>Older Millennials</b> (b. 1981-1989)	25%	34%	9%
<b>Younger Millennials</b> (b. 1990-1996)	n/a	36%	n/a

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## Jesus explains why the gospel does not take hold with most:



### "Beside the road"

Birds eat the seed and it never takes root.

**Signifies: a lack of understanding**

**Matthew 13:19:** (NASB) *When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.*

If now was the only time for salvation, then why does a simple lack of understanding of the word give Satan the ability to take that salvation away? Is simple ignorance a just cause to NOT give someone salvation? Should someone be held accountable for something they don't understand if they never really had a chance because Satan was more powerful?



### "Rocky ground"

With no deep soil, the seed springs up but withers in the hot sun. It takes root but dies.

**Signifies: Emotional acceptance but no heart acceptance**

**Mark 4:16-17:** *In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; <sup>17</sup>and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away.*

There is an initial euphoria but it soon fades away. Is that the Gospel failing or succeeding? Is the Gospel supposed to be bringing every man, woman and child to Christ now, or is there a priesthood for the purpose of blessing all of the non-Christians later, as we read in [1 Peter 2:9](#)?





### "Thorny ground"

The seed is choked out, produces no crop,  
does not necessarily die

Signifies: Heart acceptance  
but no discipline to follow through

**Mark 4:18-19:** <sup>18</sup>And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, <sup>19</sup>but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

The worldliness and paganism of our day was predicted in [Luke 17:29,30](#). There is so much around us that can distract from our consecration to God.



### "Good ground"

There is an increase of 30, 60, 100-fold.  
The seed thrives!

Signifies: Heart acceptance  
and the seed flourishes and provides fruitage

**Mark 4:20:** <sup>20</sup>And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.

Obviously there is more unsuccessful ground than successful ground and there are a lot of reasons why the majority don't accept the Gospel seed.

Jesus said he spoke in parables because he did not want the majority of people to understand what he was saying. He stripped away the opportunity for the masses to understand. If we think the gospel's purpose (according to Jesus before his ascension) was to *make disciples of all nations* - to bring all people in the world to the gospel NOW because now is the only time of salvation, the Parable of the Sower completely contradicts this. The Parable shows the call as being selective and not universal, but we know as the inspired word of God, the Bible must harmonize with itself.



**So, Jesus himself tells us not many are ripe for following. If this is true, do these next texts contradict?**

**Romans 5:18-19:** (NASB) <sup>18</sup>So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. (If everyone is under condemnation, everyone gets justification, right?) <sup>19</sup>For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one the many will be made righteous. (Okay, so all are stuck in sin and all are made righteous, right? Doesn't that contradict the other three types of "ground" in the parable?)

**If the power of the gospel is not worldwide conversion, then what is it?**

**Matthew's version of the parable expands Jesus' teaching to build a kind of "us vs. them" scenario:**

**Matthew 13:10-14:** (NASB) <sup>10</sup>And the disciples came and said to him, why do you speak to them in parables? <sup>11</sup>Jesus answered them, to you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. <sup>12</sup>For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. <sup>13</sup>Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. <sup>14</sup>In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says...

 **Spiritual not religious, Americans Are Less Religious Than Ever, CBS News (November 2015)**



- (Reporter) More now from John Blackstone.
- (John Blackstone) In North Hollywood, California, Alex McKale says she fulfills her spiritual needs at a yoga studio. Like many people age 19 to 25, she no longer goes to church.
- (Alex McKale) Most of my friends - when most, I mean all except for my boyfriend - don't go to church anymore.
- (John Blackstone) In fact, only 28 percent of her age group go to services weekly.
- (Blackstone speaking to McKale) But not necessarily saying well, there's not something out there.
- (McKale) Absolutely not. I hear so many people say, "I believe there's a God; I just don't think there's a hell."
- (Blackstone) Since the survey was first taken in 2007, there has also been a decline in the number of Americans who describe themselves as being affiliated with a religion - from 83 percent in 2007 to 77 percent in this survey.

**Remember when we discussed Isaiah 6 as the source of Jesus' words?**

**Let's now look at the context:**

**Isaiah 6:8-10:** (KJV) Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, here am I; send me.

The literal fulfillment of this was Isaiah answering God, but Jesus quoted this prophecy to let us know it was about him.

