



“What God Has Joined Together”

Part I

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Thanks for joining me today. This is a time of Bible study in search for the truth of ancient apostolic Christianity. In a sea of confusion and religious chaos, together we are searching for the message and practice of first century Christianity, and it CAN be found here in this book, the New Testament. I hope you'll stay with me today as we look into some of its tremendous truths.

Let's begin today's study with a conversation that Jesus had with the Pharisees about marriage. We'll take our text from **Matthew 19**.

Matthew 19:3-6 “The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

It should go without saying that a contract from God is absolutely binding. Marriage is not merely a civil institution; it has a sacred origin and it is still very sacred in the eyes of God and should be to us also. Someone flippantly said, “Marriage is a good way to spend a weekend.” Consequently, marriages are nearly disposable in today's culture. But it is not so in the eyes of the Lord. *What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.* But today, I want to talk about more than just marriage. We will look at some other things that God has spiritually joined together that are not to be pulled apart.

On the occasion which took place in our text, the Pharisees asked Jesus a question designed to trap Him and put Him at odds with Moses. If they could make Him contradict Moses, they thought that would expose Him as a fraud and a blasphemer.

Matthew 19:3 “The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?”

They were asking this not because they were looking for a reason to divorce their wives, but because Moses had allowed divorce under the old law, and they wanted Jesus to contradict what the law of Moses said. Jesus answers their question not by going back to the law, but by going way back before that to the creation itself when God actually instituted marriage. What happened in the garden when God created Eve and presented her to Adam as a companion and suitable help is recorded in the Pharisees’ own scriptures.

Matthew 19:4-And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

He then goes on to explain further in **verse 8**.

Matthew 19:8 “He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.”

In giving that answer, Jesus did not defy Moses’ authority to do that, thus avoiding a conflict with the revered lawgiver, Moses. But at the same time, He showed how man had strayed from the original design for and sanctity of marriage, just as our society today continues to do. He points to the nature of marriage itself by saying that when God created it by joining a man and a woman together in a physical and holy union, that bond was to last for life. To never be severed by anything but death. That is still, by the way, God’s plan for marriage. Some semblance of order could be restored to our lives and society if we really lived according to God’s plan for the home. Marriage is STILL a union of one man and one woman, until death do part. I don’t care what any court or anybody says--that’s God’s definition of marriage, and to redefine that or act like it doesn’t mean anything is wrong. It DOES mean something. *What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder or separate.*

Today, I want us to look beyond just marriage, at some other things God has *joined together*, but that people somehow think they can separate. Just as divorce destroys God’s design for marriage and the home, so separating these things destroys God’s plan for redemption and our salvation.

I. God has joined grace and faith together.

There is no such thing as ‘salvation by grace alone,’ neither is there any such thing as ‘salvation by faith alone.’ What we DO read in the Bible is that salvation comes *by grace through faith*.

Ephesians 2:8 “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Romans 5:1-2 “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

So, we are saved *by grace through faith*. We access God's grace *by faith*. In fact, when we look back at all of God's blessings and promises extended to man since the beginning, without exception, every spiritual blessing has been offered *by grace*, and consequently had to be received *by faith*. God's spiritual blessings have never been doled out unconditionally without the condition of faith. No man could continue in God's blessing aside from faith. It has always been offered *by grace* and had to be received *by faith*. *Grace is unmerited favor; something given to one who doesn't deserve it. Faith means to believe and trust what God has said.* So, every blessing is undeservedly offered by grace to you, me and others in ages past, and is received by one trusting in God's word about that promise.

Here's an example: Adam was created in joint fellowship with God. He didn't deserve that, even before sin came into the picture because obviously he didn't exist to do anything to deserve it. He had no control over his own creation and original estate. Rather, God in love created Adam with a great desire, destiny and plan for him. He placed Adam in the garden and lavished upon him every good thing for him to enjoy. But was that blessing conditional? Sure it was, because God said in the very beginning that Adam could eat of all of the trees in the garden except one: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then what? God said, *The day that you break my law, you will die.*

Genesis 2:17 "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

So, Adam through no doing of his own, received a wonderful estate given to him by God, but it was conditional upon him obeying God's command. As long as Adam believed, trusted, and obeyed God's command, he continued to enjoy the garden and God's fellowship. Was he earning that? No. But God's blessing was conditioned upon his obedience. What happened when Adam's faith faltered and he believed his wife and the serpent instead of God? What happened when his faith failed? He spiritually died, just as God said he would. He was driven out of the garden.

