



TEEN TREE OF LIFE THE NARROW OR THE WIDE GATE

Part 6

April 21, 2019

Before you begin, ask yourself a very important question: Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins? If you answered yes, you will need to be sure that you are filled with The Holy Spirit. How do you do this? You name your sins to God The Father in His Son's Name. This is called rebound. As a Christian, you must rebound any time you sin. This is taught in 1JOHN 1:9: *If we confess [name] our sins [directly to God], He [God] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Now, if you have never believed that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins, all you have to do is say to yourself that you believe in Him and you are saved! The Bible verse which teaches us this is ACTS 16:31: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."*

Last week, we looked at Heaven and hell and as you probably know, on some level, those subjects are basic doctrines any Christian should know. Sadly, the teaching contained in last week's Teen Tree, is completely foreign to the average believer. No one likes to think of hell as a place in which unbelievers will spend eternity. But as Christians, we should think of hell a great deal because the most important part of our Christian walk is to share the Gospel with unbelievers. The word Gospel actually means "good news." God's Good News to all mankind is that God The Son became a man and died for the sins of the entire world and whoever believes in Him will receive eternal life: *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten [uniquely born] Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."* (JOH 3:16) Further on in JOHN 3, the apostle John states: *"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them."* (JOH 3:36 New International Version)

Heaven is an easier doctrine for some because it's where God The Father, God The Son and God The Holy Spirit live. But did you know that it's our home, too?! Look at what the apostle Paul taught in PHIL 3:17-21 (New International Version): *Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.* These verses are so important, not only because they teach us that we're just

citizens on earth and that our eternal home is in Heaven; but also that there were people on earth when Paul was teaching who were as evil as the people we encounter today. That's why studying God's Word is so important!

During this entire study, we've learned that Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was a tremendous teacher. As Christians in the Church-Age, we are commanded to study God's Word under a pastor-teacher. This is taught in **EPH 4:11 (New International Version): So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers...** The **Message Bible** translates the Greek in this magnificent way: **He (Jesus Christ) handed out gifts above and below, filled heaven with his gifts, filled earth with his gifts. He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher to train Christ's followers in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the church, until we're all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ.** So, it stands to reason that we have to be careful who is teaching us and what he's teaching. We're going to go into this subject in depth in next week's Teen Tree of Life.

Now let's look at what our Great Teacher, Jesus Christ taught His disciples and followers: **Now Jesus turned to address his disciples, along with the crowd that had gathered with them. "The religion scholars and Pharisees are competent teachers in God's Law. You won't go wrong in following their teachings on Moses. But be careful about following them. They talk a good line, but they don't live it. They don't take it into their hearts and live it out in their behavior. It's all spit-and-polish veneer. Instead of giving you God's Law as food and drink by which you can banquet on God, they package it in bundles of rules, loading you down like pack animals. They seem to take pleasure in watching you stagger under these loads, and wouldn't think of lifting a finger to help. Their lives are perpetual fashion shows, embroidered prayer shawls one day and flowery prayers the next. They love to sit at the head table at church dinners, basking in the most prominent positions, preening in the radiance of public flattery, receiving honorary degrees, and getting called 'Doctor' and 'Reverend.' Don't let people do that to you, put you on a pedestal like that. You all have a single Teacher, and you are all classmates. Don't set people up as experts over your life, letting them tell you what to do. Save that authority for God; let him tell you what to do. No one else should carry the title of 'Father'; you have only one Father, and he's in heaven. And don't let people maneuver you into taking charge of them. There is only one Life-Leader for you and them—Christ." (MATT 23:8-10 The Message Bible)**

Do you remember what a Pharisee is? For the most part, Pharisees were opponents of Jesus Christ and the first Christians. The Pharisees didn't believe in having fun and being happy. They didn't believe in rejoicing over the amazing miracles performed in front of them by Our Lord. This was because they couldn't think beyond their concept of Who they believed God was. The basis of the Mosaic Law (which the Pharisees, who were Jewish, tried to live by) was the Ten Commandments. These commandments became the principles for their lives. But, for a certain section of these Jewish men, the Ten Commandments were not enough. They wanted a rule to cover every conceivable situation!

The Book of **THE ACTS** of The Apostles describes the Pharisees perfectly: **The next day, determined to get to the root of the trouble and know for sure what was behind the Jewish accusation, the captain released Paul and ordered a meeting of the high priests and the High Council to see what they could make of it. Paul was led in and took his place before them. Paul surveyed the members of the council with a steady gaze, and then said his piece: "Friends, I've lived with a clear conscience before God all my life, up to this very moment." That set the Chief Priest Ananias off. He ordered his aides to slap Paul in the face. Paul shot back, "God will slap you down! What a fake you are! You sit there and judge me by the Law and then break the Law by ordering me slapped around!" The aides were scandalized: "How dare you talk to God's Chief Priest like that!" Paul acted surprised. "How was I to know he was Chief Priest? He doesn't act like a Chief Priest. You're right, the Scripture does say, 'Don't speak abusively to a ruler of the people.' Sorry."** Paul, knowing some of the council was made up of Sadducees and others of Pharisees and how they hated each other, decided to exploit their antagonism: **"Friends, I am a stalwart Pharisee from a long line of Pharisees. It's because of my Pharisee convictions—the hope and resurrection of the dead—that I've been hauled into this court."** The moment he said this, the council split right down the middle, Pharisees and Sadducees going at each other in heated argument. Sadducees have nothing to do with a resurrection or angels or even a spirit. If they can't see it, they don't believe it. Pharisees believe it all. And so a huge and noisy quarrel broke out. Then some of the religion scholars on the Pharisee side shouted down the others: **"We don't find anything wrong with this man! And what if a spirit has spoken to him? Or maybe an angel? What if it turns out we're fighting against God?"** (ACTS 22:30-23:9 (The Message Bible))

ACTS 22:30-23:9 clearly teaches us that the Pharisees and Sadducees (who were the religious leaders of the Jewish people during the time Our Lord was teaching) hated each other. Most of the Jews at that time believed their religious practices had a controlling influence over every part of their lives. Because of this, the Pharisees and Sadducees held a lot of power and influence over – not only the religious lives of the Jewish people – but also their finances, work habits, family lives and more.

The Pharisees are also taught about in **MARK 3:6-22 (The New International Version)**: **Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. When they heard about all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." But he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him. Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges,**

which means “sons of thunder”), Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. Then Jesus entered a house [remember, He never owned a house and trusted His Father to provide one for Him wherever He went], **and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.” And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.”**

{to be continued}