

# Who Needs a Savior?

*Building a Christian Mind*

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**Bible Verse:** Ephesians 2:1  
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Turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 2 for the text of this morning's message. Ephesians 2. We have entered into the final stage of a series that we have been preaching since the middle of January titled "Building a Christian Mind," and for those of you that are visiting with us, we have covered how we know the existence of God, the authority of Scripture, the authority of Christ, the sovereign providence of God, the truth of Christianity, indeed the very existence of truth, those six and now we're at seven, which in an unrelated note is the biblical number for completeness. We arrive at the matter of how to know true salvation. We've kind of started this the prior two Sundays when we talked about the blood sacrifice of Christ at Communion, the obedient life of Christ which fulfills all the law requires on our behalf, and on this past Tuesday, we started teaching from Ephesians 1 and considered the biblical doctrine of election, that God chose before the foundation of the world all those who would ever believe. Apart from any foreseen faith or any foreseen merit in them, based on his sovereign, holy pleasure alone, God determined who would be saved before the beginning of time. Now that does not do away with the preaching of the gospel. It is through the preaching of the gospel that God awakens sinners to their sinful condition and leads them to saving faith in Christ. The God who appointed the end of whom would be saved, appointed the means by which they would be saved. Scripture says how will they hear unless they have a preacher? How will they believe unless someone tells them, in Romans 10, and that is what we are doing today and in the next few weeks on Sundays and at our midweek service on Tuesday at seven o'clock.

Now on Tuesday, and I'll repeat this request here for those of you that identify with our ministry, are members of our church, I made a plea, a request that those of you that know Christ, that identify with our ministry, would make a special effort, a special commitment to pray for the work of the Holy Spirit through these messages that we will be preaching today and in the next few weeks to come; as we speak about salvation, that the Lord would be pleased to use this to draw souls to himself just as we heard in the waters of baptism earlier this morning. It is not enough for us to go through the motions of gathering together Sunday and Tuesday and not wanting anything to change. We need to change as believers and sinners need to change and be converted to Christ. It's not enough for me to just impart information to you through, you know, Sunday by Sunday speaking messages and having you go out unchanged. That's not enough. That's not why we do

this. If it's just a matter of going through the motions, we should shut the doors and put the building for sale and disband if we're not going to earnestly seek the work of God in our midst, And see, we can't do this. The things that we aim at, the sanctification of the saints, true conversion of sinners to Christ in a way that they truly repent and reject the world and repudiate family and friends if that's what it takes in order to have Christ, that's not a human work. That's not something that man can do on his own. That's not in our power to do. Jesus said that this is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent. It's a work of God and so if we're going to see a work of God, we need to ask for that work of God. We need to join together corporately as the people of God, confess perhaps our prior indifference and lukewarmness, thank Christ that he did not spit us out before now for our lukewarmness, as he said he would do to the church of Laodicea in Revelation 3, and to earnestly, humbly come before him and ask for his blessing on the work of the word in a particular way over these next couple of months. I ask you whether you will join me in asking God for that. Will you join with me throughout the week and ask God to have the Holy Spirit fall upon us to help us and to strengthen us and to manifest the glory of his might in ways that he's done in days of old. He sent revival in the past. He did it in Wales in 1904. He did it in our country before the Declaration of Independence. He did it through the ministry of Whitefield and others. There's no reason why you can't do it now. He's the same God. It's the same gospel message. The need is the same and it's our part, though we can't control the outcome, it's our part to ask and to know that as we ask our Father to bless the preaching of his word and to bring in other sheep into the fold, to know that when we ask our Father for good things of the Spirit, that he won't respond by giving us stones and snakes when we've asked for bread and fish, spiritually speaking.