Then, after the wickedness of man grew to such an extent that God decided to rain down judgment and destroy the world by water, we read of one man who was of such a mind and disposition that he would trust God.

Genesis 6:6-8 "And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them." But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD."

Genesis 6:12-14 "And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch."

Well, how did Noah respond? It is recounted for us in the book of **Hebrews**.

Hebrews 11:7 "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

There it is: God's *grace* was met with Noah's *faith*. Judgment was coming, so in *grace*, God offered to save Noah. And through *faith*, Noah believed God and followed His instructions. He and his family were *saved* from the flood. *Salvation by grace through faith*—it's a wonderful 'type' in the Old Testament of the reality now in Christ.

People have perverted and exploited the doctrine of God's grace today. Many would have you believe that God's grace is just freely dispensed and that it is totally unconditional. We know that Universalists believe that all will ultimately be saved through grace and that is absolutely a false doctrine. The Bible very plainly teaches contrary to that. But there are multitudes of people who would deny believing the doctrine of Universalism, but unwittingly have embraced something that in effect says the same thing. People somehow have the idea that grace is all that is involved in their salvation. Consequently, they can believe and do just about whatever they want, they can live however they want, and still be saved by grace.

My friend, there is not one single passage in the Bible—NOT ONE—that teaches that anyone has ever been or ever will be saved from sin by grace alone. If you hear a preacher or anybody else say that, they are teaching a false and dangerous doctrine. You need to mark them because they're not teaching the truth. God's spiritual blessings always come by *grace*, but must be received by *faith*. That is exemplified again and again and again throughout the history of man as recorded in the Bible.

II. God has joined faith and obedience together.

What really IS faith? If you ask that question, you will discover something else that God has joined together, and that is *faith* and *obedience*. Just as you never once read of anybody being saved by grace alone, neither will you read in the Bible where salvation comes by faith alone. Yet, that is an incredibly popular doctrine today. *Salvation by faith alone*, people will just blatantly say. *We're saved by faith only*. Well, the Bible never says that. Make no doubt—salvation comes by faith. That's for sure. It comes by believing in God. But not faith or believing alone.

You see, there is an aspect of faith that many people forget about. It is inseparable from faith itself.

James 2:19-20 "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"

That is not talking about works of human merit or works that we come up with in an effort to earn the favor of God. That is not what he's talking about here. He's talking about works of *faith*, works of *obedience*, works that faith produce in our lives. He says that *faith without works is dead*. Then James gives us an example.

James 2:21-23 "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect (or complete)? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God."

Those works were works of following in faith what God had said to do. When was the scripture fulfilled that *Abraham believed God*? When he offered Isaac. God chose Abraham. Was that an overture of grace? Of course, it was. All of God's blessings to any man come because of grace. We deserve nothing, I

don't care who we are, we deserve nothing but judgment from God because of our sins. That goes all the way back to Adam. So, by *grace*, God chose Abraham. And Abraham received the blessing of God by his *faith*. What is faith again? It is believing and trusting what God has said. God then put Abraham's faith to the test by requiring that he sacrifice his son, Isaac. As you so well know the story, Abraham resolutely *obeyed*, taking his son to the crest of Mt. Moriah and even raising the knife to finish the deed, he trusted that God was right, true, and just—and beyond that, able to raise Isaac up from the dead. He passed the test, and the Bible says that he was then reckoned as righteous in God's eyes.

Two questions: 1. Did Abraham deserve his esteemed position of God, or was it offered to him by grace? It was offered to him by grace, of course. 2. Would he have had faith that caused him to be reckoned as righteous had he refused to obey what God told him to do? Of course not. So, you see, *salvation* comes by *grace* which is received by *faith* which *obeys* what God has said. You can't separate those things.

