

- > **How do I love you – Let me count the ways?** this is the opening line to Elizabeth Barrett Browning's (1850): "**Sonnet 43**"; or "**Sonnets from the Portuguese**". These were Sonnet's written about her husband, who she affectionately called: "**My Little Portuguese**". Still, her opening question must be answered, thru the "**Deep Light of Love**".
- **Today's message:** "**Let Me Count The Ways/Reasons**".
- > **Speaking of "Counting":** One of the hardest things known to a Christian, is keeping "their talk and their walk" the same. We live in a very broken world, and it is hard to "walk the talk". It's often easy for people (*esp. unbelievers*), to see the **inconsistencies**. **The Truth is:** any of us can use the right "**Christian-language**", but not follow-thru with "**Christian-action**" (**Love**), that does NOT match.
- These inconsistencies, make me wonder: "**Why**" **are people's "talk & walk" NOT identical, as a True Follower of Jesus' would, or should be?** I mean, the moment we accept Jesus into our hearts, is the moment that we receive His Spirit. We all get THE SAME Spirit, therefore, we should all have/show the same Christian attributes! The talk is easy, but the walk requires The Lord's Spirit...(He must reign within)

-- As I deeply thought about this question, I settled on this: that there is a difference, because there are **Various ways & reasons** that people can accept Jesus, as Savior & Lord – **without REALLY receiving Him!**

> **8 ways & reasons**, that we **“think”** that we are saved, come to my mind:

- 1) **“Default”** save..... (those who were raised in the church, thru their father/or mother’s faith... a Default-faith that happened, out of an automatic function...)(it relies on our mom or dad’s faith, getting us into heaven).
- 2) **“Fear”** save..... (those who were preached hard to about: “damnation” & “hell-fire”.... They were basically scared into believing!)
- 3) **“Coercion”** save..... (those who were socially pressured by their peers, into accepting Jesus; for me: it was FCA)(But, once we are NOT with our friends, out goes our faith!)
- 4) **“No Other Way”** save..... (those who understood that accepting Jesus, was “THE RULE”.... You HAD to accept Him, if you wanted to go to Heaven!)-(get your ticket stamped)
(Rule saves are really just a means of “works”, to get into heaven!)

5) "Experimentation" save..... (those who were curious, and just wanted to "test-try" God, to see if He'd work out OK for them!)(this seems OK, but when the experiment is over, so is the faith!)

6) "Emotional" save..... (those who allow their Emotions to run wild and receive Jesus, while flying High on their feelings) (All we need is to add: some mood-lighting and some soul-reaching music, and off we go running to the tune of our emotions!)(Yet, when the feeling is gone, so is the faith!)

7) "Trouble(s)" save..... (those who get themselves in big troubles, that they cannot get out of alone (things that are bigger than themselves); they quickly dive on making deals with Jesus.)(Trouble-saves appear good UNTIL the trouble is over, then we no longer need the faith!)

8) "Personal Belief, Faith & Relationship with Jesus" save. ...(those who will draw near to God, with a GENUINE heart!...
...it's a Head & Heart decision!.... it's a decision made entirely by someone's OWN CHOICE, WITHOUT any: Defaults – Fears – Coercions – No Other Choices – Experiments – High Emotions - or, big Troubles)(It's a save, or faith, that keeps on going!)

-- **Can any of you RELATE to any of these 8 Ways & Reasons**
– as to "WHY" we accept Jesus, into our lives?

> **So**, You might think that I am a bit off course, but let's get a little closer to **Acts 8**, for a moment today.

Acts 8:9-13, "9 *But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, 10 to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God."* 11 *And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time.* 12 **But** when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. 13 **Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized** *he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done."*

-- **Now**, if we stopped the story here, all would seem normal.

For Simon, all is well - he is baptized & saved; so he thinks!

....**But**, the story does not stop here, it goes on.

Acts 8:14-23, "14 *Now when the apostles, who were at Jerusalem, heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, 15 who, when they had come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16 **For as yet**, He (the Holy Spirit) had fallen upon none of them. **They had only been baptized in the***

name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 **And when Simon saw** that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, **he offered them money,** 19 saying, "**Give me this power** also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 But Peter said to him, "**Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!** 21 **You have neither part, nor portion, in this matter - for your heart is not right in the sight of God.** 22 Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God - if perhaps **the thought of your heart** may be forgiven you. 23 **For I see that you are poisoned** by bitterness, and bound by iniquity." 24 Then Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things, which you have spoken, may come upon me." NKJV

> **Let me** hit the "**Key-thoughts**" here:

- 1) Simon was impressing the crowds, with his magic. Yet, it was not real.
- 2) Simon was "awakened" to God's Truth, so he believed and was baptized. He continued in ministry with Phillip, seeing & tasting of the awesomeness of God.

