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**Presentation Transcript**  
**True Spirituality 03 – Walking Worthy**  
**By Bill Jacobs**  
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Today we're continuing on with our series on *True Spirituality*. I'm reminded of the time Jesus told the disciples that He would be taken and killed. And Peter protested, telling Him that he wasn't going to let that happen to Him. And Jesus responded by saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan, (and I'm paraphrasing) you tend to the things of men more than the things of God." Well, this series is about the things of God – what is important to God and what *should* be important to us. And it's also about the human propensity to focus on the less important things of God and ignore, or give less weight, to the things of God that are most important to Him.

We saw in our last presentation of this series, for example, the Pharisees, who focused on the external observance of the Law, while ignoring the heart and the spirit, which is the true purpose of the Law to begin with. In the first presentation of this series, we saw that if we ever hope to be spiritual beings, we must allow God to teach us about Himself, because we don't know anything about God and what He wants us to do. So we called that one *God Knows Best*. In the second presentation, we noted that many Christians do not understand the purpose of the Law, thinking that it is a standard they have to keep in order to earn their salvation, when in fact, salvation has already been given to those who love God and seek to follow Him. The Law is God's instruction to us to show us how to follow Him and how to have a relationship with Him, but it's *not* a way that we can earn salvation.

So now we begin our third presentation of this series on *True Spirituality*, and we're going to call this one *Walking Worthy*. I'm going to pick up where we left off in the last presentation with this one. In it, we said that Christ has a way of drawing us into relationship with Him. Let's look in Acts 26, verse 1.

**Acts 26:1** – This is a really interesting story. Paul has been detained, at the behest of the Jews, by the Romans, and he's in Caesarea now, and he's before King Agrippa, who said to Paul, *You have permission to speak for yourself. So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense. "King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews – and especially so, because*

*you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently. The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee. And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead? I, too, was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.”* Paul is saying here – and he said this in other places – that regarding the observance of the law, he was blameless. He was a Pharisee. And that’s what they did. They observed the law. And yet, while he was perfect in his observance of the letter of the law, he was wreaking havoc in the early church. He was fighting against God, which means he isn’t keeping the spirit of the law at all, doesn’t it?

**V-12** – *“On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.”* So he’s going to Damascus to persecute the church there, and he has papers of authority to do that from the chief priests in Jerusalem. *“About noon, O King, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice, saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It’s hard for you to kick against the goads.’ And then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. ‘Now, get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of Me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’* It’s interesting, isn’t it, that as Jesus was telling Paul that He was going to send him to *open* the eyes of the Gentiles, he was at that very instant *blinding* Paul, and at the same time, opening his *spiritual* eyes to God.

Now notice what Paul says he did as a result of this confrontation. It’s also interesting that we’re told in this account earlier that the Jews wanted Paul to be sent to Jerusalem hoping that they could ambush him on the road. He’d already been ambushed on the road once, hadn’t he, but by God.

**V-19** – So Paul continues, *“So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to that vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, and then to those in Jerusalem, and then all Judea, and then to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God, and prove their repentance by their deeds.”* As Jesus ambushed him on the Damascus road and blinded him, he knew that there he was, lying on the ground, beaten and

helpless before God. The term “dead meat” comes to mind. He was blind. He was powerless. He was at God’s mercy. He was as good as dead. He’d been caught red-handed, killing God’s people, and trying to wreak havoc in His church. But Jesus, instead of killing Paul, when He so easily could have there on the Damascus road, showed mercy and favor to Paul. He let him off the hook. He turned him from a killer of Christians to a Christian in about ten seconds. And Paul’s response to that was that he repented that very instant of his murderous intent toward God’s servants, and he became one Himself. He surrendered his life to Jesus Christ, because he realized, number one, he had no other choice, and two, he began to understand from that moment what the love of God was like. It was not anything like that external, rigid, obsessive, punitive religion that he’d practiced all his life – that religion that he excelled at so well and prided himself in so much. It was a religion of forgiveness and mercy, made possible by the death of the one who had him by the throat, so to speak. Quite an interesting occurrence, isn’t it? If we’ll just stop and think about what happened there, it tells us so much – it tells us so much – about what God is doing in our lives.

One of the biggest things that God gives us is the gift of forgiveness. And that’s what happened there on that road. Paul knew that even though he completely did not deserve it, he was forgiven by God.

**V-21** – Then Paul says, in verse 21, *“That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. But I have had God’s help to this very day. And so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen, that the Christ would suffer, and as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to His own people and to the Gentiles.”* It helps me to kind of humanize God, in a way. And by that, I mean to think about the fact that God has a lot of the same kinds of feelings that we have. It helps me to think about these things in *human* terms.