I ask you, will you join in praying quietly, privately as I preach throughout the week as we seek the Lord for these things? But perhaps for some of you it's even a more desperate need than you even realize. Perhaps there will be an awakening in your own heart. If you're conscious that you've been spiritually dull, spiritually dead, indifferent, cold, walking in sin, having no desire for the word of God, the people of God, the Spirit of God, the men who explain the word of God, you come and go without any real commitment to anything other than your own pleasure, maybe you should be praying that the Lord would search your heart. In fact, not maybe, you should be praying, asking the Lord, "Lord, examine my heart. Search me and see if there be any wicked way within me. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing in your sight. Wash me, cleanse me from my sin." And have a sense of desperation coming upon you. "Maybe I've proclaimed Christ, confessed Christ, called myself a Christian, when actually I've been dead in sin all the time along." I was like that. Forty years ago to this day, I was like that, claiming to be a Christian, thinking I was someone spiritual. I was a spiritual mess. I didn't love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, strength, and mind. I didn't care about Scripture. I cared about myself. I wasn't holy like Christ. I was an angry, lustful man, all the while calling myself a Christian.

It happens. We had two testimonies today that were just like that and that should put us on notice. I'm not pointing fingers at anyone. I'm speaking basic principles and sober words of truth. It should put us on notice that it is entirely possible to be completely,

utterly deceived about whether you are in Christ or not and it's particularly easy to be deceived in an environment where you were raised going to church, just assuming things, never really calling out to Christ under the conviction that you're a sinner in need of salvation. And beloved, the eternal consequences of being wrong, being deceived, are just unthinkable. It's just unthinkable. Why would we spend weeks considering the topic, the theme from Ephesians 1 and 2, how to know true salvation? In part, we do it because the eternal consequences of dying in sin are just unimaginably bleak. Hell is real. Hell is painful. Hell is eternal. And hell is what every one of us deserve for our transgressions against a holy God. And Jesus said you must be born again to enter into the kingdom of heaven. You don't casually walk around indifferently and find yourself in heaven. The way is narrow. The gate is small. You have to strive to enter the narrow gate, Scripture says. And I want to tell you, that's not the spirit of the evangelical church today. To strive, to plead, to examine self, it's a joke. It's a clown show. An entertainment-based approach to so-called ministry is no ministry at all because we're called to humble ourselves before the Lord.

Now with those things in mind, let me just state a very basic thing about our Lord Jesus Christ and his ministry here on earth. Jesus Christ did not come as a social reformer. There was plenty wicked in the first century world into which he stepped. The Roman Empire, I mean, they worshiped their emperors. It was full of degrading idolatry. Even the Jews had turned into superficial hypocrites who did not know the true meaning of the law of God that they taught. And so Christ did not come to fix things in society and it is not the job of the church today to try to fix things in society. Let the dead bury the dead. Christ came as a spiritual Redeemer. He came as a Savior to call individual men by name to himself and his call was to, "Follow me. Take up your cross, die daily, and follow me. Repent and believe in the kingdom. Believe in the gospel," Mark 1:15. And so in all of these things, beloved, what I want you to see is that we're not in the mode of business as usual here today or over the next couple of months. We realize, we feel our weakness, we see the desperate need of the hour, we see that we have no power to accomplish the things that God would call us to accomplish, and so we cast ourselves upon him. Corporately, as leaders of the church, we cast ourselves on this Savior of ours, and I call on you to do it individually as well, to cast your own life and your own soul afresh on Christ. And if you've been taking things for granted, and if the things, especially if the things that I'm saying here this morning sound utterly foreign to the way that you've approached life, then it's urgently desperate for you to consider the question that is the title of our message here this morning. Who needs a Savior? Who needs a Savior? Why the fuss? Why this introduction? Who needs a Savior? We want to throw that question on the table and deal with it earnestly. Who needs a Savior? And why do we need this study in this period of time in the church in order to have a Christian mind?

Ephesians 2:1-5 will be our text for today and for next two or three Sundays, as the Lord leads. Ephesians 2:1-5. The Apostle Paul says,

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of

disobedience-- 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved--

Those are the words that will occupy us for today and a few Sundays to come. I want to start by laying out to you the answer to the question, "Who needs a Savior," and the answer is framed by this first reality, it's the universality of sin. The universality of sin. Before you can rightly understand the urgency of answering the question, "Who needs a Savior," we first must see the problem of sin and that problem encompasses and infects everyone everywhere for all time. This is a problem that we all have.

