

Hidden Truths Revealed
Luke 18:31-34

As I read and I study these precious words of scripture each day, I can, through faith, fully trust that every word that I read is truth, absolute truth, every word. Jesus declared that to be so as He prayed for His disciples in John chapter 17 saying,

¹⁷ Sanctify them (the disciples) in the truth; your word is truth. (John 17:17)

In these few simple words, Jesus is declaring every word, every phrase, every nuance that we will read here to be pure and perfect truth. We don't have to search through these scriptures to find truth. Every word given here is truth.

And no, not everyone is able to read these words and understand these truths. We are told plainly in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 that these truths given here cannot be understood by everyone, only the few, those who have entered through the "narrow gate", those who have God's Holy Spirit living and abiding within them.

Because as those words tell us, the natural mind cannot discern the things of God. His truths are "Spiritual Truths" and can only be discerned through the Holy Spirit.

That is true for you and that is true for me. It is if and when we have God's Holy Spirit abiding within our souls that we can discern God's Spiritual truths.

And yes, thankfully, as we are told in the Book of Romans chapter 8, I can know with a certainty that I have the Holy Spirit living within me, because His Spirit ministers to my spirit, assuring me of it. And with that confidence, I know that as I read and as I study these precious words each day, I can know that God's Spirit will, at the right time, explain each word, each phrase, each nuance, revealing each truth to my mind.

However, with that being said, and as I have shared with you on other occasions, even with God's help, I find that I can still manage to become confused and even misdirected in some of my understanding of these precious truths.

But how can such confusion take place? What can bring about my misunderstanding. Folks, the reason is usually fairly simple. Misunderstanding will

most often come when instead of my simply accepting exactly what these words are actually saying, I try to make them to say what I want them to say. In other words, I try to make each scripture that I read fit into a narrative of belief that I have already accepted and follow.

And yes, I have no doubt that the same wrongheadedness is common among most of us Christians. That's why we have all these church denominations lining the streets of our cities, filled with people like me who don't agree with each other.

In this particular matter that we will study about today, as an evangelical follower of Christ, I want to believe that our Lord wants every person who will ever exist on this earth to believe in Him and to accept Him as their Savior and Lord. And that truly does seem to be exactly what these scriptures are telling us. "Jesus simply and plainly does not desire that any person should perish"! That His shed blood wiped away every sin of every person that will ever exist on this earth! Amen and Amen!

And yes, those words add so well to my preferred narrative. But when I carefully study such scriptural accounts like those given in Matthew chapter 13, my weak and small mind begins to waver. Those words,

¹⁰ Then the disciples came (to the Lord Jesus) and said to him, "Why do you speak to them (the Pharisees and others like them) in parables?"

¹¹ And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ¹² For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ¹³ This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴ Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: " ' "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive." ¹⁵ For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'

¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.

¹⁷ For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. (Matthew 13:10-17)

So many, many evangelical preachers and teachers want to insist that these words of our Lord are simply saying that some people, by their own choice, refuse to hear the words of our Lord. But oh, dear Christian, while that is clear, it is also clear to me that here our Lord is also saying that He Himself also makes choices as to who it is that will have ears to hear and eyes to see His precious truths.

And the same seems to be true within the words of the scripture passage that we'll study today given to us in Luke chapter 18. Listen to these words beginning in verse 31.

³¹ Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. ³² For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. ³³ They will scourge *Him* and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again." ³⁴ But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken. (Luke 18:31-34)

These words that Jesus spoke to His disciples, though seemingly simple, were a profound mystery, both in what they revealed about His coming suffering, and also in that the words themselves were mysteriously incomprehensible to the listening ears and minds of the disciples, their meaning deliberately hidden from them by the Holy Spirit.

A question comes to my mind, "Why does God do this manner of things, say words that He does not intend His listeners to understand, especially within the immediate moment." But then also, sometimes never at all, never at all. Which was the case with many, many of those who would hear His preaching and teaching each day, especially many of the Scribes and the Pharisees.

