

A prayer for salvation - radio

The scripture for our sermon today is found in Psalm 35. Listen carefully as I read the first three verses of that Psalm.

“Plead [my cause], O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. 2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. 3 Draw out also the spear, and stop [the way] against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I [am] thy salvation” (Psa. 35:1-3).

There are three main points that this Psalm makes:

1. **First**, the LORD must plead against my enemies for me. *“Plead my cause O LORD with them that strive against me. Fight against them that fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me”* (Ps. 35:1-3a).
2. **Second**, The LORD must tell me that He is my salvation. Say it me! Tell me! *“Say unto my soul, ‘I am thy salvation’”* (Ps. 35:3b)!
3. But there is a **third** lesson taught in this Psalm. That lesson is this: The One who must plead against my enemies and the One who must say to my soul, *“I am thy salvation”*, is none other than Jesus Christ! He is the LORD Jehovah who interposed Himself as Substitute for His people¹.

¹ The name JESUS means “Jehovah is salvation.” Therefore, He is Jehovah by His name (Matt. 1:21). There is no Savior but Jehovah, and Jesus is the Savior (Ps. 27:1; Isa. 12:2; Titus 1:3, 4; 2:10, 13; 3:4,6). Jesus is the, *“The mighty God”* (Isa. 9:6; Rev. 1:8, 11, 18). His name is *“Emmanuel,”* which means, *“God with us”* (Matt. 1:23). He is Jehovah whom Isaiah saw high and lifted up, the King of heaven’s host (Isa. 6:5; John 1:18; 12:41). He is *“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”* (Jer. 23:5-6), and He is *“The LORD my Shepherd”* (Ps. 23:1). Jesus said, *“I and my Father are one”* (John 10:30, 33). *“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father”* (John 14:9). He is the One all men must honor even as the Father is honored (John 5:22-23). No wonder Paul said, *“Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh”* (1 Tim. 3:16). And the Psalm command God’s people to worship Him (Ps. 45:11; 2:12). Jesus is called God (Matt. 1:23; John 20:28; Acts 20:28; Rom. 9:5). He is the One Mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5). We must therefore look to Him (John 1:29; Isa. 45:22-25), call on Him (Joel 2:32; Acts 2:39; Rom. 10:13-14; 1 Cor. 1:2), come to Him (Rev. 22:17; Matt. 11:28; John 6:35, 44-45), believe and trust Him (John 3:15, 16, 18, 36).

Consider each of these points in turn. **First**, to be saved, **the LORD must plead against, defend against and stop the way against the enemies of my soul.**

But, who are my enemies?

- Without a doubt, **my sin is my greatest enemy!** The Spirit of God teaches sinners that He, the God of all grace, treats their sins as their enemies! David prayed, *“Iniquities prevail against me. As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away”* (Ps. 65:3)! Is this not inconceivable mercy!? He who is holy, whose nature cannot look upon sin, distinguishes between His people and their sins. Ps. 35 is a bold prayer we are given by God to pray! How can God who is only holy make me who am only unholy anything but the object of His wrath?! How can He who is Just justify me, the ungodly sinner (Lk. 18:13; Rom. 3:26)?! Because in Christ He devised a way to magnify His holiness in the salvation of sinners! He said, *“I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and I will not remember thy sins”* (Isa. 43:25)! Listen to God’s promise: *“Who is a God like unto thee(!), that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. 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”* (Micah 7:18-19). As the LORD overthrew Pharaoh with his armies in the Red Sea, He subdued the sins and iniquities of His elect people! He dealt with our sins in justice by pouring out judgment on His Son (Rom. 3:25; 8:32). God the Father pardoned the iniquities of His people because Christ, the God-man our Mediator, buried their sins in the sea of God’s judgment when He suffered God’s judgment in their place!
- Second, not only my sins my enemy, but **my corrupt, sinful nature is my enemy!** The apostle Paul cried out, *“O, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death! I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Rom. 7:24)! My corrupt, sinful nature is so much a part of me that it is me! The apostle Paul said, *“O wretched man that I am!”* It is my ever-present enemy! Paul did not say, “O wretched man that I was,” but “O

wretched man that I am!” Only the LORD can deliver me from my sins and from my sin nature! In His holiness and righteousness, for His own sake, He must plead against, and deliver me from, my sins and my sinful self (Isa. 6:6-7; 43:25; Rom. 7:25)!