**Jesus "volunteers" for the job and is given instructions:**

<sup>9</sup>And he said, go, and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. <sup>10</sup>Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.



God's instructions to Jesus (prophetically stated by Isaiah and repeated by Jesus) clearly stated Jesus' purpose was to leave his listeners in an unconverted and sinful state!

Why would God have commanded Jesus to do that if he came to save the whole world? Some of our Christian friends explain this dilemma as follows: These "sinners" are those who already rejected Jesus, and therefore it was impossible for them to comprehend his teaching. In other words, "They wouldn't have gotten it anyway." We do not believe it makes sense that so many millions would not have any opportunity for salvation since this would contradict the character of God. God is love, built upon justice, wisdom and power. So, how does all of that work together?



**This brings a whole new question into play - if it is true that the call to salvation is so selective, what about this?**

1 Timothy 2:3-6: (NRSV) <sup>3</sup>*This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup>who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the **knowledge <1922>, of the truth.** <sup>5</sup>For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, <sup>6</sup>who gave himself a ransom for all - this was attested at the right time.*

God WANTS all men to know His truth! But isn't that contrary to the direction He gave Jesus?

**Knowledge: Strongs #1922, full discernment**

Knowledge is more than just a passing memory about something.

Example: Getting a home mortgage involves stacks of paperwork with many disclosures so the borrower understands the contract.



A caller from Connecticut suggests: 1. The gospel message does not fail. Isaiah 55:11: *So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.* 2. God has a purpose. Acts 15:14: *Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name.* 3. One day the people will change: 2 Timothy 3:5: *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

Luke 19:8-10: (NASB) <sup>8</sup>*Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much. <sup>9</sup>And Jesus said to him, today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup>For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

**What was lost? Paradise!**

Genesis 3:22-24: (NASB) <sup>22</sup>*Then the LORD God said, behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever. <sup>23</sup>therefore the LORD God sent him out from the Garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup>So He drove the man out...*

What was lost was humankind forever living in a sinless environment, the opportunity for eternal life and high level of fellowship with God. Jesus came to save that which was lost, but not to convert the whole world. How do those two ideas come together?



## What is the true power of the gospel?

**2 Corinthians 5:17-20:** (NASB) <sup>17</sup>Therefore if anyone is in Christ, **he is a new creature**; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. <sup>18</sup>Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup>namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and **He has committed to us the word of reconciliation**. <sup>20</sup>Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.



There is hope because there is a *ministry of reconciliation* for the world.



## Observations about the gospel power unfolding:

- To be *in Christ* is to be a New Creation, a unique and different spiritual class.
- This New Creation is given a specific ministry - one of reconciliation. How does that happen? More soon!
- Those of the New Creation are ambassadors - representatives of God's will through Christ.



**Spirituality rising, *Americans Are Less Religious Than Ever*, CBS News (November 2015)**

- (Reporter) *Carol Bakhos is Director of the Center for the Study of Religion at UCLA.*
- (Bakhos) *There's something that beckons us and is something that we respond to. We respond to it through religious or spiritual practices, and I don't think that will ever go away.*
- (Reporter) *While organized religion may be declining, spirituality is on the rise. The study shows six in 10 adults say they regularly feel an inner sense of peace and well-being. Charlie, that's up seven points from seven years ago.*

## Peter further explains this clear and unmistakable example of Christianity:

**1 Peter 2:9,12:** (ASV) <sup>9</sup>But ye are an **elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**

In other words, you are supposed to show the excellencies of God because God blessed you through Christ. But who do you show these to and how is it received?

<sup>12</sup>*having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles; that, wherein they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they (those who were left in the dark) behold, glorify God in the day of visitation (in the future).*

The message is for the rest of the world - but not applied now. The world's opportunity is not lost, but it is not now.

God's instruction for Jesus to leave the masses in the dark is a TEMPORARY condition - the Apostle Peter tells us they will glorify God later!



The true power of the gospel is to draw out followers of Jesus now, who will serve, teach and bless the rest of the world later. Is this provable with additional Scriptures?

John 5:28-29: (NASB) <sup>28</sup>Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice, <sup>29</sup>and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment (being put on trial).

