

JOHN 5:19-21
EQUALITY IN POWER!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 5 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

We have seen here in John chapter 5 that Jesus encounters a lame man at the Pool of Bethesda. This man has been lame, unable to walk for thirty-eight years, and he was at this pool because of a superstition that had developed there.

You see, when the waters were stirred or began to bubble, which was caused by an underground spring, whoever entered those waters first when that happened were healed. Thus, if you were lame, you would never be able to make it in and yet this man, in this hopeless situation must have thought, *“What do I have to lose! At least I can try to crawl in!”*

And as Jesus sees this man He asks Him, **“Do you want to be made well?”** John 5:6.

Of course he did but his response is interesting because he tells Jesus that he has no one to place him in the water to be the first one in and to be healed!

And the response of Jesus is simple as He tells this man, **“Rise, take up your bed and walk.”** John 5:8. And he does! He had the faith to do it and that is incredible since he had not walked in thirty-eight years!

After that Jesus leaves and this man goes to the Temple to praise and worship God for this miracle that was done in his life.

In the Temple area he encounters these Jewish religious leaders who saw him carrying his bed, which was against the Law that they had made, and they are coming against him. In fact, this breaking of the Law brought a death sentence to this man, he could have been stoned to death.

As I have said before, the Law kills but the Spirit gives life and that is exactly what we see here.

This man who was healed told these Jewish religious leaders of a man that healed him, but he did not know it was Jesus. Not yet.

After this we see that Jesus found this man and I believe at this point this man gets saved and he goes and tells the Jewish religious leaders of what Jesus had done for him.

And the response of these Jewish religious leaders is interesting. This is what the Law does, **“For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.”** John 5:16.

And it is out of this that Jesus is going to show these Jewish religious leaders that He is Almighty God, equal with the Father.

That is what John told us in John 1:1-2, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”**

And that is what John will deal with throughout this Gospel, that Jesus is Almighty God, equal with the Father, eternal! And, in the Incarnation, God became flesh and dwelt amongst us.

That is something that the Jewish religious leaders refused to believe, that the Messiah would be God in the flesh and yet, that is what the Old Testament teaches, but they did not want to believe it. They saw the Messiah as a man like Moses, but John is clearly showing us that the Messiah, Jesus, is Almighty God! (See Micah 5:2)

And Jesus is showing these Jewish religious leaders that very thing, that He is Almighty God, equal with the Father. How can I be so sure?

Because what we are told in John 5:18, **“Therefore the Jews sought to all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.”**

And please understand that this was not a one-time statement by Jesus or something that these Jewish religious leaders misunderstood. That phrase **“making himself equal with God”** is in the present perfect tense verb in the Greek, which means this. That Jesus was *continually* making Himself equal with God!

This was not an isolated incident, not at all. This was the trademark, you might say, of His ministry!

Remember what we are told in John 10:31-33, **“Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, ‘Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?’ The Jews answered Him, saying, ‘For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.’”**

Again, this was the thrust of His ministry, that He is Almighty God and at least the Jews were honest about this. There are so many cults and religious teachers that try to deny the fact that Jesus is Almighty God, and they will die in their sins because of that! (John 8:24)

One writer put it like this,

Throughout the centuries, scholars and skeptics have given many different answers to the query, “Who is Jesus Christ?”

His life is the most influential ever lived, and its impact continues to escalate.

Still, Jesus' true identity is still hotly debated by modern historians and theologians. Countless opinions have appeared as unbelievers have attempted to explain away the truth about Him.

The Jewish leaders of Jesus' day, motivated by their own bitter jealousy, accused Him of being a Samaritan (8:48) who was demon-possessed (7:20; 8:52), insane (10:20), and of illegitimate birth (8:41).

Although they could not deny Jesus' astonishing power, they discounted it as being of satanic origin (Matt 12:24). Their successors similarly reviled Jesus as "a transgressor in Israel, who practiced magic, scorned the words of the wise, [and] led the people astray" (F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* [Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1972], 165).

The theological skeptics and liberals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were intent on denying Jesus' deity. They viewed Him as the quintessential strictly human moral teacher, in whom the spark of divinity inherent in all people burned most brightly. In their minds, Jesus' sacrificial life provided mankind with a model that all should follow, but not with a means by which men might be saved. Thus, He was "an example for faith, not the object of faith" (J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* [Reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], 85).