- **Thirdly, God’s own law is my enemy.** We may recoil in reluctance to call God’s law our enemy! But the Lord Himself says that it is. Colossians 2:14 says God’s ordinances were “*against us*” and “*contrary to us*” (Col. 2:14). God’s law is holy. It is just and good. How then can God’s law be my enemy? Because I am a guilty sinner, and God’s law only curses guilty sinners! And because the law makes all blessings depend on conditions that I must meet. The law says, “Do and live; fail to do and suffer God’s curse” (Gal. 3:10-12)! Yet I am already guilty! And I have a sinful nature! That nature is “*...is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*” (Rom. 8:7). Therefore, the law condemns me and holds me under a debt I cannot pay, and in a prison from which I cannot escape (Gal. 3:22-23). The law cannot justify a sinner (Rom. 3:20). The law cannot enable a sinner to keep one thing that it commands (Rom. 8:1-4). Under the law, I lack the heart to obey (Mark 7:21-23; Rom. 8:1-4). And I am confined to the prison of my sins and my sinful nature without hope (Gal. 3:22-23)! The law actually inflames my lust for what it forbids and leaves me in my pride to vainly hope I can do what God commands (Rom. 7:8, 9, 13; Gal. 3:10, 13). But no matter how far I go in my attempt to please God by what I do, I am never able to do enough. Therefore, God’s law is my enemy.
- **Satan and this world are my enemies.** How is satan and this world my enemy? Satan accuses the saints to God and slanders God to the saints. He introduces error into the Gospel, so that men believe a lie that their free will and good works make the difference between them and others before God. The world is satan’s slave and mouthpiece. The world worships the works of their own hands in idolatry. The religion of this world teaches that man’s will, not God’s, makes the difference in salvation, because God wants to save all men but can’t because man’s “free will” won’t let Him! This religious world teaches that Christ died for the sins of all men, yet some ultimately perish for their unbelief. But this lie denies Christ His glorious

achievements in salvation, that He actually obtained eternal redemption for His people (Heb. 9:12), actually perfected forever those for whom He offered Himself to God (Heb. 10:14; John 10:11, 16, 26-29). And the world teaches that the Spirit of God tries to persuade all men to believe Christ, but only some make a difference by their own will, while others resist His call. But scripture plainly declares God's will alone makes the difference in salvation (John 1:13; James 1:18; Rom. 9:16). Scripture plainly teaches that God the Father gave His people as sheep to Christ. He commanded the Lord Jesus to lay down His life for them. Christ must bring them. He calls them. They hear Him. They come to Him (John 6:37; 10:27). He will never cast out any who come at His call. He gives them eternal life. And He will not let one of them perish. But this world, under the deception of satan, seeks to rob God's people of their comfort, to rob them of faith in Christ by making salvation dependent on man's "free will." Therefore, I need Christ to overcome and plead against this world and the god this world worships. When Joshua the high priest stood in filthy garments before the LORD, satan stood by to accuse him to God (Zech. 3:1-2). But the LORD said to satan, "*The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?*" I need the Lord Jesus to plead against satan for me, to silence his accusations against me before God, deliver me from his lies, and keep me from his temptations (Matt. 6:13).

- **Death and hell are my enemies.** Death is the payback for sin (Rom. 6:23). Hell is reserved for the devil and his angels, but all who refuse to obey the Gospel in unbelief, who do not receive the love of the truth, will be damned with the devil and his angels (John 3:36; 2 Thess. 2:10-12; Rev. 14:10; Matt. 25:41).

Now, all enemies of my soul are the result of my own sin. The law only curses the guilty. Satan only deceives those who fail (refuse) to believe God's word (Titus 3:3; John 14:30; Rom. 10:16). Death and hell are payback for sin (Num. 21:5-6; Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 6:23). Therefore, **to be delivered from my enemies, I must be delivered from my sin.** How does the LORD plead for me against my sin, His

law, this world, the devil, and death and hell? He pleads in Christ and Him crucified!

Christ crucified!