Can you remember a time when you really, really messed up, and were caught red-handed out in the open, and you were just forgiven by someone? I remember a time when one of my daughters, as a teenager, had a crush on one of the boys in our congregation. And his mother called me to talk about the boy’s little sister, who was having some problems. But my daughter thought that she called to talk about her and the boy. And she was very curious about what we were going to say, so she eavesdropped on an extension phone. While she was furtively listening, she heard this lady say some things about her boyfriend’s little sister that made my daughter feel very sorry for her. And so the next time they were together, my daughter expressed her concern – soft-hearted thing that she was for this little girl. And of course, the little girl told her mother. And her mother concluded that either I had told her this confidential information, or she had been listening. And so my daughter was *busted* of her eavesdropping. Now my daughter had never done anything like that before – ever – at least, that I know about. And I could see that she was so smitten with this boy that it was very hard for her *not* to do that – to listen. But I was *so* embarrassed that my pastoral confidentiality had been breeched. I was mortified. Because this was very sensitive information that really didn’t need to be out and about. So I went to this woman with this feeling of abject impropriety and failure,

and I apologized to her. And she smiled at me, and said, “I know that you didn’t intend for this to happen, and I know that your daughter is a good girl who was just tempted in the moment. Forget about it.” And I started to apologize again, and she smiled at me, and said, “It’s over. I’ll never bring it up again. It’s like it never happened. You don’t have to bring it up either.” You know, the graciousness that she extended to me, and to my daughter, and to our family, and to my ministry *amazed* me. It was so soothing, and I felt such a sense of relief to realize that I wasn’t going to be taken to task for what I had allowed to happen. In that moment I felt so vulnerable, and so wrong, and yet so good all at the same time. She gave me the gift of forgiveness – graciously and easily.

The Bible tells us that we can be that way with people because God has been that way with us – just like He was with Paul on the Damascus road. Paul knew his fate as he was lying there blind. He was helpless. And yet he was allowed to live, and he was allowed to repent – actually, he was *helped* to repent – and he was given a new life in God – in the love of God – where he had a different kind of relationship with God than he’d ever had before. It changed him completely. That’s a pretty good thing, isn’t it – to be given that.

There’s something else we’re given, too, though as Christians. I want to reiterate something he said there in verse 21.

**V-21** – He said, *“That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. But I have had God’s help to this very day. And so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen.”* So Paul, after his conversion from murder of Christians to Christian, said that he had God’s help every day since that day – that God’s love was supporting him and with him *every* day. They were now friends, instead of enemies. Friends help us, don’t they? They take care of us. So instead of distance, and obsessiveness, and murderous intent, there was now closeness.

1 Corinthians 13. This is what Paul said later on in his life. He’s talking about what’s really important to God – just like we are.

**1 Cor. 13:8** – And he said, (you all know that this is the “Love Chapter,” right?) *Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease.* I really wish that there were some people that could understand that – that love is more important than prophecy. *Where there are tongues, they will be still. Where there is knowledge, it’s going to pass away.* Book learning is just a temporary thing. Love is not. *For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when perfection comes, the imperfection disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child. I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child. And when I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but as a poor reflection as in a mirror, then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.* So you see, he let’s us know in this last phrase that he’s really talking about knowing and being known by God, and that he longs to know God better. He knows God knows him. He knows that he doesn’t see all that there is to see about God, and that he longs to have that kind of connection with God – that further knowing. And that comes from a relationship. It doesn’t come from counting out every little piece of

seed that you're going to tithe on. It comes from having a relationship – being forgiven. Then he says, *Now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*

But you know, there are lots of people I know in the ministry that hate to talk about love. I even know a man in the church that couldn't say the word. He called it the L-word. He wouldn't say, "Love." (I suppose that he beat his wife might have had something to do with that.) John wrote about it. You know, John, the one that was the "Son of Thunder" – Boenerges – that wanted to call down fire on people. He changed his tune after he experienced Jesus Christ in his life – and how Christ treated him. He became the apostle of love. And here's this Pharisee, who was one of the most, by his own language, obsessive, murderous, intense practitioners of that rigid code, who now says the most important thing of all is love.

So how do you suppose that this obsessive, rigid Pharisee learned that love is more important than temple worship and sacrifices? Well, he started learning it that day on Damascus road, when he was caught out in the open red-handed on his way to kill Christians. And instead of being killed himself, he was forgiven. He knew, in this life, his relationship with the one who had mercy on him could only go so far. And for that reason he longed for the day, when he could see and understand Christ the way Christ could see and understand him. We long to be with our friends, don't we, when we're not with them. And Paul even talked about longing to leave this body and be with Christ as he got older. Paul knew that God loved him, because of what happened there. And Paul loved God. They had a relationship. Paul was *rescued* from his rigid practice of the law and softened by God to where they could be friends.