To twentieth-century existentialists, such as the highly influential Rudolf Bultmann, the Jesus of history was all but unknowable. That did not bother Bultmann, however, since he believed that the "Christ of faith" invented by the church could still provide the basis for a genuine religious experience. Neoorthodox theologians, such as Karl Barth, were not willing to so completely ignore the factual significance of Jesus' life or His deity. Yet they were not willing to accept and believe the biblical record of Christ in a truly historical sense.

Other conceptions of Jesus range from the crusading socio-political revolutionary of liberation theology, to the cynical Jewish sage of the Jesus Seminar, to the countercultural hero of the rock musicals *Godspell* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

But all such fanciful and blasphemous viewpoints are far removed from the God-man revealed in holy Scripture. They say more about the obstinate unbelief and perverted imaginations of the people who created them than about Jesus' true identity.

Ironically, in all the debate over Him, Jesus' own self-testimony is seldom considered reasonably.

Did He, as historic Christianity has always maintained, claim to be God incarnate in human flesh? Or, as skeptics argue, did His followers later invent those claims and attribute them to Him?

All this unbelieving pseudo scholarship ignores the biblical account of His life and ministry, which leaves no legitimate doubt about who Jesus declared Himself to be, and who He was.

- John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Matthew 5:17-24*

Last week we began a section where Jesus is showing them and us that He is Almighty God and I believe there are three main points that He will bring out. He will show us His . . .

EQUALITY IN CREATION – JOHN 5:17-18

EQUALITY IN POWER – JOHN 5:19-21

EQUALITY TO JUDGE – JOHN 5:22-30

And last time we looked at that first point, His equality in creation. And we saw that Jesus created all things and He not only created them, but He also sustains them, He holds everything together, even out lives.

And, as I have said, the Jews got it because they wanted to kill Jesus because He, being a man, made Himself equal with God!

This morning we are going to look at that second point – ***EQUALITY IN POWER!***

And I have broken down these verses we will be looking at into three main points.

They are,

MUTUAL WORKS – JOHN 5:19

MUTUAL LOVE – JOHN 5:20

MUTUAL POWER TO RAISE THE DEAD – JOHN 5:21

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in John chapter 5, beginning in verse 19, and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and see how Jesus is Almighty God!

JOHN 5

VERSE 19

As Jesus begins these words to these Jewish religious leaders He says, “**Most assuredly**” or “**Verily, verily.**”

These words can be translated into our vernacular like this, “***Listen carefully and get this straight***” or “***Pay attention!***”

Why did Jesus want them to listen closely, to pay attention to what He was saying? What is Jesus speaking about?

Jesus is telling them that He freely has submitted Himself to do the Father's will.

Now as some read that they see Jesus as lesser than the Father, kind of a subservient of the Father.

Why is that?

Because He is not doing what He wants but what the Father wants and thus, because of that, He must not be as powerful, as strong as God the Father.

That is not at all the point that Jesus is making here.

First of all, we have to understand that Jesus, in the Incarnation where God became flesh and dwelt amongst us, has emptied Himself of some of His Godly attributes.

We see this in Philippians 2:6-8 as Paul speaks of Jesus in the Incarnation, **“who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”**

Listen to how The Amplified Bible puts these verses, **“Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God], did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained, But stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being. And after He had appeared in human form, He abased and humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross!”**

You see, when God became flesh and dwelt amongst us, He emptied Himself of some of His Godly attributes, which did not make Him a lesser God, and He submitted to do the Father's will!

And Paul's point is that Jesus Christ is God, He has existed and will continue to exist as God, and that is something that will never change!

And we may miss this in the English, but the word "**form**" is the Greek word MORPHE and it speaks of the outward manifestation of an inward reality.

In other words, the second person of the Holy Trinity, the Word has always existed, He has always been God and when He became flesh and dwelt among us, He was still God even though He took on a body of flesh. That inward reality was manifested in the things He did even though He was covered with flesh!

Then Paul says that Jesus "**did not consider it robbery to be equal with God**"?

What is he trying to say here?

He is saying that Jesus did not try to steal His deity from God, He didn't try to take away something that was not His.