David understood this. He cried out, *“Iniquities prevail against me!”* And then added, *“As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away”* (Ps. 65:3). By Himself the Lord Jesus Christ purged the sins of His people at the cross (Heb. 1:3). Do you see how the Spirit of God comforts His people against their sin enemy?! The prophet Micah said, *“Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness”* (Micah 7:8-9). Though Micah sinned, he trusted the LORD to plead his cause and justify him in the cross of Christ. It is at the cross that God *“execute[ed] judgment for me”* and all His people. Paul told Titus, the Lord Jesus *“Gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works”* (Titus 2:14). Christ our Savior judged the sins of His people at the cross.

Christ also overcame my sin nature at the cross, and He daily subdues it by His grace because of that cross victory. Sin shall not have dominion over those Christ justified by His blood (Rom. 5:9; 6:14). God has promised it. Christ now subdues my sin nature by His Spirit because of His victory at the cross. The apostle Paul said, *“Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life”* (Rom. 5:9-10). When Paul cried out, *“O, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”*, he immediately answered, *“I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Rom. 7:24-25; 5:20-21; 8:35-37; Heb. 7:25)! Therefore, Christ overcame my sin nature and daily subdues it by His victory at the cross.

And Christ overcame this world at the cross. “*Who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world*” (Gal. 1:4). Jesus told His disciples, “*In the world you shall have tribulation. But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33). Our Lord Jesus did the will of God by His obedience unto death. And He condemned the world because they received not the love of the truth (2 Thess. 2:10). Christ overcomes the world daily. This world that is the mouthpiece for satan. But no matter what persecution or trouble we experience in this world, we always triumph in Christ (Rom. 8:35-37). Even under God’s chastening hand, David prayed, “*Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake*” (Ps. 79:9). Therefore, we overcome the world in Christ crucified, risen, reigning and interceding (Rom. 8:34).

The Lord pleads against our enemies, by turning their curse into a blessing. When king David fled from his son Absalom, the LORD sent Shimei to curse David. One of David’s men wanted to kill Shimei. But David would not allow him to do so. David said, “*It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day*” (2 Sam. 16:12). God always orders all things and makes all things work together for the good of His people. He even turns the curse we deserve into a blessing in Christ (Eph. 1:3-4; Rom. 8:35-37; Gen. 50:20; Acts 2:23). He orders and designs and uses all things for the eternal good of His people, to conform us to the image of His dear Son (Rom. 8:28-29). He stops the way against them. He turns the evil intent and persecutions of the enemy into a blessing in Christ, according to His rich grace.

The Lord stopped the way against all enemies at the cross when He pleaded the righteousness of His own law in the satisfaction of Christ. “*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross*” (Col. 2:14).

Accusers silenced. Guilty justified. God glorified.

In John 8:1-11 the Lord paints beautiful picture of our salvation from our enemies. A woman was guilty of adultery, caught in the very act. She was publicly set before Jesus by her accusers². Her accusers tried to defeat Christ and condemn her. They said, “*Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou*” (John 8:5)? They tried to entangle Jesus with an irresolvable problem: How could this woman escape God’s law and justice? How could Christ be both just and merciful to sinners? How can God who is only holy accept sinners who in themselves are only unholy (Rom. 4:5)!? How can God be just and justify the ungodly (Rom. 3:26)?! How can Christ defend this woman against the law, against her sin, against the death she deserved? These haters of Christ thought they had cornered Jesus!

But in response to their questions, Jesus stooped in silence and wrote with His finger on the ground (Ex. 31:18). As God wrote the law with His finger on two tables of stone³, Christ wrote with His finger on the ground. He established the law as just and good. But as God spoke to sinful Israel through Moses alone, Christ spoke to these accusers through the law alone. Sinners cannot judge sinners without condemning themselves⁴. There is only one Lawgiver who is able to save and destroy (James 4:12). Only the Lawgiver, against whom all sin is committed⁵, can judge sinners. The woman’s accusers knew the law. After His first stoop, Jesus lifted Himself up and silenced the woman’s accusers. He said, “*He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her*” (John 8:7). Those who accused the woman to Jesus, saw His writing and heard His judgment. When Jesus said, “*He that is without sin among you,*” they were convicted by their own conscience, and went out one by one, beginning at the eldest even to the last (John 8:9). The longer

² Those who brought her were guilty of greater adultery. They worshipped the idol gods of their own will and their hypocritical self-righteousness.

³ Consider also, Dan. 5:5-6.

⁴ “*Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things*” (Rom. 2:1).