What else do we get if we're a part of God's people, and His church, and are called by Him. Let's go to Job 1, and verse 8. This is a really interesting scripture.

**Job 1:8** – *Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? that there is none like him on the earth? a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" And Satan answered the LORD, and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a hedge around him, around his household, around all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands and his possessions have increased in the land."* So, when a person comes to God – when a person turns with his whole heart to God – like Paul did and like Job had, God does something completely understandable. He showers them with favor. In the Old Testament that was called *lovingkindness*, and in the New Testament it's called *grace*. It's like parents who want to lavish love on their children and overlook their faults. You know, there are some parents that are stingy with their kids. They think it will spoil them if they give them a lot. They call that spoiling. But did you know that children who have generous parents generally turn out to be generous adults? It's true. Did you know that a baby that is loved and nurtured unconditionally in the first two years of life will grow up to be a loving, nurturing adult?

A number of years ago, I was talking to the Dean of Students of Ambassador College, and he was telling me that I was the type of minister who always thought all of the kids from my congregation that applied to college should get in. Is there any other way to be? I think that's the *only* way to be. Of course, I always know their faults, but I choose not to focus on them, unless they force me to do otherwise. I know that I can help them more by focusing on their strengths.

Now, I always knew that it worked with the kids in my church, but I had this amazing insight when I started working at public school. Every now and then we'd have some little kid that was a real problem – failing academically, not able to get along with anybody and always in trouble. So we would have a meeting, and we would invite the kid, his parents, his teacher, his educational assistant, the social worker, the school psychologist, the occupational therapist, all of these people – the school system can marshal huge resources when necessary. We would get everybody in the room together, and we would structure the meeting this way: for the first third of the meeting – for twenty minutes – we would talk about this child – in this child's presence – about all his strengths. And then for twenty minutes we would talk about all the problems. And then for twenty minutes we would make a plan to help him be successful at school. And you know what – without exception – after attending dozens of those meetings, the biggest problem always was? Getting the parents to say anything good about their kid. That was *always* the problem.

God is *not* like that with us. He focuses on – He knows our faults – but He lavishes us with blessings and lovingkindness. I know why He does that because I've watched those little children as they *respond* to hearing all the adults talk about all their strengths. What that does is, it puts them in a place where they're willing to hear about their problems and then do something about it. That's what it does. Without fail, it does that. The only time it failed is when we couldn't get the parents to produce something positive about their children.

God is gracious with us. He overlooks our faults. He knows we have them, but He focuses on our strengths and how much He loves us. He dotes on us. It's not spoiling us. It's encouraging us. That's what it does to little children when you do that with them. And that's what it does to us as adults.

God gives us gifts so that we can make contributions. He gives us stuff so He has something positive to say about us even. He forgives the mistakes that we make. It says in the Bible that He keeps us "as the apple of His eye." He's not worried about spoiling us. He's generous. He takes care of us. He gives us stuff that we don't deserve. You know what Paul really deserved, while he laying there blind, was to stay blind the rest of his life or to be killed right then. Nobody would have said anything out of sync would happen if God had killed him right there. God has killed lots of other people who were on their way to hurt His children. But He had mercy on Paul. He was gracious to Him.

God is more concerned with our heart than He is with our misbehaviors and our weaknesses. As Christians, that is what is offered to all of us when we become a part of

His church. Or when we're born into a family where the parents are a part of the church, we are offered forgiveness of our sins that have separated us from God. We are offered a loving, close, caring relationship with God – where God is going to take care of us. And we are offered favor and care – care way above what we should expect. That's what God offers us. That's what grace is. It's forgiveness, it's relationship and it's favor. It's God taking care of us and providing our needs. Do you believe that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him? See, that's what that's all about. Those are the things that are important to God. It's not all the little things we do wrong all the time. It's not all the stuff that we don't even know that we're doing that's contrary to God's way.

Now, let me ask you this? What would be our natural response to those things – to those gifts that have been given to us? Well, let's go back to Paul again, and see what he did. We read this already, but in verse 19 he said:

**Acts 26:19** – “*So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, and then to those in Jerusalem, and then in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God, and prove their repentance by their deeds.*” That's what Paul did. That was his natural response to being caught out in the open – ambushed – and allowed to live – to be taken into God's arms and made a part of God's family.