Now, just to set the context, and by way of reminder, Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians, what we call the letter to the Ephesians, he wrote this letter to Christians. Look at chapter 1, verse 1. Chapter 1, verse 1. He's writing to Christians. He's writing to the church, those that have been redeemed already in what he says here. In chapter 1 verse 1 we read, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus." To be a saint is to be set apart in Christ. It's not someone who attained a rare degree of holiness; every Christian is a saint because every Christian has been set apart by faith in Christ and is separate from the world and now belongs to him. And so he's writing to the saints when he says this and he, as we saw on this past Tuesday, he opens with a long word of praise and blessing to the name of God for the generous way that he has saved believers in chapter 1, verses 3 through 14. Look at verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." See those first person plurals, our Lord Jesus Christ, he's blessed us, he's writing to Christians. Paul is writing to the body of believers, the circle of the redeemed and talking about the spiritual realities that belong to those that are in Christ Jesus. That's who he's talking to.

Now, as we come to our text in chapter 2, verse 1, he looks back. He looks to the past and he reminds us as Christians, he reminded his readers in the day, of what was true of them before Christ saved them. See, we're saved out of something. We don't obey our way into heaven because we're totally, completely lost, depraved, and sinful, and we cannot fix ourselves to make ourselves acceptable to God. That's fundamental to true Christianity. A true Christian is someone who is poor in spirit, not boasting in his goodness. Rachel mentioned that in her testimony, didn't she? She said, "I thought I was good." But did you hear what she said? "I was not. I had a black heart." That's the true testimony of everyone who has ever been redeemed because of the reality that everyone is joined together in the universality of sin.

Look at chapter 2, verse 1 with me. Paul says, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins." He says, "You're Christians now, but you used to be dead in trespasses and sins," and dead men can't do anything. Dead men have no spiritual life. And so he's telling them what they were before their conversion, here in these first three verses, he's telling them

what they were before their conversion for a purpose. so that they would understand something critical to the nature of Christian life. He wants them to see the contrast between their former death, spiritual death in sin, and the life that they now have as Christians in Christ. And so he says, he addresses them as saints and then he does a flashback, you might say. and says, "Let's go back to where you were before you were in Christ. You were dead in your trespasses and sins, every one of you."

He kind of expands on that theme in Ephesians 4, if you'll turn to 4 and verse 17. And actually before we get to chapter 4, verse 17, take a stop at chapter 2, verse 12 and verse 11. In verse 11 he says, "Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called 'the uncircumcision' by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands," he says, "remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." He's writing to people who were Gentiles that were now Christians, and he says, "You've got to remember the way things used to be. Before you came to Christ, you were separated from him. You were lost. You had no hope whatsoever. The promises that God made to the Jews in the Old Testament had no bearing on you. You were cast adrift on the sea and the beating sun of judgment coming down upon you with nothing to drink to slake your thirst. That's what you were like. You are dead in trespasses and sins, separated from God, alienated, and without hope in the world." Every person in the world is born into that condition.

He goes on in chapter 4 verse 17, and he reminds them again. He kind of circles back to this theme again and again and in chapter 4 verse 17, he says, "Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity." This is the condition of mankind lost in sin. And so in chapter 2, verse 1, when he says you were dead in your trespasses and sins, he's reminding them of the past reality of their spiritual lives.

Now, beloved, listen to me. This is really important. It is important for you to have one of two things really clear in your mind, either that it is clear to you that you are in Christ and that condition of spiritual death is a past tense situation for you and that it's clear to you that you've been born again, or to realize that if you are walking in darkness and that you are really indifferent to Christ and have no desire for the things of God, that the realities that he speaks of past tense for Christians is the present tense reality for you. You're dead in trespasses and sins. You're alienated from God. You have no hope. You're callous and facing eternal judgment.