⁵ “*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned*” (Ps. 51:4).

we live in this world, the more sin we commit. The greater our sins, the greater our guilt. Therefore, the oldest left first because they were the most guilty.

Having silenced the guilty accusers, Jesus stooped again and wrote on the ground. Do you remember, when God gave Moses the first writing of His law? He wrote with His finger on two tables of stone. Moses came down the mountain with those tables. But when Moses saw Israel committing idolatry, he threw those first tables down, smashing them in pieces (Ex. 32:19). That act signified the universal sinfulness of God's own people. All have broken His law (Rom. 3:23; 1 John 3:4). Therefore, when Jesus stooped to write on the ground the second time, it spoke of the fulfillment of that second writing which God wrote on the two tables of stone. When God wrote the law the second time, He commanded Moses to put that second writing in the ark of the covenant. Now, the ark had a lid. And that lid was called the mercyseat. On that mercyseat, the High Priest sprinkled the blood of the atoning sacrifice once every year. That mercyseat and the blood sprinkled on it were given to show that Christ would propitiate God by His offering of Himself for the sins of His people who had broken His law, that law which was put into the ark (Rom. 3:24-25; Heb. 10:14-18). The blood of Christ made satisfaction for all those for whom He offered Himself. Christ's blood appeased God's wrath because He suffered the penalty of God's holy law against sin. In His second stoop, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Himself the Lawgiver, showed that He would satisfy God's justice and fulfill God's law with His own blood for the true Israel of God (Isa. 42:21; Gal. 6:16; Rom. 9:6-8). He would answer justice for chosen sinners to whom eternal life was promised before the foundation of the world. You were *"redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you"* (1 Pet. 1:18-20). To be made under the law and answer God for it, Christ had to stoop. He who is equal with God, made Himself a servant. He who is God in every way that God is God, took to Himself all that makes man man. And in His second stoop, our Lord Jesus Christ stooped to fulfill His own law, which His people broke. He took the sins of His people and made them His own. He offered Himself in satisfaction to God for them. He obeyed that law. His obedience cost Him His own death on the cross. He

established everlasting righteousness for His people (Dan. 9:24; 2 Cor. 5:21). He honored and magnified God's holy law (Isa. 42:21). In so doing, He took away all of the sins of all of His people, making them clean before the LORD⁶. Having thus stooped in voluntary humiliation, Jesus rose from the dead, which He signified when He lifted Himself up the second time. He looked around. The silenced accusers were now gone. The woman now stood alone before Him. In His first stoop, He upheld the righteousness of the law by writing it on the ground and leveling it against her accusers. But in His second stoop, He pleaded Himself as the atoning sacrifice to God and as the justifying righteousness of God's elect, those He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). This woman signifies all of God's elect. They are all guilty like her and condemned by the law (Titus 3:3; Eph. 1:-16; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). They are accused to God by satan and hated by the world. But by His death, the Lord Jesus nailed the handwriting of God's law that was against His people to His cross, and answer God for every charge with Himself. *"Having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross"* (Col. 2:13b-14). He who is the Lawgiver and Judge of all, stooped this second time to answer His own justice and fulfill His own law as the one Mediator between God and men. He who is our Mediator did for God all that God required. And He did all that God required to save His people from their sins and from every enemy! He pleaded Himself for His people. To God's justice, He said, *"Take me, instead of the lad"* (Gen. 44:33)! And, *"If you seek me, let these go their way"* (John 18:8). He satisfied God for them (Isa. 53:10; Eph. 5:2; 1 John 2:1-2; Rom. 3:25). He obtained their eternal salvation (Heb. 9:12). His plea then is the same as it is now: *"Receive him (the guilty, condemned one) as myself"* (Phm. 1:17). He bruised satan's head. He overcame the world. He put death to death (Hosea 13:14). He delivered His elect, sinful people from the lowest hell. *"Great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell"* (Ps. 86:13). The law is honored. All accusers are silenced. The guilty is made righteous and justified (Rom. 5:17). The Light of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ, is revealed in the brightness of His grace to sinners. He is the revelation of the invisible God. *"If*

⁶ "For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD" (Lev. 16:30).