You see, Jesus is God, equal with the Father; He is not "*a god*" like some teach, but Almighty God!

Thus, he didn't have to take it because it was already His!

And then, in Philippians 2:7 we are told that He "**made Himself of no reputation**" or that He "**emptied Himself.**"

Again, what does that mean?

Jesus Christ, God Almighty, the one who created the heavens and the earth, “**emptied himself**” of all the rights He had as being deity and took on the body of not just a man, but a servant!

It was not that Jesus was 50% God and 50% man or even 75% God and 25% man. But He was 100% God, and 100% man and God alone can do that.

I may not understand that, but it is what the Scriptures teach.

Then what did Jesus empty Himself of, which that phrase “**made Himself of no reputation**” speaks of?

First of all, He emptied Himself of His divine glory. We see that in John 17:1, 5, where we are told, “**. . . ‘Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You . . . And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.’**”

Secondly, He emptied Himself of His divine authority as we are told in John 5:30, “**I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.**”

Thirdly, He emptied Himself of some of His divine attributes, He did not stop being omniscient or all-knowing; He did not stop being omnipresent or present everywhere; He did not stop being omnipotent or all-powerful; He did not stop being immutable, but He chose not to exercise those attributes during His earthly ministry.

We see Him get up early to pray and seek direction from His Father. In Mark 13:32 we are told, “**But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.**”

The fourth thing Jesus emptied Himself of was His eternal riches that are due Him. We see that in II Corinthians 8:9 where we are told, **“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”**

And in Mark 10:45 we are told, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

The fifth thing that Jesus emptied Himself of when He became flesh and blood was that He temporarily emptied Himself of His intimate relationship with the Father as He bore the sins of the world on the cross of Calvary.

In Matthew 27:46 we are told, **“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’”**

I like the way that one writer summed this all up for us. He wrote,

What is the Incarnation but His humility in emptying Himself and becoming Man?

What is His life on earth but humility in taking the form of a servant?

What was His death on the cross if not the supreme demonstration of humility - “He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

Everything about the life and ministry of Jesus spoke of humility.

What could speak of humility more than a lion becoming a lamb - the Lion of the Tribe of Judah becoming the Lamb of God - the Sovereign of the universe becoming the sacrifice for our sins?

- Source Unknown

And what Jesus said here in John chapter 5, about doing the Father's will, we see that in many places in the Scriptures.

We see that spoken of in Hebrews 10:9, “... ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ ...”

In John 6:38 we are told, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

In John 14:31 Jesus said, “But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do....”

In John 8:29 we are told, “And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.”

In Luke 22:42 we are told, “... ‘Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.’”

And lastly, in John 17:4, where Jesus said as He prayed to the Father, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.”

The idea here is that He, as God the Son, does nothing independently. He was and is fully submitted to the Father's will. This submission comes by choice, not by coercion or by an inferior nature. In the Incarnation Jesus was fully God and fully man!

And what we see here in John 5:19 is that Jesus is affirming His deity based on the mutual works He and His Father were doing.

In other words, no one can do the works that God does unless that Person is God!

I like the way that Arthur W. Pink sums this up for us. He wrote,

It will be seen that in verse 30 we have a strictly parallel statement, and by noting what is added there the one in verse 19 is more easily understood.

“The Son can do nothing of himself” of verse 19 is repeated in the “I can do nothing of myself” in verse 30, and then in the closing words of verse 30 we find that the Lord explains His meaning by giving as a reason - “Because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”

The limitation is not because of any defect in His person (brought about by the incarnation) nor because of any limitation in His power (voluntary or imposed); it was solely a matter of will. “The Son can do nothing of himself,” literally, “nothing out of himself,” that is, “nothing” as proceeding from or originating with Himself. In other words, the force of what He said was this: “I cannot act independently of the Father.”

- Arthur W. Pink, Gospel of John

Let me add this. God is holy, He is righteous, there is no darkness in Him at all. So, whatever the Father asks the Son to do will be perfect, it will be right, and the will of the Father is the will of the Son because Jesus is not going to do something that would make Him unrighteous or unholy. There is not even one spot of darkness in Him!

The Son was so vitally connected with God the Father that He could not act independently. He does not mean that He did not have the power to do anything by Himself, but that He was so closely united with God that He would only do the very things which He saw His Father doing.