3) Everything SEEMS OK for Simon; as well as with the other people, who had believed & were baptized with him.

....Sure: they put Simon's name on the church membership-rooster – they had a church fellowship-luncheon, to celebrate his decision – and then they put him to work in the church.

4) **BUT**, verse 14 says "**something is Not quite right**", for the passage said, "**They received the Word of God**"..... **OK**, *but stop here* – *How many people go to church, and Bible studies – believing God's Word, that the preacher & teachers offer them?.... They SEEM TO receive God's Word, and even get baptized – so all MUST BE right, right?.... I mean, they've jumped thru all the "church-hurdles" – and are "talking & walking" Christians, right?*

-- **Hum?** The point that the scripture is making is that: the good people **ONLY received God's Word**, thru their preachers & teachers! According to the next several passages, they were MISSING the "**One Element**" that was/is needed to: "**Walk the Talk**" (*the True Christian Way*), and that was: "**The Holy Spirit, and His Dunamis** (*or, His Power*)! WITHOUT His Power, we CANNOT Walk & Talk with and kind of cohesiveness, or longevity!

.....As I understand this passage – **the Reality is**: Those WITHOUT the Holy Spirit, cannot see Him in others.

However, Those who **DO HAVE** the Holy Spirit resting in & dwelling in them, CAN SEE the Holy Spirit reigning in others!

And yet, this creates a problem because those WITH The Spirit's discerning (*x-ray*) vision, CAN spot a Christian-imposter, or fraud, in a flat minute (*as Peter does with Simon*). **Verse 23** reveals this as Peter says to Simon,

"For I SEE, that you are.... poisoned & bound in your iniquities (sins)....." Peter could see the error of Simon's false-belief. **The footnote** (*in my Bible*) for **verse 23** says, **"Peter confirmed that Simon had NOT TRULY converted to Christianity. His heart -(his: will, affections & allegiance), was NOT RIGHT before God."**

....**In truth**, Simon possibly only went along with the whole belief-rouse, because he wanted the Power, Praise & Applause that Phillip was getting... *the very same Power, Praise & Applause that he used to get, when he did his magic shows. (lots of church "magic-shows" going on, these days – be careful.....)*

-- **Good Glory**, **Can you see it?** The "**thoughts/motives**" of Simon's heart desire (*in believing The Gospel*), was all Wrong...(his "**allegiance**" to Jesus – was missing).

- **Could it be**, that maybe our "**motive**" is/was wrong too?
- **Could it be**, that our "**allegiance**" to Jesus is missing too?

- **Look**, the average Joe COULD NOT SEE that Simon's faith was Faulty. It took a solid believer, to point out his Wrong: thoughts, desires, motives & allegiance, to accepting Jesus properly. **Now**, I can't say that Simon was a "*church-fraud*", but I am saying that his way/reason (to **WHY/HOW** he *accepted Jesus*), was really NOT the way, or reason, that Jesus wants us to receive Him. **Jesus expects us to come to Him: openly, honestly, humbly, broken, knowing & realizing OUR NEED for Him & His Salvation!**
- ...Jesus wants us to come & receive Him - *that deep & personal*.
- * **So**, Simon has a Big salvation-problem.... and Peter did the only thing that he could do, he POINTED OUT Simon's terrible, misguided, heart-condition, before God.... **In verse 21**, Peter speaks "**plain Truth**" to Simon, "**You have neither part, nor portion, in this matter - for your heart is not right in the sight of God...** (*When we accept Jesus (and Not other theories or principles), we are made RIGHT with God; which Simon appeared to have Not done!*)..... **22 Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God - if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you!**".
- **Crazy right?** Simon believed the Powerful Words of God, and he was baptized, but he was not close to Jesus at all; *and his life (words & actions), showed it!*

-- This is all a bit scary too, because Matthew lays down hard-truth in **Matthew 7:21-23**, "*21 **Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'***" NIV

-- Understand: Jesus is not breaking off a relationship with people here, because there was never a relationship to break off. Despite their high-sounding words and showy displays of religious fervor, they had no "intimacy" with Christ.

--- So, it turns out that what matters is not so much that "WE" know God on some level, but that "GOD" knows us! As Paul explained (**1 Cor. 8:3**), "*Whoever loves God, is known **BY GOD***".