Now, as you read on in chapter 2, verse 1, he goes on and expands the nature of that spiritual death. The trespasses and sins, we'll talk about that in a moment, but he says, you were dead, verse 2, "in which you once walked, the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, you followed the course of this world, following the prince of the power of

air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience." This is the very nature, this is exactly the essence of someone who is not a Christian.

And then he expands it to include, he goes beyond and he just expands it to the entire human race. It's not just the Christians at Ephesus that he's addressing. He's describing universal spiritual realities that apply to all of mankind. Verse 3, "among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath," here it is, "like the rest of mankind." Gentiles and Jews alike were dead in sin. All had sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. You can read in Romans 1 and in Romans 2 how Paul brings out this point that even though the Jews had a particular benefit of being the recipients of the promises of God, and the temple worship and all of those things and the revelation was given to them, they were still dead in sin and they still needed new life, they needed forgiveness, they were lost in sin just as much as the Gentiles. Now the Jews hated to hear stuff like that just like people today hate hearing anything that tells them anything other than they're the finest thing that's ever walked on the face of the earth. The spirit of the world caters to our pride. It caters and it flatters us and tells us that not only are we not so bad, we're actually pretty good and God's going to be really happy to have us with him in heaven and, you know, you just need a little bit of instruction to bump you up and be a little bit better than you were yesterday. None of that's true. None of that's true. You must be born again.

You're dead in trespasses and sins, and as you know, you can summarize these three verses in Ephesians with a label from each verse. The reality of those that are not in Christ is this, you are dead in sin. Verse 2, you are dominated by the devil following the prince of the power of the air. And thirdly, you are doomed, doomed, I say, to suffer the wrath of God. Dead in sin, dominated by the devil, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, and that's true of all unsaved mankind. Romans 3:23, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

So who needs a Savior? What a quaint 17th century question to ask in our modern, sophisticated world here in the 21st century. Who needs a Savior? I do not care that asking that question would get us laughed out of most places where polite society gather around. I don't care. Who needs a Savior? Let's put it this way, if you are a member of the human race, you do. Every person that you have ever met, that you know now and ever will meet, needs a Savior because sin is real, God is real, his judgment is real, and hell is real. These are the spiritual realities unseen, admittedly, but clearly revealed to us by the authoritative word of God. Everybody needs a Savior. You need a Savior because you are not good enough for a holy God on your own.

So I ask a subsidiary question, say everybody needs a Savior, are you, my friend, convinced of that deep in your own soul, that you need a Savior? Are you convinced of that? Do you believe that? Do you freely testify that to whoever will listen to you? Or are you like I used to be and secretly proud, secretly self-righteous, secretly... I don't even want to think about it. It was 40 years ago. Naming the name of Christ, but secretly rejecting, despising him, and blaspheming his name through your words, through your actions, through your deepest heart thoughts. Are you convinced that you need a Savior?

If there's anything in you that resists and push backs against that statement, the first thing that you need to repent of is that. The first thing that you need to repent of is resisting the word of God, resisting the gospel, resisting the testimony that Scripture plainly states that all men are lost and dead in trespasses and sins. You need to repent of the most fundamental way that you think about yourself in relationship to God and come as a little child, like a little child coming to its mama. "Mama, I need help. I'm hurt. Cut myself." You come to God with that simplicity and implicit confession of helplessness, "God, I can't help myself here. I'm a sinner. I deserve your judgment and I can't deliver myself from it. Satan has held me. I am a liar and therefore the son of the father of lies, Satan himself."

You see, friends, I dwell on this because nothing in the natural man wants to embrace that and so we have to bring it up and expose it in light of the clear teaching of the word of God and grind out the pride in your heart so that you would have a sense of humility in approaching God and asking him for grace that you do not deserve. We've got to do away with our sense of entitlement, we've got to do away with our sense of self-righteousness if we're going to know anything about grace, forgiveness, and eternal life and forgiveness of our sins, and until we deal with these things earnestly from God's word, we haven't really even started to do the work. That's why it takes a few weeks to cover this, not just, you know, a little 15-minute devotional wrapped around jokes and personal stories. That's not a serious approach to Scripture or to the needs of sinful men. I hope you understand that.