**Jesus saves the world in two stages; the true Christians first and the rest of the world second:**

1 John 2:2: (NASB) and he himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.



**The instructions of God allow for the passing of a lot of time and the developing of sin to its fullest potential. All evil will be destroyed:**

2 Peter 3:7-9: (NASB) <sup>7</sup>But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. <sup>8</sup>But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

It is all part of a big plan that takes time, implements justice, provides mercy and develops those who will be needed to teach the rest of the world about who God REALLY is.

**If the power of the gospel is not fading, is it getting stronger?**

Hebrews 2:9: (NASB) But we do see him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.



**One life, The Godless Church and Atheists Taking the U.S. By Storm, The Guardian (September 2014)**

- (Atheist preacher) The central idea we need to spread is that we only have one life which means that life has to be lived to the fullest. There's no second chance. No opportunity to have a do-over. There's no afterlife in which wrongs are righted and cosmic justice meted out to the evildoers.



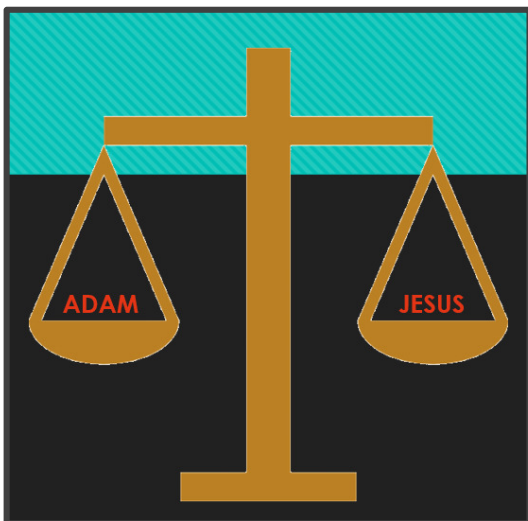
- (Reporter) *The Sunday Assembly was started by two British comedians, Sanderson Jones and Pippa Evans. They held the first event in London in January, 2013. After that, Jones and Evans found that people were getting in touch asking if they could set up their own Sunday Assembly.*
- (Reporter speaking to Pippa Evans) *What is it like being now a quite prominent atheist and organizing something like this? Do you get any pushback from people who are religious that you know?*
- (Pippa Evans) *I do have several close friends who are religious. One of my best friends from high school, she is a pastor. I actually turned to my pastor friend to ask her how do we start a church and she gave me reams of advice. Lots of great ideas.*
- (Reporter laughing) *Your pastor friend gave you advice on how to start a godless church.*
- (Pippa Evans) *Yes. Exactly.*

**Here is an incredibly detailed proof of the gospel's message and power happening in two stages:**

Romans 5:12-14: (NASB) <sup>12</sup>Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned <sup>13</sup>for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. <sup>14</sup>Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of him who was to come.

Adam was entirely responsible for inherited human sin. Death reigned even before the Law was given, therefore the penalty was clearly upon all humanity. The consequences of sin happened even before the Law identified what would be considered sinful.

Romans 5:15-17: (NASB) <sup>15</sup>But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the **many** died, (**"the many" MUST mean all humanity according to Paul's context in verse 14**) much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to the **many**. (**This MUST mean the same "many."**) <sup>16</sup>The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. <sup>17</sup>For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, (**Whom did death reign over? Everyone!**) much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. (**Aha! There IS a qualifier here applying to the called-out ones! Those who follow Jesus during their lifetimes. This shows them reigning (exercising an authority they are given).**)



There is a logical, sequential order in which God allows for sin to come into play, labels sin through the Law, allows it to continue to its full extent and gives the gift of justification to give everyone who had the experience of sin.

Romans 5:18-21: (NASB) <sup>18</sup>So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to **all** men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to **all** men. (**ALL humanity MUST be included**) <sup>19</sup>For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. (**Again - this is about ALL humanity, as it is a continuation of thought.**) <sup>20</sup>The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, <sup>21</sup>so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (**Grace replaces sin based on justice on a wholesale scale!**)



 Religion has failed, *The Godless Church and Atheists Taking the U.S.* By Storm, *The Guardian* (September 2014)

- (Reporter) *How did you become an atheist or were you raised an atheist?*
- (Sanderson Jones) *Religion does a lot of things well. What they do not do so well - they inculcate hate, intolerance and all sorts of things that are anti-human. This brings the best and leaves the worst out.*
- (Reporter) *What is your background then? Were you raised with a religious aspect or anything like that?*
- (Pippa Evans) *I was raised by militant atheists, and I feel like there's a lot of people suffering and screaming and their lives basically suck because religion is keeping them down.*

When we look at the gospel, there is no hate or bringing people down. It gives them hope beyond hope much bigger than an atheist can give anyone. At best an atheist can say, "You have a few years left. Use them." The Scriptures say, "Develop your life as best as you can now, but wait until eternity when you can live in a world full of righteousness and peace run by God through Jesus."