So right here – here we are — we have arrived at the stumblingblock for so many Christian people. How does it work? Do we *earn* our salvation by our deeds? Or do we show our allegiance to God by them, having already been saved from our sin, not needing to earn anything? So what did Paul do? Well, he repented, didn't he? He stopped trying to kill Christians. And he started trying to make them. He realized he was headed the wrong way on that road. He thought he was a righteous law-keeper. He was very self-righteously zealous for the Law. And there on that road he found out he was trying to kill people that God loved.

He said that he taught people to do what he had done. Number one, they should *repent*. And number two, they should *turn to God*. That's what it says in verse 20. Turn to God. Allow God to take care of our sins by Christ's sacrifice. Come to God and ask for help. Realize He is the only one who can save us. Throw ourselves on His mercy, even though we don't deserve it. And then what else did he say he taught people? Turn to God and *prove* their repentance by their deeds. Show our turning by the way we live our life differently. That's how we show that we're His. We're not earning anything. We're just showing that we're His by our changed life. We're showing appreciation for what's been done for us.

We've had the cart in front of the horse for quite a long time. We think the way we get to God is by keeping this code, and God actually says it starts with our understanding of ourselves, and then our accepting of what God has for us.

**1 Jn. 4:19** – In 1 John 4, and verse 19, John, who was the apostle of love, said, *We love Him, because He first loved us.*

You know, I said earlier that it helps me to humanize these principles. I had a really interesting experience this past week. I got an email message from a young adult daughter of people that we've known for many years. She told me in this email that her father gave her our Website address, which is [www.liferesource.org](http://www.liferesource.org) if you don't have it. And after listening to our recent message, *About Depression*, she was encouraged to make contact with me. And she told me a very sad tale. I felt so bad for her. She told me she had been hurt by someone in the church a number of years ago – hurt deeply. She explained to me what happened. She told me that there was no one to understand her situation and her feelings. You know, it's really astounding how evil people can be and still call themselves Christians. Well, she ran into one of those. She tried to talk to people in her church about it, and they said things like, "Get over it," and "Why did you let him do that to you?" and "Stop whining and do something about it." Those are the kinds of things all those loving people told her. She's been so traumatized by her experience, not only with this person, but also with her congregation, that she can't even attend that church any longer, because of all the bad memories and the bad feelings. She feels like she has no one to turn to. She feels utterly isolated spiritually. That's really a bad place to be, isn't it? That's a bad place to be.

So while she was talking, I was making an effort to convey to her that I understood the anguish of heart she was feeling, and that I would take it seriously, and that I *would* help her. As she began to actually believe that that was going to happen from me, she began to cry. She cried deeply. And then she would apologize for crying. There should be some apologies all right, but she should not be making them. Someone else should be making them to her.

The next day she wrote me an email, and in it she thanked me for the time that I took to talk to her on the phone. And she told me that for a long time she's been praying that God would send somebody who could understand the torment that she'd experienced, and help her find someone of like mind spiritually to help her find her way back to God – because she's quit going to church. And she had stopped praying and studying her Bible for awhile. She said that we were an answer to her prayers. We were able to extend graciousness to her and to express caring love for her. You know, it's the ones who are hurting the most who appreciate it the most. And that kind of gratitude lasts forever – like the gratitude for that woman who forgave me and my family. That's the kind of gratitude and appreciation that Paul felt after he survived his experience with Jesus Christ on the Damascus road and realized he was still living – not only living, but now "the apple of God's eye."

You show me a person who feels that the Law of God is a burden, and I will show you a person who has not yet realized the depths of their own sinfulness. Because they have not realized that, they cannot realize love that has been extended to them. See, this is how God solves the problem of obeying the Law out of constraint, or as a Pharisee. This is how God does it. He helps us to see ourselves as we *really* are, and to realize that in spite of that, God loves us. And a natural response to that is that we love God with all our heart, with all our mind and with all our soul. That's where it begins.

So our children come to us, and they ask what they have to do to be baptized, and what do we tell them? You've got to come to church. You've got to read your Bible. You've got to start praying. You have to learn the doctrines of the church. Study those booklets. Keep the Sabbath. Keep the festivals. Stop drinking. Blah, blah, blah, blah. What we really ought to focus their minds on is what's most important. They need to focus their mind on how much God loves them, in spite of their failings. And we need to ask them if they love God with all their heart? And we must ask them if they believe that He really is ready to forgive their sins and give them eternal life? And we need to ask them if they are ready to surrender their lives to Him, because of what He's done for them? And the natural response, when they can answer those questions in the positive, is that they will surrender their lives to God, and they will live their life to please Him. They will obey God's Law because they *want* to.

Paul explains it another way in Romans 12. Let's look there.