Sin is universal. Everyone needs a Savior. And let's go to point number two and just expand on this reality of sin. This reality of sin. What can we say about the nature of sin from this passage that we're looking at in Ephesians 2? Well, let's go back to verse 1 again. We kind of circle around the airfield before we come in for a landing so we see the lay of the land and we take in what the context has to say about it. Now we look at it in a closer sense. Paul says you were dead in your trespasses and sins there in verse 1. He's using death, obviously, in a spiritual sense. His readers were not physically dead otherwise it would be kind of foolish to write a letter to them, right? Just kind of drop it down on their grave, I guess, and hope that it sinks through. No, no. They were physically alive but spiritually dead, so there's a bifurcation. You can be alive in the body but dead in the spirit. And these readers and every sinner who has not repented and put his faith in Christ is separated from God. We saw that earlier. Verse 12, you were separated from Christ. Chapter 4, verse 18, they were alienated from the life of God. That's the sense of death that he speaks of, separation, alienation, no communication with the living God whatsoever.

You know, let's just think through the picture of death a little bit. It's very helpful spiritually to get comfortable with the idea of death and not just resist it and deny it and avoid it because death pictures spiritual reality for us and death is the ultimate end that each one of us will face unless the Lord comes back first. So let's just think a little bit about what it means to be dead. One thing that we can say for sure is that the physically dead do not share life with the living. The physically dead do not share life with the living. Every one of us has had a loved one that's died and we no longer can converse

with them. There's no connection. There's no existing connection between us and them now. We can't go to a cemetery and communicate with people. There is a gulf, there is a chasm that cannot be bridged between the dead and the living. Well, in like manner, the spiritually dead do not share life with a holy God. God is the living, holy, uncreated creator and sustainer of the universe and of our life, it is from him that we get our breath, but we have no communion with him if we are not in Christ. The spiritually dead do not share life with a holy God. They are dead in their trespasses and sins. That word trespass, think about a no trespass sign on a piece of private property. You cross a boundary. You step into a realm where you're not supposed to be. You deviate from the path. That's a sense of trespasses. There is a line of righteousness that God has said shall not be crossed, and every one of us have crossed it. God has established boundaries for righteous attitudes and conduct and each one of you, you and I, we have all violated them repeatedly before we even take into account that we've inherited corruption from our ancestors going all the way back to Adam. It's a false step. It's a crossing of a boundary. Sin trespasses in sin. Sin has the idea of missing a mark or falling short of a goal. You know, you aim an arrow at a target and it goes off course and it doesn't go where it's supposed to. It doesn't land where it's supposed to. That's the idea. Straying, crossing boundaries. You see, and what he's saying with the reality that he's speaking to is that God has established and revealed his moral law, which is a reflection of his character, and to share life with God, you must not be pretty good, you must be perfect, without sin, without any moral corruption, and the testimony of Scripture and the sad reality of all of our lives is this: every one of us falls short of what he requires.

Now, let's come to a really important point of pivoting in the message, parking the car here and getting out and exploring what's around us because it's one thing to say all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and a lot of you would just impatiently nod your head in agreement with that. "Yeah, I know that. Get on with it. Get on with what you have to say." Beloved, this is what I have to say. This is why you need a Savior and it's critical for your soul, and I'm speaking to you individually, privately here, even though I'm speaking publicly, I'm speaking to every one of you, it's critical for your soul to work out in detail what Scripture means when it says that you have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. It is not hard at all. It is not difficult to show you your guilt before God, even if you resist it, even if you put your fingers in your ear and say, "I'm not listening." It's not difficult to show your guilt before God. The Ten Commandments, Exodus 20. We taught through those a while back, didn't we? Just picking up the elements of the second table dealing with human relationships and bypassing the first table with our responsibilities before God, just starting there. God's law says you shall not murder and you say, "No problem, I haven't done that." Jesus says what that means in spirit is that you should not even get angry. Have you ever gotten angry? Lost your temper with someone? You're guilty before God. God's law says do not commit adultery. Well, now people, some of you kind of shift uncomfortably in your seats. Others say, "I haven't done that. I haven't physically done that." Jesus says that that means in spirit that you do not even lust in your heart, and certainly between the physical act of adultery and the private lust of the heart, you'll find within that the whole matter of pornography and computer sins and things like that being convicted and condemned by the law of God. God's law says do not lie. Jesus says you shouldn't even make vows, just be true in your conversation. Let your