Warren Wiersbe put it like this. He wrote,

Jesus claimed to be one with His Father in His works. If healing a man on the Sabbath was a sin, then the Father was to blame!

Jesus did nothing “of Himself” but only that which the Father was doing. The Father and the Son worked together, doing the same deeds in the same way. “I and the Father are One” (John 10:30).

When our Lord came to earth as man, He submitted Himself to the Father in everything. “Lo I come to do Thy will, O God” (Heb 10:9).

He veiled His glory and laid aside the independent exercise of His divine attributes. In the wilderness, Satan tempted Him to use his divine powers for Himself, but He refused to act independently. He was totally dependent on the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT*, p. 245

So the works that the Father wanted done are the works that Jesus wanted done. In other words – ***MUTUAL WORKS!***

And as we continue on, we will see – ***MUTUAL LOVE!***

And that love is going to be based on the work that Jesus was going to do, as we will see.

VERSES 20

Here is another important point – ***MUTUAL LOVE!***

You see, the relationship between the Father and the Son is based in ***LOVE!***

Please understand that this relationship between the Father and the Son is not a master, slave relationship but one based in love, as I have said. And this is a continuous love not one that comes and goes!

That is the point that Morris makes as he wrote, *“The Father loves the Son (the tense denotes a continuing habitual love; the Father never ceases to love the Son).”*

Now in saying that, what Greek word do you think John uses for this love that the Father has for the Son?

I think we would assume it was **AGAPE** love or that unconditional love that God has for us. But that is not the word that John uses, interestingly enough.

He uses the Greek word **PHILEO** for **“love”** which is a brotherly type of love, a love that speaks of having deep feelings of affection that friends would have.

And this is the only time we see this Greek word used in the New Testament for the Father’s love for the Son.

Not only do we see this word used but the way it is used is also interesting. This Greek word is used in the present tense and what that means is that it is a love that is ongoing, a love that is unbroken.

The idea here is that this love has gone on from eternity past and on into all of eternity!

Now, in saying that, what about when the Father turned His face from the Son, didn’t His love for Jesus turn away as well?

Not at all. He loved Jesus with this love that will never be broken, He just could not look upon Him when He bore the sins of the world, our sins!

For us, that is a love that we don’t really understand because our brotherly love waxes and wanes, depending upon what the other person does or doesn’t do to us.

That is not the love that the Father and the Son have. It is a perfect love, a love that does not wax or wane!

And look at what this picture that Jesus is painting for us is all about. He was basically saying, ***“My Father has such deep affection for Me, that He never does anything that He doesn’t reveal to Me, and I never do anything He hasn’t directed Me to do, even healing on the Sabbath.”***

So if what Jesus did, heal this man on the Sabbath was wrong, it was against the Law, not only is Jesus wrong for doing it, but so is the Father.

I can imagine the look on the faces of these Jewish religious leaders when Jesus said that. They must have been blow away and what could they say? Jesus was only doing what the Father told Him to do, so how could that be wrong.

And it was not wrong because there is no sin, no darkness, nothing that God does that is wrong!

And Jesus tells these Jewish religious leaders, and I am paraphrasing here, ***“If you think the healing of this lame man was a great work, you ain’t seen nothing yet because I am going to do even greater works than this!”***

And we see the Father working through the Son, through Jesus as He heals the leper’s, healed Peter’s mother-in-law, heals the Centurion’s servant, stills the sea, heals the paralytic, delivers those who are demon possessed, opens the eyes of the blind, opens the ears of the deaf, restores the mute, Jairus’s daughter is healed, the woman with an issue of blood was healed, the widows son is raised from the dead, Lazarus is raised from the dead, and so much more that Jesus did as He healed multitudes of people.

In fact, John reminds us in John 21:25, “**And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.**”

So yes, Jesus was going to do greater things, but there is something specific that He was going to do, and we will be looking at that next.

I have called this section – *MUTUAL POWER TO RAISE THE DEAD!*

And I believe it is born out of this love that we were talking about. You see, the work of saving people was born out of God’s love for this fallen world, for you and me.

Remember what Jesus said in John 3:16, “**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**”

And as much as the Father loves us, so does the Son as He willingly laid down His life for us and we did not deserve it!

