

Without Jesus Your Sins Won't Sink

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Bible Text: Micah 7:19

Preached On: Tuesday, February 11, 2014

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My message today, friends, is on how to get saved. I'd like to share with you a story about a rugged sea captain who found Christ. It's a compelling story because Jesus came to save sinners and sailors are often thought to be some of the rougher sort of men. The expression "square like a sailor" pretty much sums up the seafaring life. A life on the sea is hard and it is a struggle to survive out on the wide ocean and the kind of men who end up being sailors are tough men and rough men and this particular sea captain that this story is about, was the roughest kind of sailor for he was a smuggler. He was not only a rough man, but a lawless man. But God found him and he found God and he got saved and I want to tell you his story.

Before we begin, friends, I must give you some background on what it means to become a Christian because in your day and mine, there is a famine for hearing the word of God and there are few preachers today who proclaim the true gospel, the gospel that has power to save. So, I must share with you the gospel before we proceed into the story of that smuggling sea captain.

The title of my message today is "Without Jesus Your Sins Won't Sink" and my text today is found in the book of Micah, in chapter 7 and verse 19 which states,

"He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

When you hear the story of the sea captain, you will know why I chose that text for us today. I will ask you to be patient with this poor preacher as I proceed because I must be honest with you and give you the gospel with all its terrors and warnings and wooings. Like we say in the South, "I'm gonna give you the oil straight from the can." That means I will not dilute the gospel of the Son of God to make it more palatable for you to swallow because your blood would be on my hands if I did that. You see, friends, we live in a day of a more modern gospel, a more politically correct gospel, one that has had all the teeth taken out of it. So, sit back and listen to the real thing before we get to our story today of the rugged sea captain who got saved. I can assure you, friend, that without Jesus your sins won't sink.

I live in what's called "the Bible Belt" where there is a church on every corner but the problem is, the towns in which those churches exist grow more wicked with each new day. It makes me often wonder if there would be any noticeable impact on the town if the churches in those cities were replaced with libraries and coffee shops. Would it make any difference? The church is supposed to have an influence upon society but few do today because they have diluted the gospel message to make it more palatable to sinful man. A preacher is supposed to be an Ambassador for Christ and represent him and inform you of your duty of repentance and warning to flee from a terrible place called hell, that hell exists because of sin and that sin is black and hell is hot and it is a place of punishment for sin and for a person to avoid hell and its fires, that person must be born again.

You see, friends, we've gotten mixed up on what the gospel is and what the gospel does. We have confused reformation with repentance. Reformation is cleaning ourselves up a little to be more presentable to man but repentance is turning from our sins and turning to God. My fear is that because there is a shortage of hearing the true gospel, there may be quite a large number of people who have never heard it and what they call Christianity is just reformation. They decided to join the church or if they decided to become a Christian, so they made some resolutions, they cleaned themselves up a little to fit in better among church people but the sad fact is, they probably never heard the gospel come with power into their lives whereby they were transformed into a new creature and born again. They joined the church but they were never awakened to their lost condition and never convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit and they have never truly exercised repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ.

It may be, friend, you have never heard the true gospel of the Son of God which speaks of a scandalous cross on which the Prince of Glory died. That cross had Christ's blood all over it because of sin. Sin is rebellion against God. God made man and placed him in a Garden and he blessed them with a good-looking wife called Eve and God gave man specific instructions not to eat of a certain tree in the Garden. But there was a serpent there, the devil, and he tempted Adam and Eve to rebel against God and commit sin. But when they sinned, they committed treason against the Almighty and he had no choice but to banish them from the Garden of Eden and banish them from his presence. Man fell that day into sin and because of Adam's sin, all mankind enters this world with a sin nature, a depraved nature that is bent toward sin. Man drinks iniquity like it's water and can't get enough of it and man's dilemma is that he can't get to God on his own. He is separated from God. His good works won't save him. His self-righteousness won't save him.

Man needs a sin substitute to get back to God. But why does man need a sin substitute? I'll tell you why: God requires perfection to get into his heaven. The benchmark God uses to test perfection is his holy law, his commands: do not lie; do not steal; do not commit adultery; do not covet and so on. But the trouble is, man is a sinner and he has broken the law of God. God's law is strict and severe and when man is held up against the strictness and severity of God's holy law, he will fail that test because man is a sinner.

Listen, friend, you're not a sinner because of sin, you sin because you are a big sinner. If you'd been in the Garden of Eden, you would have pushed Adam out of the way and tried

to pull God down off of his throne and sit there yourself. All sin is rebellion against God and sin separated man from God and there is no getting back to God on man's own merits. The Bible says our righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of God.