**For those called - their whole future depends upon their present and the world waits for them!**

Romans 12:1-2: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. <sup>2</sup>And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Those following after Christ now have a special set of responsibilities.

We see God's attributes of LOVE, WISDOM, JUSTICE and POWER are all in harmony with this plan. We see when God told Jesus not to convert all of the people, it was for a specific purpose - to call out the faithful followers first so they can be crystallized in character in this time. When the resurrection comes, they will be part of *the ministry of reconciliation* Peter spoke about.

The power of the gospel is NOT fading - it is growing stronger and is right on time! God's plan is exactly on time.



## How do we MAXIMIZE the power of the gospel?

**Realize it is personal - the gospel's power now in this age is focused on individuals (NOT denominations) who are truly following Christ:**

**Romans 8:14-25:** (Rotherham) <sup>14</sup>For, as many as by God's Spirit are being led, the same, are God's sons, <sup>15</sup>For ye have not received a spirit of servitude, leading back into fear, but ye have received a spirit of sonship, whereby we are exclaiming - Abba! Oh Father! <sup>16</sup>The Spirit itself, beareth witness together with our spirit that we are children of God; <sup>17</sup>And, if children, heirs also - heirs, indeed, of God, but co-heirs with Christ, if, at least, we are suffering together, in order that we may also be glorified together. <sup>18</sup>For I reckon that unworthy are the sufferings of the present season to be compared with the glory about to be revealed towards us.



**Realize the personal focus of the gospel's power now is for the purpose of blessing, teaching, guiding and directing the rest of the world later in the next age:**

<sup>19</sup>For, the eager outlook of creation (the "everybody else," the rest of the world), ardently awaiteth the revealing of the sons of God (the true Christians), <sup>20</sup>For, unto vanity, hath creation been made subject - not by choice, but by reason of Him that made it subject, in hope <sup>21</sup>That, creation itself also, shall be freed - from the bondage of the decay into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God; <sup>22</sup>For we know that, all creation, is sighing together, and travailing-in-birth-throes together until the present.



Again we see how God's plan works. He allows sin and death so sin can be revealed for the ugly, disastrous division it causes between man and God. Our job is to be teachers and guides later. Life and hope will be embraced and mankind, once given a true choice, will choose righteousness.

**Realize that our role here and now can easily be overlooked or ridiculed, because to those around us this is so farfetched:**

<sup>23</sup>And, not only so, but, we ourselves, also, who have the firstfruit of the Spirit--we even ourselves, within our own selves do sigh, sonship ardently awaiting - the redeeming of our body; <sup>24</sup>For, by our hope, have we been saved - but, hope beheld, is not hope, for, what one beholdeth, why doth he hope for? <sup>25</sup>If, however, what we do not behold we hope for, with endurance, are we ardently awaiting it;



The hope we have is not tangible; it is a hope of life with Christ in heaven. We do not know what that looks or feels like. All we know is it is promised so we look forward to it. It is higher than earthly hopes. We develop our life of sacrifice now and the world waits for us to finish our development of this life of sacrifice.



***The Bible still speaks, Is the Bible Relevant, Explore God***

- I believe God is still telling the story. I don't think the Bible is just a dead book. I think it's alive. I think it's communicating to us today and giving us vision and a conviction of how God's love should constantly be ruminating in this world and how we are supposed to be those who are spreading it, and how it's supposed to be good news. Unfortunately a lot of people in our world see it as bad news and see the Bible as a book of to-dos and a book of conflicting information versus seeing it as this unfolding story, this pursuit of God constantly pursuing humankind; constantly trying to love us into relationship. Not command us into it but accept us and love us into relationship; into the way we're designed as human beings to see the world.*



God loves the human creation. We are His children. A good parent allows a child to go through difficult times so they can be better and stronger.