One of the answers to that question is that we can't know all of God's intentions and His ways because His ways are so vastly more infinite and profound in their purpose than our small minds can grasp. And we are told that in Isaiah 55 where God tells us that,

⁸. . . my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my

ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

Also, remember that at this point in their knowing and following the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to abide within them. These words spoken here by the Lord Jesus were "Spiritual Words". And as those scriptures given in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 clearly tell us, "Spiritual Words" can only be known and understood by God's Holy Spirit, and can only be discerned by a person when they have the Holy Spirit abiding within them. And so, yes, these men could hear Jesus saying these words, but for those moments in time, their minds could not comprehend His meanings.

But thankfully and praise be to God, later, after they had received the Holy Spirit that the Lord Jesus "breathed" into their souls, some of these men, especially the disciples, would suddenly remember these words that He was saying to them and they would then fully understand and believe all of these things.

Oh dear Christian, our God truly is infinite in His wisdom and His ways. And though we can't hope or expect to comprehend all that He does or says at each given moment, while we wait for Him to reveal Himself to us and to fulfill His promises, we can know that He is worthy to be trusted and that, at the proper time, when we have need of it He will enable us to know all that He is revealing to us.

Here, Jesus was speaking words of prophecy about Himself, words that did not fit well into the concepts that the disciples had in their minds for the Messiah who had come to save them from their sin.

And Jesus knew about their inability to comprehend His purposes, but also, He knew that it was not the right time for them to know the divine plans that He was sent to carry out. So, as was often His way, He concealed the meaning of His prophetic words until the proper time of revelation.

And that has been God's way, evidenced all through the Books of Prophecy in the Old Testament, and especially in the Book of Isaiah. There the Prophet Isaiah gave clear prophecies about the later coming of the Lord Jesus, about his Lordship and also about the very suffering that Jesus spoke about here in today's passage.

Listen to these very familiar words given by Isaiah, speaking about Jesus seven hundred years before His birth! There in the Book of Isaiah chapter 9 verse 2, Isaiah prophesied saying,

²The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined. (Isaiah 9:2)

And then in Isaiah chapter 9 verse 6, he prophesied concerning the Lord Jesus,

⁶For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of *His* government and peace *There will be* no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

As Jesus' disciples were growing up and attending their weekly synagogue teachings, they had surely heard these words many, many times. And they had, no doubt, set their hopes on the parts that prophesied about a coming government leader who would bring justice and peace to their nation.

But then, surely they had also heard and read the words given later on in Isaiah's prophecy, words that spoke about the suffering that the Messiah would have to endure. And note these words carefully, that these are much the same words as Jesus spoke to His disciples. These from Isaiah chapter 53,

¹ Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? ²For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there is* no beauty that we should desire him. ³He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was wounded for our transgressions, *he* was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is

dumb, so he opened not his mouth. ⁸He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. ⁹ And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was *any* deceit in his mouth. (Isaiah 53:1-9)

Most likely, none of the people who heard Isaiah say these words knew anything of their meaning. Just as with the words of today's passage here in Luke chapter 18, God often placed a veil over His prophecies, waiting for the proper time to reveal their meaning.

But though veiled for a season, these prophecies would take place exactly as God said they would. Our Almighty God demonstrating His timeless and infinite nature, here, spanning over many, many generations, bringing events into being precisely as He planned them and precisely at the time He foreordained them to take place.

And within these words of our passage, Jesus declared Himself to be the one spoken about by Isaiah, the Messiah, the "Mighty God, the Everlasting Father" who would, by His suffering and death, bring cleansing from sin to all who would receive Him.

But again, just as it was with the prophecy spoken by Isaiah, these truths were, for the moment, also hidden from the understanding of those who heard them.

May I say also that God gives revelations, such as these, for another reason, so that you and I can read them now, thousands of years later and know that none of these words of scripture are actually given by men, yes, through men, but not by men? Yes, Isaiah penned these words, but they were, in no way thought up and given by Isaiah. And yes, Luke penned these words of Jesus, but they were in no way thought up and given by Luke.

We know that these words were written by God and God alone and are told that in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 where we read,

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

These first words, "All scripture is God-breathed" are clear and plain and without possibility of misunderstanding! Every word of these scriptures came from the mouth of God. Yes, many of the words reflect the innermost thoughts of some of the writers. But they are all breathed into the minds of the writers by God Himself.

And No, just as with these disciples, we will not always understand their meaning and purpose at any given moment. But we can be confident that as these words become needful to us, and if we are in right relationship with our Lord, He will reveal their meaning to us.

