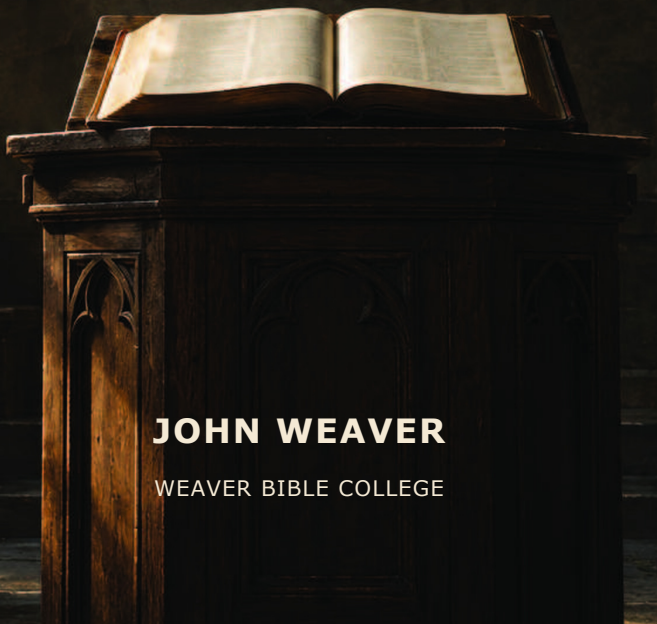
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BIBLICAL STUDIES

What Sinners
Hate To Hear

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE



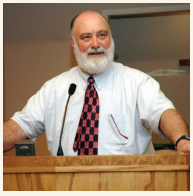
Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

GALATIANS 4:16

The discomfort of a message does not determine whether it is true. John Weaver considers teachings that confront sinful confidence and the resistance they may provoke. These messages invite readers to examine their response to Scripture and to distinguish unwelcome correction from an unjust judgment.

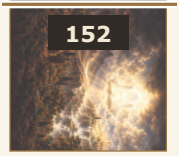
“Many people go around using their tongues to say that Jesus is Lord, with no earthly idea of what they are saying.”

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.



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CHAPTER 1

What Sinners Hate to Hear

Part One of Two

What Sinners Need to Hear

Introduction: The Importance of Hearing

Look at Isaiah 55, and verse 3, at what God says: "...incline your ear and come unto me and hear, and your soul shall live. And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Note again, verse 3: "...incline your ear and come unto me and hear, and your soul shall live."

Hearing is vitally important to salvation. Our Lord said very plainly, "Hear, and your soul shall live." So the question is, have you ever heard unto salvation? If so, what did you hear, and how did you hear? I hope you understand that there is an external hearing of the Word and there is an internal hearing of the Word. The external is merely physical; the internal is spiritual.

Many have the ability to hear externally and outwardly, but no one has the ability to hear inwardly and spiritually apart from the

grace of God. I have been asked this question a number of times, and that is what really triggered this message as I was thinking about it in light of a lot of people having lost loved ones and lost friends: What do you say to a sinner? What do they need to hear?

The Problem of Condensing Truth

How would you witness to an unconverted friend or family member? Have you ever considered what you would really say to them, or what they really need to hear?

Naturally, if you had several weeks or several months where you could just talk endlessly, you could cover an awful lot of things and very, very many doctrines. But you are only going to have that situation if you have a close neighbor or a close family member with whom you can do that. Usually, when it comes to witnessing to someone, it is under an hour, sometimes under thirty minutes. So what in the world do you tell someone when you are trying to give them what you would call an irreducible minimum of truth, because of time's sake?

There is a problem in telling people what they need to hear: how do we condense the truth without compromising it? It will take two weeks to finish this message so that you may see the completeness of the truth. But then you must be able to condense it and say, "Here is what you need to hear." How, then, do we communicate that which is absolutely fundamental, needed, and necessary without perverting the truth? We need to know what people need to hear in order that we may give them the truth. And I must emphasize this: it is indeed the truth that sinners need to hear. It is the truth that we have been commanded to hear.

Whether you look in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or any of the prophets, you will see this command repeatedly: "Hear ye the word of the Lord." Often, that command is given even to God's professing people. If God's professing people will not hear His Word, is it any wonder that sinners will not listen to Him? Over and over He says, "Hear ye the Word of the Lord."

Many of you will remember that numerous times in the New Testament our Lord said, as in Matthew 13:19, "He who hath ears to

hear, let him hear." In Matthew 15:10, He called the multitude and said unto them, "Hear and understand." Our Lord has commanded us to hear. In Mark 4:24, the Word of God says, "Take heed what you hear." We are not obligated to hear everything.