**Here is a great summary of the power of the gospel in our personal Christian lives:**

**Romans 8:31-32,35-39:** (NASB) <sup>31</sup>*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?* <sup>32</sup>*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered him over for us all, how will He not also with him freely give us all things?*

**We have the greatest power in the universe working with us and through us.**

<sup>35</sup>*Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* <sup>36</sup>*Just as it is written, for your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.* <sup>37</sup>*But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.* <sup>38</sup>*For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

If you are a called-out one following in the footsteps of Jesus, this is personal. You have been given the power and influence of God to work in your life. Your mission is not just about YOU. You are to come into harmony with God. We are to be Christ-like. We should be learning and reacting differently to the experiences of life. If faithful, we will have a part in blessing the entire world of mankind!

**Romans 8:28:** (NIV) *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

The gospel is growing because God's plan is coming closer and closer to its fruition. This age will end. It looks dark now, but there is a "happily ever after!"

**So, is the power of the gospel fading?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!**

**And now even more to think about...  
only in the Full Edition of CQ Rewind!**



**The Parable of the Sower in its entirety:**

**Mark 4:3-20:** (NASB) <sup>3</sup>*Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow;* <sup>4</sup>*as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up.* <sup>5</sup>*Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil.* <sup>6</sup>*And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.* <sup>7</sup>*Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop.* <sup>8</sup>*Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.* <sup>9</sup>*And He was saying, He who has ears to hear, let him hear.* <sup>10</sup>*As soon as he was alone, his followers, along with the twelve, began asking him about the parables.* <sup>11</sup>*And he was saying to them, to you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, <sup>12</sup>so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive, and while hearing, they may hear and not understand, otherwise they might return and be forgiven.* <sup>13</sup>*And he said to them, do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?* <sup>14</sup>*The sower sows the word.* <sup>15</sup>*These are the*



ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word, which has been sown in them. <sup>16</sup>In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; <sup>17</sup>and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. <sup>18</sup>And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, <sup>19</sup>but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. <sup>20</sup>And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.

### **Now, a little bit more on the Parable's point regarding those who do not understand - Satan snatches the word away from them:**

Matthew 13:19: (NRSV) *When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand <4920> it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path.*

**Understand:** Strongs #4920 suniemi (soon-ee'-ay-mee); to put together, i.e. (mentally) to comprehend; by implication, to act piously: KJV-- consider, understand, be wise.

Ephesians 5:17: (KJV) *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but **understanding <4920>**, what the will of the Lord is.*

### **Satan is always looking for ways to take the word from us. Once he does, we are defenseless!**

1 Peter 5:8: (NRSV) *Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour.*

### **Satan taking God's word from Eve:**

Genesis 3:1-6: (NRSV) <sup>1</sup>Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?' <sup>2</sup>The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; <sup>3</sup>but God said, you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die. <sup>4</sup>But the serpent said to the woman, you will not die; <sup>5</sup>for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. <sup>6</sup>So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.

### **Satan trying to take Peter:**

Luke 22:31-32: (NRSV) <sup>31</sup>Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, <sup>32</sup>but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.

### **Satan trying to take God's word from Jesus:**

Matthew 4:5-7: (NRSV) <sup>5</sup>Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup>saying to him, **If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, He will command his angels concerning you, and on their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.** <sup>7</sup>Jesus said to him, again it is written, do not put the Lord your God to the test.



## A short explanation of a text that describes some of what will be for the world in the coming Judgment Day:

2 Peter 2:9: (KJV) *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of **judgment <2920>** to be **punished <2849>**:*

**Punished:** Strong's #2849. kolazw kolazo kol-ad'-zo; properly, to curtail, i.e. (figuratively) to chastise (or reverse for infliction): punish. 1) to lop or prune, as trees and wings 2) to curb, check, restrain 3) to chastise, correct, punishment 4) to cause to be punished

### The only other use:

Acts 4:21: (KJV) *So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might **punish <2849>** them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.*

Hebrews 9:25-28: (NASB) <sup>25</sup>*nor was it that he would offer himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. <sup>26</sup>Otherwise, he would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages he has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. <sup>27</sup>And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, <sup>28</sup>so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await him. Who awaits him? The now sinful world!*