*you have seen me, you have seen the Father” (John 14:9). God is known in how He saves sinners by the stoop of His Son to bear their sins, to answer and fulfill His law, to plead Himself for them, to silence their accusers by the decision of heaven’s court. God Himself rebukes our every enemy! “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?! It is God that justifieth! Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8:33-34)! Our “Advocate with the Father [is] Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1-2). “**He [Himself]** is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:2). He is “Emmanuel...God with us” (Matt. 1:23), “Jehovah our righteousness” (Jer. 23:5-6)! “There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5)!*

Say unto my soul, “I am thy salvation!”

Having carefully considered who my enemies are and how the Lord pleads and stops the way against them in Christ crucified, risen and reigning, consider now the second part of Ps. 35:3. It is a short and most precious prayer given by God Himself to His people! Considering all that Christ did to defeat and silence the enemies of my soul, the Psalmist now asks the LORD to do one more thing. Speak to my soul. Tell me you are my salvation! How does the LORD tell me that He is my salvation? He declares to the Gospel of Christ to me. He persuades me that Christ who died, rose, now reigns and intercedes is all my salvation (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:9-10; Rom. 5:10; Heb. 7:25). If the LORD is my salvation, I need not fear what any enemy can do to me. “*The LORD is my light and my salvation! Whom shall I fear*” (Ps. 27:1)?!

We may mistakenly think of salvation as a time when we exercised our will or made a decision for Jesus, and many other false notions. But if we let this Psalm speak for itself, we will understand the blessed truth of what salvation truly is! The LORD Himself says that He is my salvation! This is the Psalmist’s prayer. “*Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation!*” If the LORD is our salvation, I will go to LORD to save me. If the LORD is my salvation, I will look to Him. If the LORD saves me, if He saves you, He will make us know that He Himself is our salvation! Jesus

asked the woman in John 8, “*Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more*” (John 8:10-11)! The Psalmist asked the LORD to say this to his soul. Tell me that you are my salvation! Jesus said, “*I do not condemn thee.*” The Judge of all substituted Himself for His people. He judged against their enemies. He advocated for them before God. Now He tells them who He is: He is the LORD God. He tells them what He is to them: *I [am] thy salvation!* He tells them what He did in His two stoops, first, taking our nature, and second, bearing our sins and rising in triumph over our sins and all of our enemies. And He tells them what He obtained by doing so: our justification before God, our eternal salvation (Heb. 9:12; 10:14). He Himself is everything in our salvation. He obtained it. It is in Him. It is therefore eternally sure. If the Spirit of God convinces me and you that Christ is all, we will worship Him. We will love Him. We will trust Him. We will glorify Him (Rev. 5:9-13; Ps. 50:15; John 20:28)!

When Jesus rose from the dead, many of His disciples did not believe until He appeared to them. When He did, they were terrified. Do you know what He said to quiet their fears? He said, “*Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself*” (Luke 24:40). O, almighty, precious Savior of sinners! Tell me that you are my salvation, that you are my Lord and my God (John 20:28). We are saved in Christ alone (Acts 4:12; Isa. 45:17). He says, “*Behold me*” (Isa. 65:1), “*Look unto me*” (Isa. 45:22), “*Come to me*” (Matt. 20:28). “*Believe me*” (John 14:1; Acts 26:18). Let us therefore ask Him to do what He has said, to deliver us from our enemies, to bring us to Himself and tell us in our souls that He is all of our salvation. “*Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation*” (Isa. 12:2; Ex. 15:2). “*Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*” (Rom. 8:33-34).

The LORD, my salvation

Finally, realize that this Psalm is prophetic. David prayed as a prophet. His experience and his words would become the experience and words of Christ in fulfillment. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself prayed this Psalm, as Substitute for His people, at the hands of their enemies (Isa. 53). He suffered the contradiction of sinners against Himself (Heb. 12:3). He suffered the curse of God's law (Gal. 3:13; Num. 12:7-9). He was forsaken by God (Ps. 22). God plunged the sword of His justice into Christ His fellow, our great Shepherd (Zech. 13:7). He suffered. He paid with Himself. He prayed. And thanks be to God, He was heard! God justified Him and raised Him from the dead. His answer is the salvation of all for whom He died (Rom. 4:25)! The Gospel declares God's answer to Christ as His answer to His people. He is the salvation of His people! Are you persuaded that Christ is your only hope from every enemy? Is He your answer to God and your conscience and answer in the Day of Judgment? We need God to speak to us of Christ daily from His word. Therefore, pray that He would "*Say unto your soul, 'I am thy salvation!'*"

Addendum: Not included in sermon

Will you plead for Baal; will you save him?!