yes be yes, your no be no. God's law says do not steal. And in the 10th commandment, it goes even further and this is what convicted the Apostle Paul, the 10th commandment says you should not even covet. You should not have a longing desire for that which does not belong to you.

And so, let me ask you a question. Again, I'm speaking to you personally here. This is like we're sitting down and you're giving me the opportunity to monologue to you over the table at Panera Bread or whatever. My friend, have you ever used the Lord's name in vain? Carelessly said, "Oh my God"? Scripture says you're guilty. Have you ever been angry, cursed out someone, spouse, family member, road rage, boss, employee? My friend, have you ever lusted at all, just once longed and set your affections after someone that did not belong to you? Have you ever lied at all, told an untruth, knowingly deceived someone by misrepresenting the facts? Have you ever coveted that which was not yours? It's pretty convicting, isn't it? I was going through my notes yesterday, came to that part, was just reminded afresh, "Yep, yep, yep, yep, yep, yep, that's me on every one of them. That's me." That's enough to ruin us and to shatter any sense of self-righteousness and show you without any doubt that you need a Savior, but then you go to that which is even loftier and of even greater significance, what about your love for God? Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, strength, and mind. Do you live for his glory? Does every act, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, are you conscious of living that out for his glory? Have you always loved God with your entire being? None of us can say yes to that. Don't even pretend to say, "I've done that." Let's not play the game. None of us have kept the first table of the law related to our duties to God, none of us have kept the duties of the law with relationship to man, in fact, we've violated them in what we've done, in what we have not done, in what we've thought, in what we've said. We are thoroughly sinful, thoroughly lost, and there is nothing that we can do about it.

Now look, beloved, and as we are conscious of asking the Spirit of God to come upon us as we consider these things from his word, we're not playing games. We're not going through motions. We're declaring the sober truth of God in dependence of the work of the unseen Holy Spirit in every heart that comes under the sound of my voice. You must understand, beloved, that the point of comparison is not whether you're a little bit better than someone else. That's not the point of comparison. You cannot get off, you cannot avoid this by saying you're not as bad as someone else. Imagine someone being on trial for murder and they did it. They committed the crime. Imagine that they made this kind of foolish defense before the jury or before the judge who holds their fate in their hands. He said, "Yeah, I stabbed him to death. That's true. But you know, I didn't stab him nearly as many times as the other guy did. The other guy did it 30 times. I only did it 15. I'm not that guilty. Actually, I'm righteous because I'm not as bad as that guy. I was restrained as I plunged the knife into him again and again." You don't like the vividness of the illustration, do you? Good. Good. I'm glad you don't like it because it's only a picture of our guilt before God. You see, the issue is not whether you're a little bit better in your judgment in comparison to another sinner that you know, the issue is whether you have loved God with all of your heart, soul, strength, and mind, whether you have loved your neighbor as yourself, and you can't get off by saying you're not as bad as someone

else. Jesus said you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. The point of comparison is the holiness of God, not another sinner.