Listen, friend, all of mankind will face a future judgment. Hebrews 9:27 declares, "And it is appointed unto men once to die but after this judgment." Romans 14:10 states, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." The reason why man needs a sin substitute to get back to God, to be reconciled back to God, is because man cannot stand on his own merits and be held up against the strict and severe law of God and pass that test. Man is a law-breaker, a guilty rebel against a Sovereign, who deserves punishment for sentencing must be carried out because God is a just Judge who must punish sin. Our trouble today, friends, is that we don't believe God is a God who must punish sin but just get out your Bible and read in Genesis how God sent a flood into the world in the days of Noah because of the wickedness of man and God destroyed all of mankind except Noah and his family. Sin caused that flood, friend. Mankind was drowning in sin and God drowned them with a flood because God is a God who must punish sin.

Look again in Genesis and see how God rained fire down upon wicked Sodom and see a God who must punish sin. The God of the Bible changes not. He is still a God who hates sin and who will punish sin so we need a sin substitute to get back to God. I know I'm a sinner and I need a sin substitute in the person of Jesus Christ and so do you, friend. So do you.

Have you ever learned a foreign language? I took Spanish in high school but I was never good at it. Do you know what the language of the gospel is? I will tell you, friend. The language of the gospel is this: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." That's it in a nutshell from the lips of Christ Jesus. One must exercise repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ to enter heaven and be reconciled back to God. Man has a duty to repent if he wants to get back to God and be saved and the only way to have Jesus is to repent toward God. That means to throw down your shotgun of rebellion at the feet of a Sovereign. That means to submit to the claims and demands of the Lord Jesus Christ on your life. That means to surrender your all to the Lordship of Jesus Christ when you come to him for salvation. Repentance is laying every inch of you on the altar of sacrifice and not holding anything back.

To get back to God, there must be a clean break with sin but you won't hear much preaching on man's duty of repentance in your day and mine because most preachers have gotten out their mop buckets and mopped up all the blood around Calvary so it won't be offensive but it's only the blood of Christ that washes away sin. There is a cross in Christianity, friend, and that cross had Christ's blood all over it. The only way back to God is to get under that blood. Are your sins washed in the blood? The old hymns say,

"What can wash away my sins?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

And,

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”

Are you stained by sin? Our text today is from the book of Micah and I will re-read it to you,

“He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”

Listen, friend, when we come to Christ savingly, all of our sins are cast to the bottom of the sea never to rise again and indict us. But if you die in your sins, your sins won't sink but they will line up one-by-one at the judgment bar when your life is reviewed before God and you will be found guilty and the sentencing of the law will be carried out and you will be cast into a burning hell for all eternity. Hell is a place of torment where the damned cry out in agony and anguish. Jesus said hell is a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Weeping speaks of great loss and regret; gnashing of teeth signifies anger and remorse.

Listen, friend, without Jesus, your sins won't sink. Did you hear me? Without Jesus your sins won't sink. Young man, without Jesus your sins won't sink. Young lady, without Jesus your sins won't sink. The gospel declares, “In whom we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.”

When I began this message, I promised you a story about a sea captain and I intend to tell you that story now for in this story of the smuggling sea captain, is a clear presentation of how to get back to God through the forgiveness of sin. Please, friend, listen carefully to the old sailor's story for you may be able to relate to his predicament. I pray that God will open your ears and tune your mind to see its treasures. I have seldom heard a story so full of the gospel of the Son of God than this story of the smuggling sea captain. So, please, listen carefully as I read you his words of life and death.

“I was once the captain of a smuggling boat. I remember well one morning just at daybreak, we discovered a Coast Guard boat in the distance. We had on board a heavy cargo of tobacco and we stood to make quite a bit of money if we could land it. The Coast Guard was still a long way off but we knew that if she gave chase, we couldn't possibly get away because our heavy cargo slowed us so much. We hoped that first we might not be seen but alas, we soon saw the Coast Guard crowding all sail and turning her course toward us. We all knew what would happen if we were taken. Not only would the boat and cargo be confiscated, but we'd all be sent to prison.

“For a time, there was a dead silence while we stared at each other in dismay. The Coast Guard was coming up fast behind us. Suddenly, I

thought of a way out. 'Mates!' I cried, 'there is no hope for us by running away but let them come. They will only find an empty ship.' Hastily, we first rigged the sail at the stern of the ship to screen us from the sight of the Custom's men. Then, sending part of the men below, I set them in line to hand up the packages of tobacco and pitched them overboard as they came up. Oh, how did we work!

“All was quiet. Nothing was heard but the splash of the tobacco dropping into the sea. The cargo was going down fast. 'Cheer up, men!' I cried, 'we'll soon be finished with it.'”

“Just then, I saw the ship's boy was too tired to go on so I sent him to see if the Coast Guard was very far off. In a minute, he came rushing back to me, pale as death. He just gasped out, 'It won't sink,' and fled below.