Theological Dilemma of Not Hearing

We are obligated to hear the Word of God. In Luke 8:18, He said, "Take heed how you hear." God is going to hold us responsible not only for what we hear, but also for how we hear. That means those times when we stay out too late on Saturday night, come sleepy-headed on Sunday morning, and are dull of hearing and do not really pay attention. God will hold us accountable for how we heard His Word. We must take heed not only to what we hear, but also to how we hear.

There is a real theological dilemma for those who will not hear the Word of God. Remember what our Lord said in John 10:27: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Our Lord says that His sheep hear His voice. Now consider what He said to those unbelieving Jews in John 8:47: "He that is of God, heareth God's words. Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."

This is what our Lord is saying: "My sheep hear My voice." In other words, if you hear and heed the Word of God, it is evidence that you are one of His sheep. If you refuse to hear and heed the Word of God, it is obvious that you are not His sheep. He said, "He that is of God heareth God's words"; therefore, you hear them not because you are not of God. The reason they did not hear God's words was that they were not of God.

Then, in John 8:31, Jesus said to those Jews who believed on Him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." Continuing in His Word is evidence that they are truly His disciples. The person who hears and heeds the Word of God gives evidence of belonging to Christ, while the person who refuses to hear it gives evidence that he is not of God.

The proof that our conversion is genuine is that we continue in the faith and in the Word of God. What does that mean for someone who professes that he was saved, but has not been to church, read his

Bible, or heard any Word or teaching for twenty years? Our Lord says that the proof we are genuinely His disciples is that we continue in His Word. The proof that we are one of the Lord's sheep is that we hear His voice and follow Him. The evidence that we are not His sheep is that we do not hear Him, heed Him, or obey Him. When someone turns his ear away from hearing the Word of God, he is treading on very dangerous ground. He is condemning himself and exposing himself as one who does not belong to the Lord.

The Puritans used to say, “I have great news for a sinner if I can ever find one.” Stop and think about that. We are all sinners; I know that, and you know that. But when you talk to someone about his sin, his attitude is usually, “Well, I’m not that bad.” We know we are sinners, but we do not understand the complexity, depth, or judgment of our sin. That is why the Puritans said they had great news for a sinner if they could find one.

They followed it with another saying: “A sinner is a precious thing, for only God can make one so.” They meant that when a sinner genuinely sees and understands his sin, his depravity, its wickedness, and its just deserts, God has opened his eyes and shown him exactly what he is. Only God can make a sinner see his need of Jesus Christ. That is why they said a sinner is a precious thing, for only God can make him so.

If you have a lost family member, a friend, or someone who will listen, what do you tell him? I am going to give you a minimum of four truths. I will cover only two today and two next week, Lord willing. At an absolute minimum, these four truths should be communicated. The first truth is this: listen carefully.

First Truth: Ability vs. Responsibility

We must communicate the difference between ability and responsibility. Why in the world do I begin with such a point? The difference between these two concepts is absolutely, vitally important. In the garden, when God had created Adam, he not only walked with God, but he had the ability to please God. And he did so during their time of communion. However, when Adam sinned against God and rebelled against him, God drove him from the

garden, and he was cursed. Adam and all of his posterity lost their ability to please God, but they did not lose their responsibility.

When Adam sinned, he did not cease to be God's creation. He was still God's creation, but now he is a sinner and a sinful creation. As God's creature, he was still accountable and responsible to God, even though he was now a sinner. You have to remember that Adam, according to the Scripture, was created with original righteousness, knowledge, and holiness.

Everybody wants to talk about the will of man. Adam, with original knowledge, original righteousness, and original holiness, in a perfect environment, used his will to sin against God. The problem with Adam was this: although he had original righteousness, knowledge, and holiness, he was created mutable—that is, changeable. He could lose it, and he did lose it when he sinned and rebelled against God. He could change, and he did change. He lost his position and his ability. He lost everything in the fall, changing from being holy to unholy and from being righteous to unrighteous.

Romans 5:12 is a very important verse. Paul writes, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” The Scripture says, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world.” Who actually was the first to sin? Eve? That's correct. Well, why does the Bible say, “by one woman,” that sin entered the world? Because the covenant was with Adam, and Adam was our federal head and representative. Look at verse 12 again: “Wherefore, as by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men.” Now look at the phrase, “for that all have sinned.” Let me explain something about that phrase.