You say, "This is hopeless. There's no way out from this kind of condemnation that you're describing." To which I say, yes, that's entirely the point. James said if you've broken one law, you've broken them all, you're a transgressor of the law. The law of God, the holiness of God, the righteousness of God, beloved, it's like a seamless fabric, a perfect, expensive piece of cloth, and you can't puncture that anywhere without disfiguring the whole. This is the righteousness God calls us to. One sin punctures it and here we've seen clearly that we've multiplied guilt in ways that we can't even begin to number. David says in the Psalms that, "My sins are more numerous than the hairs on my head. They've gone over me." One sin makes you guilty, my friend, and you have committed many.

Turn to the book of James, just past the book of Hebrews. By the way, if you're visiting and you perhaps don't have a Bible, you don't own a Bible, you really need one, you do need to be reading your Bible, there are Bibles under the seats here throughout the congregation. We invite you to take one, take two as our gift to you if you don't have a Bible. If you just want to take a Bible to remember this day because the Lord's done a work in your heart today and you want to take something as a tangible token of remembrance of this day of the work of God in your heart, take a Bible. They're there for you.

But in James 3:2 we read, "For we all stumble in many ways." We all stumble and we all stumble in many many ways, it says. Chapter 4, verses 1 and 2, "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?" Do you have a lot of conflict in your life? Do you cause a lot of conflict? Why does that happen? It's because of what's in you. It's because of sin within you. The Bible says, "Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You don't get what you want, so you lash out. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel." James pointing to the inner reality of sin, only the symptom of which is these outward conflicts and quarrels that come along. The problem is your heart. The problem is your heart. You've got a dirty, sinful heart and you can't do anything to change it anymore than a tiger could wake up and say, "I think I'll change my stripes today. I think I'll go out polka dot today." That's ridiculous. In the same way, only far more serious and far more impossible for a sinner to change his nature. It's easier for a tiger to change into a polka dot than it is for you to save your own soul.

You see, beloved, we're talking about this in human terms and at a human level, anger, lust, covetousness, love of pleasure, love of the world. It's all of us and you're in trouble. You're in trouble. And then infinitely more when you calculate in the reality of your insincere worship, your cold heart toward God, your indifference to the closed Bible on your shelf week after week, month after month, the cold formality of what you call prayer, without any regard to worship and thanksgiving, just, "God, give me, give me, give me." Even your prayers are sinful. And I'm confident enough in the truth of God's word, the universality of sin, and the help of the Holy Spirit as I speak to say that your

conscience tells you in this moment that you're no exception to anything that I've said. I'm confident of that. None of us have any excuse and so we're left with this sad reality. Who needs a Savior? You do because you have no spiritual merit before God. Indeed, you are guilty before him. You have no power to change your own nature. You have no power to get out from under the devil. You cannot do any spiritual good to earn the favor of God. Who needs a Savior? My friend, you do. You do. You do.

Now, only with that settled firmly in our minds can we truly enter into the glory of knowing true salvation. You see, you don't get to the glory of true salvation by evading the issue of sin. Jesus said he did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. The people who think they are self-righteous exclude themselves from the gospel itself. Jesus said, "I didn't come to call people like you." And yet, he's the only way to heaven. What are you going to have? You're going to have your pride, your independence, your autonomy, or would you have Christ and eternal life in heaven? Those two things are mutually exclusive.

Now the good news, which we'll talk about more in days and weeks to come, beloved, it's because you are so sinful that the gospel is such good news. The gospel tells us that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. 1 Timothy 1:15, the Apostle Paul said, let's look at it. 1 Timothy 1:15. We'll start in verse 12, and I'll ask you, my friends, whether you can echo the testimony of the Apostle Paul in your own experience by what we read, or if this is something foreign, alien to you that you need for yourself. 1 Timothy 1:12, the Apostle Paul says, "I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly," there's that word again, past tense, this is what I used to be, "formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent." That's what I used to be, "But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost." Christ came to save sinners. Do you see the connection? Jesus didn't just come for some vague purpose that no one can understand. He came because men and women, boys and girls are lost in sin and they need a Savior. And because he is full of mercy, full of grace, full of love to sinners, he came in order to redeem them. He gave his perfect life on the cross, stood in the place of sinners like you, and God looked at him and said, "That adulterer, that liar, that covetous person, Christ, I'm going to treat you like him," and punished him. David the adulterer, David the murderer, "Christ, I'm going to treat you like I would have treated David. Suffer now." Put in your own name. Jim. Sandra. He looks at Christ and he said, "Christ, I'm going to treat you like you lived that life of sin, that you lived that life of sin, and I'm going to punish you for it." And Christ, as it were, said, "I accept that. I accept that because I want to save a people for myself." Because he's full of mercy and grace and love and patience and goodness, Christ took punishment that he did not deserve. For all of these sins that we've discussed here today, Christ bore the price of it so that you could be forgiven. But it requires, it's not automatic. You must be converted to Christ. You must be born again. You must own it all and say, "Yes, I accept the judgment of the word of God against my guilty soul. I agree. I am guilty. I deserve judgment. And if I don't," this is what was going through my mind almost 40 years ago to the day, "if I