That is what Paul said in Romans 5:8, “**But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**”

Let’s read on and see what Jesus has to say next to these Jewish religious leaders.

VERSE 21

Now we might not think much about this verse that states that not only does God the Father raise the dead but so does God the Son!

Why is this such a big deal?

Because the Bible, in the Old Testament, it says that only God raises the dead and thus, Jesus is making Himself equal with the Father, He is saying that they are One, that He is God!

Let me show you what I mean about God alone raising the dead.

In Deuteronomy 32:39 we are told, **“Now see that I, even I, am He, And there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand.”**

In I Samuel 2:6 we are told, **“The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up.”**

This is speaking of the Sovereignty of God, that He does as He pleases, He can give life to the dead!

Again, we don't think much about this, but to these Jewish religious leaders, they clearly understood that only God can raise the dead!

Thus, if Jesus is claiming that He too can raise the dead then He is saying that He is God!

This is a physical healing or raising from the dead, which we see Jesus do in the New Testament.

But I think this goes beyond that and it is also speaking of spiritual healing. In other words, those that are dead in sin Jesus can bring back to life through His atoning work on the cross of Calvary!

Listen to what Paul said in Ephesians 2:1-10, “*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*”

Let me first say this regarding Ephesians 2:1. In your Bibles that the phrase “**He made alive**” are in italics. That means that they were added to the text for clarity. But also understand that this idea is implied from the context.

Obviously, Paul was writing to believers who were “**made alive**” by God working in their lives!

Therefore, Ephesians 2:1 originally read, “*And you were dead in trespasses and sins.*”

And Paul starts out with a bang, you might say. Every person who is not in Christ, is dead!

Ray Stedman put it like this. He wrote,

Of all the truth expressed in Scripture, the truth found at the beginning of Ephesians 2 is the hardest for human beings to hear, believe, and accept.

Here, in these first three verses, is the revelation of a truth so difficult for us to receive that we immediately tend to discount it and water it down. The result is that we do not have a realistic outlook on the true hopelessness of our condition apart from Christ - or the true wonder of our position once we are in Christ.

In these verses we find Paul's great analysis of our problem. We are not a little misguided. We are not culturally deprived or misled in our thinking. The solution to the human condition is not better education or a social program or enhanced self-esteem. No, our problem is more fundamental and hopeless than that. Our problem is that, apart from God, we are dead.

- Ray Stedman

Hard to swallow but that is very true!

And because of this spiritual death we are insensitive to the things of God because our sins have separated us from God.

And when Paul speaks of "trespasses" or PARAPTOMA, (par-ap'-to-mah) in the Greek, he speaks of going in the wrong direction while "sins" or HAMARTIA (ham-ar-tee'-ah) in the Greek speaks of missing the mark and the mark is perfection. In archery it was the bull's eye!

You first must know the problem so you than can receive the solution and that is what Paul is doing here.

You see, all have missed the mark, and all are spiritually dead to the things of God outside of Christ. They are like spiritual zombies walking around.

And yes, you can dress them up, put a hat on their head; a cigar in their mouth but the fact of the matter is that dead is dead!

Many, even in the church today, may look good outwardly, all dressed up, but they are spiritually dead, they are unable to feel or be sensitive to the things of God.

In Isaiah 59:1-2 we are told of this condition, **“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.”**

And how is this then manifested in our lives?

Look again at Ephesians 2:2-3, where we are told, **“in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”**

Here is the picture that Paul is painting for us. He is telling us that outside of Christ people meander through life according to the course of this world or the world’s system of values apart from God.

And isn’t that exactly what we see in the world today as people try to satisfy their fleshly desires? Of course it is!

In fact, the word **“desires”** implies that they are seeking after these things with great diligence, it is a willful act on their part and because of their sin the wrath of God will come upon their lives!

And here are three enemies of man: **SATAN** who is the prince of this world that is in rebellion against God, and he uses us as pawns to be drawn into the lusts of this **WORLD** that is opposed to God through **FLESHLY** lusts.

Sin is dangled in front of us as if it is some prize to obtain but, in the end, it only brings about death. May we be aware of Satan, the world and the flesh so we won't be drawn into its deception.

And let me say this. You are either following the Lord or you are following Satan! I know, shocking to many but that is the reality. Those are the only options, and you can see who a person is following by the fruit that is produced in their lives!