I realize not everybody is a Greek scholar, and I am not trying to make you one. But I am going to tell you that when it says, “For all have sinned,” it is an aorist passive in the Greek. That means this: it is something that happened one time, once and for all, with continuing results. When did all of us sin at one time? In the fall in Adam.

Because he was our federal head and our representative, we lost it all when Adam fell. Here is what this means: If you had been in the

Garden of Eden, you would have done exactly the same thing Adam did. You would have. We all sinned, we all fell on him. Now, since Adam was our federal head and federal representative, you can find that, by the way, not only in Romans chapter 5, but in 1 Corinthians 15 as well. When he sinned, we sinned. When he fell, we fell. When he lost his ability, we lost our ability.

That is why the Bible says now in Ephesians 2 and verse 1, "Hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins." So man now is dead in trespasses and in sin. What can a dead man do? Absolutely nothing.

Biblical Evidence of Inability

Now, I want you to look in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 2. We are coming back to Romans 8, so just hold Romans, if you would. Look in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 14. I am telling you that we lost everything in the fall. Look at that very carefully. Look at this next phrase. The natural man, that is the unsaved man, man apart from grace, man without Christ, receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for their foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. The natural man, the unsaved man, does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. Why? They are foolishness to him. Neither can he know them. In other words, fallen man does not have the ability to receive, know, or understand the things of God. Period.

Let me show you how bad it really is. Romans 8, beginning with verse 6, says, "For to be carnally or to be fleshly minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Verse 7 says, "Because the carnal mind"—the fleshly mind, the unsaved mind, the natural mind—"is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Verse 8 continues, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

What does the Bible just tell us? Natural man, unsaved man, by nature hates God. Not only does he hate God; his mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be. They that are in the flesh cannot please God. How many are in the flesh? All of us. How many of us have no ability to please God in and of ourselves? All of us.

There is not one sinner—there has never been one sinner—who had the ability to please God. Nothing he could ever do could please God. By nature, he hated God. He cannot please God; that is a term of ability. According to 1 Corinthians 2:14, he cannot receive the things of God, and he cannot know the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned.

This is emphasized throughout the Bible, and I want to show you particularly the "cannots" in the book of John. Look in John chapter 3, beginning with verse 3, and watch carefully what our Lord says. Jesus said in John 3:3, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Except a man be born from above—anothen is the Greek word—he cannot see the kingdom of God. Unsaved man cannot even glimpse the kingdom of God. He cannot see; he is blind.

Then John 3:5 says, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." So what is it that a man cannot do so far? He cannot see the kingdom of God; he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That is, he has no ability.

There is a difference between the words may and can. May is a term of permission; can is a term of ability. If Dr. Holmes asked me, "Can I play your piano?" my response would be, "You may, if you have the ability." I do not think he has the ability to play the piano, but you see the difference. May is a term of permission. Can is a term of ability. So our Lord says no man has the ability to see the Kingdom of God. No man has the ability to enter the Kingdom of God in and of himself.

John 6:44 says, "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which sent Me draw him, and I will raise him up the last day." How many men, in and of themselves, have the ability to come to Christ on their own? Not one. We cannot see, we cannot enter, and we cannot come.

In John 8, He is talking to unbelievers. They said unto Him, "We be not born of fornication. We have one Father, even God." They were accusing Christ of being an illegitimate child. Jesus said unto them, "If God were your Father, you would love Him. For I

proceeded forth and came from God, and neither came out of myself, but He sent me. Why do you not understand my speech? Even because you cannot hear my word, you are of your father the devil, and the lust of your father you will do."

What did He say to them? "You cannot hear my word." Sinners cannot see, they cannot enter, they cannot come, and they cannot hear. John 12:39-40 says, "Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, He had blinded their hearts and hardened their hearts, blinded their eyes and hardened their heart that they should not see with their eyes and understand with their heart and be converted and I should heal them. Therefore they could not believe."

What is it that a sinner cannot do here? He cannot believe. If you take the book of John, you cannot see, enter, come, hear, or believe. It should be an obvious fact from Scripture, a clear and certain fact from Scripture, that fallen man has lost his ability to please God. However, that does not mean that he has lost his responsibility to please God. You have to communicate the difference between ability and responsibility. You may lose your ability, but not necessarily your responsibility.

God did not make man sin, and God does not make you sin. You choose to sin because you are a sinner. You choose to sin because you have Adam's fallen nature. Simply because man has lost his ability to please God does not mean that God has lost His right to command. God is still God. He is still the sovereign God of heaven and earth. He is the sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God who has the absolute right to command. And God does command. He still commands sinners, although they have lost their ability. They have not lost their responsibility.