These words, all of them, are the inerrant, infallible words of God, penned by men, but only as the Holy Spirit moved their minds to write them.

But again, why would Jesus do this in this manner, give clear meaning words to His disciples, but conceal their understanding from them for the moment?

Again, as we read a few moments ago, His ways are not our ways and not easily understood by us. And His "Providence", His deliberate intervention into the affairs of men, often cannot be easily seen and understood up close. To be seen rightly, it sometimes needs to be seen from some distance.

Here, in revealing to you and to me His plans from afar off, as with those words spoken by Isaiah, and then the same words being spoken by Jesus seven hundred years later, God is clearly and plainly declaring to us that He is sovereign over time and sovereign over all the events that take place. And further, that He is actually reaching into time and into the affairs of men and not just "allowing" behaviors and events to take their own course, but actually "causing" those behaviors and events to take place exactly as He wants them to occur.

This is another way of restating words that He often said in the Old Testament when He declared Himself to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Those men spanned three generations of time, but God declared Himself to be their God in a very present sense.

God was, and is, and is to come. He is God of the past, God of the present, and God of the future. Time makes no difference to Him. Time has no hold over Him. Jesus said in John chapter 8, that "before Abraham ever was, I AM!"

Yes, while Jesus lived on this earth, He was constrained by time. And that is why He spoke here about a future event. But folks, we must understand that to God, all things take place in the "ever-present now"!

And here, Jesus is declaring Himself to be that infinite God who is not constrained by time, but sees all things as if it were today, this hour, this moment! Yes, Jesus could see His own crucifixion at that very moment. Jesus truly is the "Great I AM", the "Mighty God the Everlasting Father". And as Jesus declared in another place, "I and the Father are One"!

Jesus clearly saw the coming days and the awful events of suffering that lay ahead of Him. And as a man, they grieved Him terribly. But even more so, as the Holy and Righteous One of Israel, the events that lay ahead of Him grieved Him beyond our ability to comprehend.

He knew that in the days that lay ahead of Him, He would need to endure things that were completely foreign to His nature, strange, vile and pathetically wicked things. He would, in His death, take all of the sins of the world upon Himself.

But here in these words, Jesus, very kindly knew that His disciples would not be able to comprehend the necessity of the path that He would have to walk, the suffering that He would have to endure.

Recall that in the days ahead, as Peter began to understand that Jesus would actually be put to death, not comprehending why His death would be required to pay the penalty for sin, he tried to talk Jesus out of it.

No, most often, while we are going through a crisis, our minds are not able to grasp much, other than the suffering. And kindly, Jesus knew about that frailty in His followers and He graciously hid the meaning of His words from them for the moment.

But He did place the words within their minds for their remembrance and their use on a later day. And after the crisis was over, the Holy Spirit would bring these words back to their remembrance and they would look back and know that His death, His burial and His resurrection were part of a carefully designed plan, carried out through divine providence and fore-ordination, a plan that

had been put into place since before the foundations of the earth. Plans that He clearly revealed and spoke about there in Isaiah chapter 53, but the disciples did not as yet “have ears to hear”.

May I close our study today with the same application to our own comprehension of these scriptures?

As you and I read these words, we sometimes find very little meaning in them. And we especially struggle with the words that declare to us that there will be suffering ahead for us in this life. And even more, that we must seek for, and we must fully embrace much of that suffering, especially when it is the sufferings of Christ that He has left for us to carry on forward for Him. Words like those given in Colossians 1 that say,

²⁴ I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, (Colossians 1:24)

And also, those in Philippians 3,

¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:10-11)

Folks, God is generous and He is kind to us when He withholds some of the meaning of His words. They are sometimes too much for us to bear at a given moment.

And also, we will not understand why some of us are able to hear the voice of His call upon our souls, but others will not have ears to hear. But even so, we need always to remember that our God is absolutely Holy in all of His ways, and He is trustworthy to do all that He has promised. And that He will carry us on through any struggles that lie in front of us.

Our part is to remember and to trust that just as He told us here, He has already done the most difficult part. And we need simply to, by faith, join with Him in what He has done, and all will be well for us, “eternally”.

Hear these precious truths from Romans chapter 8, and we'll close . . .

²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Romans 8:29-30)

Pray with me.