**Rom. 12:1** – *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.* And we love God because He first loved us. That's reasonable. Love for God is a byproduct of His love for us. And the love of God motivates us to be like Him. Then he says, *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.* Why would we want to do that? Because we love God because He loves us. *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to realize how really bad he is at obeying God's law – but to think seriously – realistically – as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function. So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them. If prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith. Or ministry, which is service, let us use it in our serving. He who teaches, in teaching. He who exhorts, in exhortation. He who gives, with liberality. He who leads, with diligence. He who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another, with brotherly love and honor, giving preference to one another, not lagging in diligence, but fervent in spirit, serving God. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer, distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. And if it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourself, but rather give place to wrath. For it is written, "Vengeance is mine. I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. And if he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in so doing, you will heap coals of fire upon his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

See, there is the progression. All of these good, Godly things are an outgrowth of God's loving gift to us. And these things are "our reasonable service," he says. Now in the King James and the New King James it is translated *reasonable service*, but notice how it is translated in the NIV in verse 1. *Therefore I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy, and pleasing to God. This is your spiritual act of worship.* How do you worship God? Well, it's to live a Christian life. That's how we worship God. We can't say we're Christians unless we're actually following Christ. And Christ bids us to obey the Law.

So the deeds of the Law, which is the expression of love to God and others, is the substance of our worship. It's what we do. To live a Christian life shows that we belong to God. And that is a really *good* place to be.

Paul writes about this in another way, as well. Let's go to I Thessalonians 2:9

**1 Thess. 2:9** – He says, *For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil. For laboring night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe. And you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God, who called you into His own kingdom and glory.*

So what does this mean – *to walk worthy of God*? Let's think about that. Something's been given to us. Something's been done for us. There's a natural response that God is hoping for from us. If we respond that way, then we are walking worthy of the calling that we've been given. Let's read about it in Hebrews 6:6.

**Heb. 6:6** – This is very important stuff. *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance.* That cannot be done. Why? *Since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God and put Him to an open shame.* See, what Christ did was *so* important, and so difficult, and so painful, it is offered *once* for every person. And we all have a chance to accept it. Not two. We get *one*. If we don't accept it, if we don't hold on to it, if we don't walk worthy of that precious sacrifice that was made for us, if we quench the Spirit, if we give up what's been given to us, if we don't value it, if we sell it like Esau sold his birthright for a pot of red beans, then we're not walking worthy.

**V-7** – He says in verse 7, *For the earth, which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessings from God, but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.* But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you – yes, things that accompany salvation that we speak in this manner. He has to tell them what *can* happen, but he's confident that that's not going to happen to them, because of how God is. *For God is not unjust to forget your labor of work and love, which you have shown*

*toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* God is loving. And He is forgiving – more so than we can ever imagine. He has given salvation to us. He has given us the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the down payment of eternal life. But if we quench it, and we turn back to that old life, then we have surrendered that gift. And we'd have to repent again, and we'd have to have Christ's sacrifice applied to us again, and that's just not going to happen. Now, I don't know – at least in my mind – very many people that I would say I've even suspected have come to that point. I think once God gives you the Holy Spirit, it's really hard to get rid of it. But it can be done.

Let's look in Colossians 1:9 through verse 12. You see, something great has been given to us and there *are* expectations that we will treat it with respect.

**Col. 1:9** – *For this reason also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will and all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, and being fruitful in every good work, increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.* So, there it is, again, that theme of walking worthy of what God has done for us, and being thankful for what has been done for us. You know, if you can't be thankful, you can't be converted.

**Eph. 4:1** – *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called. And then he explains what that is. ...with lowliness, and gentleness, and longsuffering, bearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, just as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above, and through all, and in you all. But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.*

You see, people who love God, and who are walking worthy of what Jesus did for them, do *not* divide the church over doctrinal issues. They do not bluster and argue over such things. They know that loving each other and taking care of each other is *more important* – is more *spiritual*. They know that those things are more important to God, and that being right about some of the minor things isn't really that important at all. And that's what spirituality is – at least in part: minding the things of God more than the things of men, treating each other graciously, and magnanimously, and respectfully. Loving God and loving our neighbor *is* the point of the Law.

So we've now locked another piece of the interlocking puzzle in place. God knows best. We talked about that first. We have to listen to Him. The Law is *not* for salvation. It's for blessings – the greatest of which is to have a relationship with Him. Christ is for salvation. That was the second thing we talked about. And then, once given salvation

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through belief, God holds out to us the expectation that we're going to walk worthy of that great gift, and we're going to show that by the way we live our lives – that we now belong to Him.

The next presentation in the series will build on what we've already set forth. And we'll be hearing that in just a few weeks.