

Few Find It – by Donna Douglass

Scene #1 – The Question

“Murray, I have a question,” Barry Believer said with a perplexed expression as they pedaled away from Barry’s house. “What do you think it means in Matthew 7 when Jesus says that people would do great works in His name, but He would say to them, ‘Depart from Me, I never knew you?’ It sounds like even people who do really good things might not make it to Heaven.”

“That’s a great question,” Murray Mentor replied. “I wondered that for a long time, too. And coincidentally, I finally started researching it about a month ago. It’s really changed the way I think about the entire Christian life!”

*“So what have you learned?” Over several months of riding with Murray regularly, Barry had developed a great respect for Murray’s understanding of the Bible. He always seemed to have the right passage ready to go whenever Barry had a problem that he was dealing with. Those had been mounting lately, with the downturn of the economy. And Barry knew that Murray had faced huge challenges of his own in the past, so his answers were rarely just empty words; he had lost his own job after more than 15 years with the company and shortly thereafter, lost a child to cancer. An almost subconscious part of the back of Barry’s mind wanted the peace and genuine selflessness that Murray had. But he balked when Murray mused that much of his knowledge and peace came from his experience of God during that very tough time in life. Barry wanted nothing to do with that! He was a successful lawyer with a promising career before him, a healthy family, a good church, and he was becoming a pretty strong triathlete. He’d just*

*placed in his last race. But still there was something that Murray had that he wanted, even though he blocked them out every time such ideas began to float into his conscious thoughts.*

“Well, there are a couple of things... First, there’s the context of those words. Do you remember that?” Murray was silently praying for the right words to say to Barry. He often prayed for Barry, and he prayed even more now that he’d begun to see the implications of this verse and many related to it.

“Well, I think it was in the Sermon on the Mount,” Barry said, struggling to remember.

“Yes, at the end of it. And just before this comment, Jesus talked about the narrow gate which leads to eternal life and the broad road that leads to eternal destruction. Then He talks about false prophets and how to recognize them by their *fruit*. What do you think He means by fruit?”

“Well, what they do, I guess. Their actions.”

“That’s what I thought for a long time. But as I’ve researched this and prayed about it and talked to Mindy, I’m starting to believe that more accurately it’s referring to the *fruit of the Spirit* – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control – I think that’s all of them – not necessarily the actions that people do.”

Barry thought about that for a moment as they rounded the corner onto a main street at fell back to single file. He couldn’t recall the Bible saying “fruit” was good works like doing miracles or helping the poor, but he wasn’t sure either. Certainly Murray had a peace and patience that far exceeded anyone else he knew.

When they turned off onto a quieter road, Murray picked up the conversation. “That’s not really your question, as I understand it, but I think it relates to it distantly.”

“Yeah,” Barry conceded. “It’s not my question, but it’s an interesting point, especially given all the healings and such I’ve heard about recently.”

“That’s a whole different ball of wax that I know I don’t know enough about to comment on!” Murray laughed. “So back to the people Jesus sends away. I don’t know about you, but I was always taught that once person had accepted Christ into their heart and asked forgiveness from their sin, that they were saved. Done. In 1 John 5:13 it says, ‘I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know you have eternal life.’ Right? You know you have it. That’s it. Right?”

Barry recognized the verse and wished again that he could just quote them like Murray could. “Yeah, I’ve heard that before,” he replied.

“So a person just believes and says the right words? They go forward at the altar call and ‘pray the magic prayer’ and they’re on their way to Heaven?” Murray caught himself speeding up as he stepped up onto one of his soapboxes.

“It sounds like that. I guess that’s what I’ve always heard,” Barry answered, sensing that Murray was leading him down a different road.

“Well, I’m coming to see a couple problems with that. The passage in Matthew 7 you asked about is one. Another is what it means to believe. The implication of the Greek word ‘to believe’ was way more than intellectual assent. It insinuated that action would result, like if you believed that getting that new tri bike would help you go faster. So you bought it – and it did! Or the story of the guy who rolled the wheelbarrow across a tight rope above Niagara Falls. When he asked, ‘Who believes I can do it again?’ everyone cheered. But when he said, ‘who’s willing to get in the wheelbarrow?’ there was silence. To believe, the way the Greek word was understood means to get in the wheelbarrow. It’s an intellectual understanding that results in

action; if there's no action, then there's no belief." He paused to let Barry absorb that then continued. "And then there's the Apostle Paul," Murray indulged himself for a moment, meandering into another passage that had bothered him for a long time. "In 1 Corinthians 9 he said he beat his body and made it his slave so that he 'might not be disqualified for the prize'" (1 Corinthians 9:27). "What's the implication of that?"

Barry hesitated. He knew he'd read that passage before, but he'd never really thought about it. "Well, I guess, it means there's a possibility that he could be disqualified. But he's the Apostle Paul. Of course he was saved!"

"Exactly. Yet even *he* didn't seem to take it for granted. Why else would he tell us to 'work out your salvation with fear and trembling'?" (Philippians 2:12) "Where did the fear and trembling come from, if we are assured of our salvation once we 'believe'? And why did he say to, 'work out your salvation' if it's already a given?"

"Hm. Those are good questions," Barry replied, thankful they were riding so Murray couldn't see the confusion and concern on his face. But they were approaching the main road again, so conversation ceased for a few minutes. As they turned up the side road toward Barry's house again, Murray continued.

"I apologize for getting on my soapbox a little, but I think these are great concepts to think about, because they have huge implications for life! So why don't we both do some research and talk about this again Thursday?"

"Sure, that would be great," Barry replied a bit overwhelmed. He felt like the foundation of his whole belief system had shifted almost imperceptibly, but somehow that changed everything. He wanted time to process it. "So where were those verses again?"

“I’ll email them to you when I get home.” Murray knew that spitting out a bunch of references wouldn’t do much for Barry just as it wouldn’t for himself. “Say hi to Betty and the kids for me!”

“Will do. Have a great day!” Barry called in reply as he turned into his driveway.

Murray rode the last few miles home in silently praising God for such a huge answer to prayer. For Barry to finally show even a little interest in talking about spiritual things was a *monstrous* step forward. And for him take the initiative to ask, and to ask about such a foundational issue – Murray was ecstatic! He’d prayed for this for months.