Now I do realize that many don't want to hear that about themselves. They don't want to hear that they are sinners.

And thus, what the church has done is they removed "**SIN**" from what is being taught because they are afraid it might hurt their fragile self-esteem.

Listen carefully to a few quotes from Emerging Church leaders and you will see what I mean.

"Repentance is not turning from sin. It is a 'celebration' of life in Christ. Anyone who tells you that you need to repent is not talking about Christianity." - Rob Bell, "The 'gods' Aren't Angry Tour," Nov. 16, 2007, Dallas, TX

Doug Pagitt, Emerging Leader, author and pastor of Solomon's Porch in Minneapolis, was asked ***"Is homosexuality incompatible with Christian faith?"***

Pagitt simply replied: ***"NO. Being Gay and Christian is not a contradiction in any way."*** - Quoted by Mark Driscoll in "Why I Left the Emerging Church" at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fall 2007

How can people listen to these guys? It is amazing to me, but it is what they have been taught. Listen to what Rob Bell had to say about the Bible.

“(This is) part of the problem with continually insisting that one of the absolutes of the Christian faith must be a belief that “Scripture alone” is our guide. It sounds nice, but it is not true . . . When people say that all we need is the Bible, it is simply not true.” - Rob Bell, Velvet Elvis, p.68

So you remove the authority of the Bible. You remove sin from our lives by downplaying what sin is. Thus, without sin you don't need a Savior, you don't need God to become flesh and die for our sins – you don't need Jesus.

I hope you see how dangerous this is. And that is why Paul is hitting this hard, you are dead in your trespasses and sins!

And here is the reality before we come to the solution. Warren Wiersbe put it like this,
The unbeliever is not sick; he is dead! He does not need resuscitation; he needs resurrection. All lost sinners are dead, and the only difference between one sinner and another is the state of decay. The lost derelict on skid row may be more decayed outwardly than the unsaved society leader, but both are dead in sin - and one corpse cannot be more dead than another! This means that our world is one vast graveyard, filled with people who are dead while they live (1 Tim. 5:6).

- Warren Wiersbe

That is what we need to know and now that we see the hopelessness of our situation, we read **“But God . . .”** Those two words change everything!

People want to clean up their act before coming to God, be more lovable to God but you can't, He already loves you so much that He died for you!

Why does God love us so much?

It is not because we are so great, but it is because of His rich mercy that He does not give to us what we deserve, eternal punishment.

Instead, He gives to us eternal life, not because we deserve it, but, again, He loves us that much!

You see, we were spiritually dead and God, because of His great love for us, He made us spiritually alive, not because we deserved it or were worthy of being saved, but by His grace or unmerited favor that He has bestowed upon us.

And now we are sensitive to the things of God, the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts as we read the Word of God, as we hear the Word of God, and-so-on.

Now there is one requirement that we all must have before God can do this, and that is we must be dead, dead to all our attempts of being justified before God by our own efforts.

It is as Jesus said in John 5:24, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”**

We were dead but Christ has given us life, eternal life with Him! ***BUT GOD . . .!***

Make no mistake about it, God loves us. God saved us. And now God has raised us up with Christ! How powerful that is, and the focus is not what we have done, but what God has done for us!

I think the most important question we must ask is this. ***“What must I do to be saved?”***

Now, in saying that there is a plethora or an abundance of answers that people have.

Some would say we are saved through baptism, or confirmation, or church membership, or keeping the Law, or being good, or living by the Sermon on the Mount, or giving to those in need, or communion, or paying for our sins in Purgatory, and the list can go on and on!

No, that is not how you are saved.

We can't work our way into heaven because we have missed the mark of perfection and thus, our sin separates us from God.

And the reality is, the only thing we have added to the work of salvation is sin, God did the rest by saving us and our salvation is only found in Christ, and it is through Christ's finished work that grace is given to us!

Paul put it this way in Romans 6:23, "**For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**"

Thus, the basis for our salvation is grace, the means of our salvation is faith and it is a work of God!

Keep in mind that faith is not a worthy act, it is not some work we do. It is simply reaching out to accept and receive God's gift of eternal life.

Now some believe that the faith is a gift of God and thus, God gives to some the faith to be saved and others He does not. Foolishness!