---- Jesus warns that one day, He will tell a group of religious-practitioners, "*I never KNEW you.*"

- If God is All-knowing and He does NOT know these religious people, then we might question: *whether our relationship with Him really exists - or if it is really non-existent?*

-- Our "**horizontal**" relationships (*with people*), can happen APART FROM a "**Vertical**" relationship with God. And yet, our going to heaven, totally depends on our "Vertical" relationship with God! *Heaven will not happen for us, APART FROM our "Vertical" connection with God!*

> **This conversation story**, **begs us** to look "Deeply" at the "***Why, How & for What reason, that we might have asked Jesus into our life & heart?***" **The answer** to this great question, means **YOU** will have to dig deeply into your soul, to honestly answer it. **But listen**, if you FIND that you asked Jesus into your heart & life for reasons OTHER THAN just wanting Him - **Fear Not**, Because **Jesus IS** the manifestation to us of: Genuine, Unconditional-Love - (**He is:** *"Truth – Life – Goodness - The One Who loves you wildly – The One Who adores you, to the very Center of His Being – and The One Who just wants you, as you are*).

...**the thing is**: He always stands **READY** to embrace us, even THRU our: misgivings, misunderstandings, intentional & unintentional failures & successes alike! **Romans 10:13**, "***Call upon the Name (Person) of Jesus Christ (and to Him alone), and you WILL BE saved***".

-- Turn your misguided or false reasons (*for wanting a relationship with Him*), over to Him.... I mean, He already knows more

about YOUR heart (*your: thoughts, desires & real motives*), than you do. **Look, If you** find that you DID ask Him into your life on “**False**” pretenses – **REPENT**. **If you** find that you asked Him into your life on “**True**” pretenses – then **PRAISE** His Holy Name!

> **So I, repeat what I started with** – *that there are Various ways & reasons that we can accept Jesus as Savior & Lord, without REALLY accepting HIM..... **Point #8**, is the AIM of THIS MESSAGE.* **The idea** is that: the first **7 ways or reasons** -(by **Default** – thru **Fear** – by **Coercion** – it’s **The Rule** – thru **Experimentation** – thru an **Emotional-response** – or, because of deep **Troubles**), can typically be accomplished **WITHOUT THE NEED OF JESUS!**

-- **But, **Point #8**, REQUIRES** a head & heart action, that is done **IN CONCERT (IN CONJUNCTION) WITH JESUS!**

- **Again, Point 8** accepts Jesus thru a “**Personal Belief, Faith & Relationship, with HIM**”. And it only happens when we: draw near to God, with a GENUINE heart, of Affection & Adoration of & for Jesus! ...(*it’s a Head & Heart decision*) ...(*it’s a decision made entirely by someone’s own “free-will” choice, WITHOUT the complications of the OTHER 7 WAYS, or REASONS getting in the way of making a Real decision for Jesus to be your Savior & Lord*)

-- **I wonder now:** **Just HOW MANY Simon's are out there**
(running around: life, church & ministries) believing
they are all good, but who really DO NOT "KNOW"
Jesus? How many Simon's are out there holding down
"Word of God" faith & baptism, WITHOUT holding
down a "One on one" relationship, with the Lord?

Is it me? Is it you? May we all "Examine ourselves,
and Seek the Lord's all-exposing search-light, that
searches us to our core – so that we may KNOW the
True Answer!"

> We are saved by **God's Grace**, alone. And, we are saved **BY**
God, **FOR** God. We do NOT save ourselves; God saves us
out of this broken world. And, He does so when He sees us
turn to Him, **KNOWING** that we **NEED** Him & His Salvation!
Let our salvation, be for that 1 reason only!

Discovery Questions:

1) If you are already a believer in Jesus Christ; would you say
that your talk and your walk match? Would the world agree
with you?

- 2)** Do any of the 8 Ways or Reasons, to accepting Jesus, sound familiar? Do you know anyone who might have accepted Him under any of the first 7 Ways or Reasons?
- 3)** Read Acts 8:9-23 and describe what you see going on with Simon in the story? What was wrong with Simon's thoughts (*motives*) to accepting Jesus? Is it possible that your Christian experience associates with him?
- 4)** In the Acts 8 story, the scriptures said that the people only believed the "Word of God", and did not receive the "Holy Spirit" – why was that?
- 5)** If our hearts are truly the center for our: "will, affections & allegiance"; then how goes it with your heart towards God? Are you "affectionate" towards Him? Is your "allegiance" to Him true?
- 6)** When Peter told Simon to "Repent of his thoughts"; just how does someone go about doing that? (*maybe Col. 3:2*)
- 7)** Matthew 7:21-23 tells us that "not everyone who calls out to Jesus Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven" – So, just what does that mean? Who were the souls that this passage spoke of, who were not allowed to enter heaven? Does this passage apply to us today, and how serious is this for us?

8) The bible makes it clear: We are to know God, through having a relationship with Him – but most importantly, we are to be known by God (*John 17:3*). So, do you believe that God knows you? And if you replied “yes” - why do you believe this way?