don't receive Christ right now, I'm going to go to hell forever, and that's what I deserve." It's that urgent, beloved. We must flee to Christ and ask him in the goodness of his saving intentions toward mankind that he would save us and come with personal repentance, personal faith, taking up our cross to follow him.

Now, I've spoken today largely assuming people that are self-righteous and needing to puncture that. Let me just say a passing word to those of you that are weighed down with guilt, you're introspective, you know that you're sinful and it overwhelms you. Everything that we've said here today is a message of hope to you. There is hope. You're not going to find hope inside. Look outside of yourself to this Christ who loved sinners just like you, came to save sinners just like you, and calls sinners just like you. You can go to him for salvation based on what he promises. He says, "I promise you, I will receive you. I will give you eternal life. I will cleanse you. I will wash away all of your sins. Just come to me." You don't have to say, "Oh, but look at me and how bad I am, and I'm not sure I'm..." You're not worthy of it but that, but looking for something inside yourself is not the basis on which you come to Christ. You come to Christ because he's a gracious Savior and he tells you to come and on the basis of his word alone, you can come to Christ today and be saved.

For those of you that are Christians, including Tommy and Rachel in that blessed time of baptism we had earlier, so grateful for that, for those of you that are Christians, you know the gospel, you know Christ, you have been born again, understand that Paul's point in Ephesians, he intends to bring you joy. There you were, lost in trespasses and sins, separated from God and utterly unable to change your condition, and we'll see this more in days to come, but understand that it was when you were like that, that Christ died for you. It was when you were like that, that the Spirit of God worked in your heart and drew you to Christ. It was when you were like that, that Christ received you as his own. Christ delights in receiving sinners. Christ delights in keeping sinners. Christ delights in taking sinners to heaven. And if God has done that work in you, you can be filled with joy as you walk out, realizing that God has exercised his power to save you, he has shown his grace and mercy to you, despite all of your sin.

You say, "Well, if that's true, then this is really great. God must really be good." Precisely. That's why we sing, "Hallelujah, what a Savior." He cleansed your past so that you don't have to dwell on it. His love never changes, so fear is taken away in the presence and on the eve of death and his mercy endures forever, my Christian brother, my Christian sister. So your future is secure but the pivot point is not to be in your own righteousness, of which you have none, the pivot point is to be in the Savior. You need a Savior like that and, my friend, don't you want a Savior like that?

Let's pray together.

*Spirit of God, the hour's passed so quickly. Would you seal and confirm to the hearts of those who truly believe the reality of salvation that they might find joy in Christ as they leave today? May you pursue like a hound dog those that are not in Christ. Pursue them with your convicting work, with your converting power, that everyone under the sound of*

*my voice, O God, would share in Christ together. Lord, we would not have one walk out unforgiven. We'd not have one walk out hardened in sin, but for all to come to saving faith in Christ. But Lord, it's impossible to us. We don't have the power. We can't reach into hearts and change them. Only you have that power. So Father, we've preached your word to the best of our limited ability, now we look to you to bring forth the fruit that belongs to you and to you alone. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

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