In Judges 6, God told Gideon to throw down the altar of Baal. When he did, the Baal worshippers wanted to kill him. But Gideon's father Joash rebuked the idol worshippers. He mocked their god. He said, "*Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar'*" (Judges 6:31).

The rebuke of Gideon's father shows the folly of man's religion. Idolatry reverses the roles between God and man. In false religion man creates God, because man defines God by his own human experience; man must allow God to be God. God

can do no more and no less than man allows. In false religion, God needs to be saved by man. Man must plead for God; man must save God.

Scripture says otherwise. The truth is that God created man. Man exists because God gives him being (Acts 17:8). If God did not think of man, man would have no existence, no being. God is therefore sovereign; He does all His pleasure (Isa. 14:24; 46:9-11; Acts 15:18; Eph. 1:4, 11; 2 Thess. 2:13). In the Gospel, God pleads for His people against their enemies (Ps. 35:1-3; Micah 7:7-9, 17-20; Luke 1:68-75; Prov. 22:22-23; 23:10-11; John 8:1-11; Rom. 8:31-39). In the Gospel, God saves His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21; Heb. 1:3) and from their sinful will (Ps. 110:3; John 6:37-40, 44-45; Titus 3:3-7; Eph. 2:1-9; Jer. 31:18-19; 2 Tim. 2:24-26). God saves man from his enslavement to his sin nature (Rom. 6:17; 1:5; 10:16-17; 16:26; 1 Pet. 1:21-22).

Free will, works religion promotes the lie that God cannot save a man unless man allows him. Free will, works religion says that Christ equally died for all men and the Spirit of God equally wants all men to be saved, but since only some are saved, man ultimately makes the difference. Free will, works religion says God cannot save a man against his free will. The idol worshippers of free will, works religion say that man decides if God will save him, and man decides when God will save him, therefore, man decides who God will save.

Common lies

The world is the mouthpiece of satan. The world has a high opinion of man, and a low opinion of God. Have you ever heard someone say, “Everyone is entitled to their own opinion?” Really? Do you think when men stand before Christ in judgment and speak lies about themselves and against the truth that Christ, the God and Man of glory, the Judge of all, will say, “Well, you are entitled to your own opinion?!” I remember an illustration Todd Nibert gave in a sermon. A batter in baseball let the pitch go by without swinging. The umpire called, “Strike!” The batter turned to the umpire in heated protest and said, “Everyone in this stadium knows that pitch was low and outside!” But the umpire calmly replied, “Everyone

in this stadium may believe that pitch was not a strike. But in this game, my opinion is the only one that matters.”

Truth is what God thinks. Truth is who God is (Ps. 31:5). Sin is what man thinks and says and does against God’s truth (1 John 3:4). Never is God’s truth more prominent than in salvation. Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6). You and I are not entitled to our own opinions. We are obligated to abandon our ways and our thoughts and bow to Christ. *“Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, for He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon”* (Isa. 55:7). Repentance is a change of mind. We must agree with God against ourselves. We must confess who and what we are. We must own who God is, who Christ is and what Christ has done, that salvation is in Christ alone. We must abandon our ways. Our way is sin. Our way is self-righteous pride. In the book of Judges God repeatedly said, “Every man did what was right in his own eyes.” But contrary to this world’s doctrine, we are not entitled to our own opinion, and just because we do something, doesn’t make it right. Just because everybody believes it, says it and does it, doesn’t make it right. Don’t use your birth as an excuse for sin as the world does. Don’t say, “I was born that way.” David confessed his actions as sin against God and lamented that sin was part of his very nature, making him all the more vile, all the more helpless, all the more in need of sovereign, saving grace (Ps. 51:4-5, 7)! Sin is our own fault. Our will and affections are enslaved to it. Pray therefore that God would grant you and me repentance to the acknowledging of the truth of Christ by writing His Gospel on our hearts (Jer. 31:18-19; Acts 5:31; 2 Tim. 2:25; 2 Cor. 3:3-9). Pray that He not leave us to be taken captive by the devil at his will (2 Tim. 2:26; Col. 1:12-13; Acts 26:17-18; Matt. 6:13).