You see, if that was true then man would have no free will in this matter; it is all predetermined by God. And if I go to Hell, it is not my fault, it is God's because He did not give me the faith to believe! Foolishness!

Faith is not a means of salvation to those in the Reformed Theology group, which J. I. Packer is part of; *faith is a gift of God. No person, unregenerate person can BELIEVE unless and until the person is regenerated and only God can do that!*

But you look at the Scriptures and we do have a free will to choose.

New Testament Greek Scholar Harold W. Hoehner explains it like this,

Much debate has centered around the demonstrative pronoun “this” (touto). Though some think it refers back to “grace” and others to “faith,” neither of these suggestions is really valid because the demonstrative pronoun is neuter whereas “grace” and “faith” are feminine.

Also, to refer back to either of these words specifically seems to be redundant. Rather the neuter touto, as is common, refers to the preceding phrase or clause. (In Eph 1:15 and 3:1 touto, “this,” refers back to the preceding section.)

Thus it refers back to the concept of salvation (2:4–8a), whose basis is grace and means is faith. This salvation does not have its source in man (it is “not from yourselves”), but rather, its source is God’s grace for “it is the gift of God.”

- Harold W. Hoehner, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament*, p. 624

Also, that means that our salvation is a *gift* of God not a reward for man’s *hard work and good deeds*.

And what we should do since God gives it as a free gift, is that we should praise and thank Him.

Make no mistake about it, if we earned it, we would boast and pat ourselves on the back.

The bottom line is this. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone – and it truly is ***BUT GOD . . .!***

Now the Bible clearly shows us that God the Father raised Jesus from the dead. Just one verse to show you what I mean.

In Ephesians 1:19-20 we are told regarding God the Father, “**and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.**” (See also I Corinthians 6:14, II Corinthians 4:14)

We see here that God the Father has the power to raise the dead and He raised Jesus up from the dead.

But what about Jesus, does He have this power as well, because, if He is God, then He should!

In John 10:17-18 we are told, “**Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.**” (See also John 11:25, John 2:19)

Jesus has the power to not only raise the dead, as we see with Lazarus and others, but He has the power to resurrect Himself from the dead because He is God!

And like in creation, we see the Triune God actively involved in the resurrection of Jesus as the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead as well. (See Romans 8:11, Romans 1:4)

Let me put this into perspective for you, because many don't see this as a big deal, but in the Jewish mind, it was a big deal. You see, if Jesus could raise the dead, He was telling them He was God and He not only was God, but He is God and He will always be God!

We are told,

For Jesus to claim to have power to raise the dead was a blasphemous thing in the eyes of the Jewish leaders; they gave that power to God alone.

They said that Jehovah held the three great keys: the key to open the heavens and give rain (Deut 28:12); the key to open the womb and give conception (Gen 30:22); and the key to open the grave and raise the dead (Ezek 37:13).

As far as the Gospel records are concerned, Jesus had not yet raised anyone from the dead; so to make this claim was to invite even more opposition.

John 5:21 certainly can mean much more than the physical raising of people from the dead, for certainly Jesus was referring to His gift of spiritual life to the spiritually dead. He amplified this truth further as recorded in John 5:24-29.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 245

Make no mistake about it, Jesus wants these Jewish religious leaders to understand that He is Almighty God.

And we have seen this last time as we looked at Jesus and His – ***EQUALITY IN CREATION!***

We have seen it this week as we have looked at Jesus and His – ***EQUALITY IN POWER!***

And next time we will look at Jesus and His – ***EQUALITY TO JUDGE!***

Let me close with this for you to think about. We are told,

A Jewish soldier had been attending services where he heard of the character and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He went to his rabbi and said, “Rabbi, the Christians say that the ‘Christ’ has already come, while we claim He is yet to come.”

“Yes,” assented the rabbi.

“Well,” asked the young soldier, “when our Christ comes, what more than Jesus Christ can we expect?”

What, indeed, since Jesus Christ was fully God?

- Illustrations of Bible Truths

Make no mistake about it, Jesus is Almighty God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. And if you reject that, as Jesus said, you will die in your sins.

Jesus made it clear to the Jewish religious leaders who He is, and He has made it clear to us. May we believe!