“In a flash, we understood what he meant. I ran to the stern of the ship and what a sight that was. The sun was just rising behind us and there in that long line of light were the packages of tobacco bobbing up and down in our wake and the first package in the line reached right back to the oncoming Coast Guard boat. Helplessly, we stood and stared at it. The proof of our guilt was there spread out for all to see. We were lost and in our ears rang over and over those fatal words, 'It won't sink.'

“In those days, my heart was far from God. I belonged to the world. From time-to-time though, I had serious thoughts and then I would resolve to correct my ways and change my course but resolving is one thing, doing is another. I still went on in the same old ways and as soon as we were free, I went back to smuggling.

“About three years after all this happened, I went out in a boat on the river one night. It was New Year's Eve and in spite of myself, my thoughts went back in review of my past life. I saw myself when a child, kneeling at my mother's knee to say my evening prayers. Again, I heard her tell me of One who came down from heaven to bring life to the world and at this I sighed deeply. The more I thought about my past, the more horrified I was. God had created me and I had lived and was still living as though there was neither God nor eternity.

“That night, I went down on my knees in the boat and prayed that God would come to my help. After this, I would be another man. I resolved not to touch a drop of liquor and to avoid all bad company. I made many more resolutions like that: what I would do and what I wouldn't do. Soon I began to feel a very good opinion of myself. Then, on further reflection, I saw that there were a lot more things I ought to clean up or lighten the ship as we say. I must throw overboard everything that ought not to be in my boat. My life was to be completely changed. My resolutions were getting

more serious and positive every moment. My heart grew lighter and I was happy in the thought that I had become a new man.

“As a finishing stroke, I decided to sell my ship and go home to my mother. Having made the decision, it seemed as if everything must be in perfect order. I had taken up the oars to go back to land when suddenly the moon broke through the clouds and cast its beams like a band of silver across the water to where my boat was lying. But why should I start to shiver? What should it remind me of? The memory of that certain morning when chased by the Coast Guard I had cast a cargo into the sea came over me with overwhelming power. I saw again the ship boy's frightened face and heard his cry, 'It won't sink!' How blind I was. Here again, I had tried to lighten my ship by casting the cargo overboard and there behold, it was all floating behind me like an accusing line stretched up to the throne of God. All that I had done, said or thought was there before the face of God and it would not sink. Fool that I was, I thought I could drown all my wickedness in the sea of eternal forgetfulness without a thought of the holiness of God. If I had been able from that moment on to do only what was good, it would not have changed the evil done in the past. What good was it to be forming good resolutions for the future and to pitch the old cargo overboard when it would not sink? Tears of despair filled my eyes. I was hopelessly lost.

“While in this state, seeing neither relief nor safety, I remembered the teachings of my faithful mother. Had she often told me about Jesus, the Savior of sinners? Hadn't he died on the cross for sinners? And if I should turn to him now, wouldn't his precious blood wash away even my sins? Wasn't there grace and mercy even for me?

“All at once, everything was clear before me. Yes, the Lord Jesus had died for me. He had borne the punishment of all my sins. If I accepted that, they would all be cast into the depths of the sea. “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more,” was the passage that kept coming to my mind. Such a joy filled my heart then. Lighthearted, entirely relieved of my burden, I turned my boat toward the shore and a new man, I stepped out onto the land. I had gone out a lost sinner but I was coming back redeemed by the Lord.”

I love that story, friend, don't you? Now do you see why I chose a Bible verse from Micah. Let me read it to you once more,

“He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”

I like what the Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, has to say about this text. He said in regard to God subduing our iniquities, “When he takes away the guilt of sin that it may

not damn us, he will break the power of sin that it may not have dominion over us.” And in regard to how God will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea, Matthew Henry commented, “As when God brought them out of Egypt, he subdued Pharaoh and the Egyptians and cast them into the depth of the sea. It intimates that when God forgives sin, he remembers it no more. He cast them into the sea not near the shore side where they may appear again next low water but into the depths of the sea, never to rise again. All their sins shall be cast there without exception for when God forgives sin, he forgives all.” I like that.

You see, friend, when you come to Jesus for forgiveness of sin, you must come to Calvary and look at him hanging on that cross. Look up there, see those nails in his hands and those nails in his feet? Those nails are your sins and my sins for our sins nailed him to that cross and the blood that is running down that cross, washes all sins away. When we come to Christ, he takes our sins and buries them in the sea of forgetfulness, never to be remembered again. They will never, ever rise again to condemn us like that sea captain's illegal cargo bobbing on the water. We are forgiven with his blood and by his death.

But you must come to him, friend, for forgiveness of sin because without Jesus your sins won't sink. You need pardon from sin, friend, to get back to God and to avoid being cast into hell. Jesus Christ is the only remedy for sin. In him there is pardon and peace with God. Why wait any longer, friend? Do what is necessary before God. The word of God in Isaiah declares what is necessary. May God grant you the grace, friend, to do what is needed.

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts:
and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and
to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”