



One of the saddest, most difficult and confusing things to watch in God's family is to see a baptized child of God fall from the faith and lose the joy of forgiveness. "Why did God allow him to fall away? Why didn't baptism and God's Word keep him safe? How can you be a believer one day and the next day refuse to believe that God even exists?"

In 1824 we have the beginning of one of these sad, difficult and confusing ordeals. In August of that year, Karl Marx was baptized and then confirmed at the age of 15 as a Lutheran in Trier, Prussia. He appeared to be a committed Christian, but as he continued his education the good news of forgiveness was strikingly absent.

Karl Marx was a poet from a young age on. His poetry covered two main themes: the girl next door, whom he married in 1841 (Jenny von Westphalen) and the destruction of the world. Two phrases stand out the most in his poetry, "Everything that exists deserves to perish" and "We are the apes of a cold God." These two themes of destruction and a cold unloving God were the beginning of a life without the joy of forgiveness that culminated in a denial of God's authority over mankind. "Religion is the opiate of the people."

So what went wrong? Is God to blame for this fallen away believer? Are the God-given means for creating and protecting believers not strong enough? Did not God die for Karl Marx along with all sinners? Didn't God love him as much as he loved me? Yes God loved him along with all sinners, paying the price of their disrespectful disobedience as his creatures. God's plan of salvation included Karl Marx as it includes all sinners. God in his mercy and kindness lined up the stars in the universe to bring him to a believing congregation for His undeserved grace through baptism. The sad fact is that the blame falls at his own feet for pushing away the Lord's free love and eternal blessings which flow from Jesus Christ's life and death for the world of sinners.

But what about the men and women who were supposed to "train him in the way he should go, so that when he is old he will not depart from it"? Are they to blame? We can blame His parents, who converted to Lutheranism many suspect for business success. We can blame his Pastor and teachers in that Lutheran Congregation for missed opportunities to preach the gospel to him. We can blame his college professors at Jena University for teaching him Darwin's theory of evolution as if it was a new revelation of truth. All of them were sinful human beings that were given a gift from the Lord and a responsibility to use that gift according to His Will. By our words and actions, we can put obstacles in people's way to the message of forgiveness and eternal life. One of the saddest times in my life is when I asked why a family

no longer came to church and weekly family night. The answer I got crushed my spirit – They don't like your competitive nature on the field. We are sinful. We must be humble and honest with ourselves, the Lord and those we teach. It is a heavy responsibility to preach and teach the Word of God. Thank God that His Word is more powerful than our sinfulness.

This year let's remember our common problem to preaching the gospel – we are cracked pots, who hold the glorious power of forgiveness – the Gospel. Speak the truth in love to our young Christians, in patient humility and gentleness. Handle the Word of God with reverence as the very Word of life for these young people. Use the treasure of the Gospel with confidence for we know it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

NIV 2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. **7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.** 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. 11 For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. 12 So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.