We see this also in the case of Noah. We read earlier that *Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:8)*. God offered to save Noah by means of an ark. Noah believed God, but is that all that he did? What if Noah had said, *I believe that God is true and right. I believe that a flood IS coming and I'm just going to sit back and trust God to save me. Somehow, some way, He will save me. I'm trusting and believing that.* Would he have been saved? No. In fact, he really wouldn't have been trusting had that been the case because God told him more than just to believe what He said; He told him to build an ark.

Hebrews 11:7 "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

You see, you can't separate the *faith* from the *obedience*, yet it says that *the righteousness came by faith*. What kind of faith then? *Obedient faith*.

Yet, this is the very way people look at salvation today. Some people think they are going to heaven whether they trust or follow Christ or not. That God is just so good, loving, and gracious that it would seem unreasonable and out of character for God to condemn them to hell. But you can't be saved without faith. Then there are those who say, *I am saved by grace, by just believing in Jesus. I am saved the very minute that I, in my mind, decide that Jesus is who He says He is.* They just agree to the facts of the gospel, so far as Christ coming to earth, living, and dying and so forth, and there are multitudes of people on the earth that will acknowledge that, but they don't follow Jesus. They believe they will be saved because they have good thoughts about the matter, or they're just expecting Christ to save them because that's the way it will be. That that's what the Bible means by *faith* and they are going to heaven *by grace through faith*. That's what the majority of preachers preach today. But, friend, listen closely: if that's what you believe about salvation, you have been deceived. That is NOT what the Bible teaches. The Bible NOWHERE teaches that salvation is by grace alone, neither does it teach that we are saved by faith alone. We are saved by grace through faith that responds in obedience to the conditions that God places upon the blessing.

Look again at James' conclusion.

James 2:24 "Ye see then how that by works (works of faith or obedience) a man is justified, and not by faith only."

That right there is the only time in the New Testament that you will ever find the phrase *faith only*. James says that a man is NOT justified or made just or upright in the sight of God by faith only. He is saved by faith, to be sure, but not by faith only. He is saved by faith that moves him on to obedience. You might say, *Well, that has a man "earning" his salvation*. No, it doesn't. Did Abraham "earn" his righteousness when he obeyed? But on the other hand, would he have been righteous had he refused to obey? Did Noah "earn" the salvation he and his family received aboard the ark? No, but would they have perished had he not *by faith moved with fear and prepared an ark to the saving of his house*? We know the answer to that. He would've perished.

Jesus saves us by grace through faith today, but our faith must be of the same nature as Abraham and Noah's. It must move, it must respond and obey, it must submit. Friend, there are commandments in the gospel; it's not just a matter of believing something in your mind. There are commandments in the gospel. For example, Jesus told His disciples to go and offer salvation to the world.

Mark 16:15-16 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. (That's *grace*.) He that believeth (That's *faith*.) and is baptized (That's *obedience*.) shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

So, why doesn't that verse say, 'he that believeth not and is not baptized shall be condemned' if baptism really is necessary to salvation? Because the type of works involved in our salvation are works of *obedience* produced by *faith*. Therefore, if a person doesn't first believe, then baptism becomes irrelevant. Baptism is predicated upon faith or belief. But to the person who truly believes, baptism is the step of submissive obedience where the cleansing of the blood of Jesus and the blessing of salvation is thus applied.

My friend, there is a multitude of preachers at churches, big and small, who will tell you that you don't have to be baptized to be saved. The majority of churches in this town will tell you that you don't have to be baptized to be saved. In fact, they tell you that you're saved the moment you believe and that obedience of any kind has nothing to do with it. But they're putting asunder what God has joined together. God has joined *grace, faith, and obedience* together in a beautiful and wonderful plan that has been offered to you today.

Hebrews 5:9 "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;"

He, in grace, has provided *salvation* unto all those who *obey* Him, who in *faith* receive the promise by following, obeying, and submitting to the command of the Lord Jesus. I surely hope that you will receive the blessing of salvation today by obedient faith.

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