Responsibility Remains Despite Inability

Now let me try to distinguish between these two things for you, and then I am going to make the application in just a moment. Simply because someone is responsible to do something does not mean that he has the ability to do it. A thirteen-year-old girl and a fourteen-year-old boy can produce a baby. If and when that happens, does that mean that they have the ability to marry, raise

the child, educate the child, and be the kind of parents and spouses that God demands? Does the fourteen-year-old boy have the ability to make a living, support, and sustain his thirteen-year-old wife and child? No. He does not have that ability. He may have the responsibility, but he does not possess the ability. There is a difference between ability and responsibility.

If I borrowed $10,000 from Ed, am I responsible to pay it back? Yes. But suppose I borrowed the $10,000 from him, left, and became involved in a horrible automobile wreck. I am incapacitated. Do I now have the ability to pay it back after I have already spent it? No. I have the responsibility, but I do not have the ability. So there is a big difference between ability and responsibility.

Now I want to apply this same principle to the commands of Scripture and let you see it. Acts 17:30 says, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." Notice that He does command all men to repent. Why does God command all men everywhere to repent?

First of all, He has the right to. He is God, and He can do whatever He pleases. But secondly, verse 31 tells us why He issues this command: "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

Here is why God commands men to repent: God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world. There is a final judgment, and He is going to judge that world in righteousness. Notice that Scripture says, "by that man whom he hath ordained," which is Jesus Christ. "Whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, and that he hath raised him from the dead." Just as surely as God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, there is going to be a day of judgment. Why does God command all men everywhere to repent? The answer is that God has appointed His Son judge of everything, and He is going to judge every man. The assurance of that is that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

God has commanded every man everywhere to repent. Look at what happens if there is no repentance. Luke 13:1–5 says: "There

were present at that season some of them that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Our Lord said that just because some great, catastrophic, horrible, tragic incident happens to someone does not necessarily mean that they were sinners exceedingly. He said, "No. But I'll tell you, unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish."

We know from Acts 17 that God commands men to repent, and from Luke 13 that if men do not repent, they will perish. As His creatures, we owe Him glory. As sinners, we owe Him repentance because we have violated His law, transgressed His commands, and sinned against His person. God commands repentance. Why, then, are sinners not repenting? We know that if they do not repent, they will perish. Why are they not repenting?

Have you sinned this week? Yes. Janet is shaking her head and pointing at Henry. You say, "I guess I've sinned this week." Well, repent. Let me see you repent. Go ahead and repent right now. Do you realize that you cannot repent unless God gives you repentance? I do not care whether you are a non-Christian or a Christian; it is the absolute truth.

How does one receive repentance? Where does it originate? Repentance, like faith, is the gift of God. God must give it. If God does not give it, I cannot repent. Repentance is His gift. It comes from Him and from Him alone. When I turn from my sin, I am exercising the gift of repentance that He gave me. Repentance does not reside in man by nature—not even in a Christian man. No man can repent apart from the Lord.

Acts 5:30–31 tells us one reason Christ was raised from the dead and sits at the right hand of God the Father: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God

exalted with or at his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." In other words, repentance and forgiveness are gifts from Jesus Christ; He must give them. Look in Acts 11. You remember that in Acts 10, Cornelius and his household were converted.

When Peter came back to Jerusalem, the other Jewish people who believed challenged him, saying that he was not supposed to go into the house of someone unclean. Peter rehearsed everything God had shown him. Look in Acts 11; let us read verse 17. Peter says, "For as much as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God?"

When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted, or given, repentance unto life." Where did they get repentance? They got it from God. It is His gift; He gave it. If you will turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy, chapter 2, beginning with verse 24, watch carefully. This is 2 Timothy 2, verse 24.

Paul is telling Timothy his only hope in preaching and teaching. In 2 Timothy 2:24–26 he says, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him and his will."

When do men recover themselves out of the snare of the devil? According to verse 25, when they acknowledge the truth. When do men acknowledge the truth? According to verse 25, when God gives them repentance. If God does not give them repentance, they do not acknowledge the truth, nor do they recover themselves out of the snare of the devil. So here it is: God demands repentance. Men are responsible to repent. But they do not have the ability to repent.

Faith as a Gift, Not a Human Decision

Where does that leave the sinner? It leaves him right where it should leave him: at the mercy of God. Self-reformation is not repentance. You may say, "I'm going to stop smoking, I'm going to stop drinking,

I'm going to stop chewing, I'm going to stop going to the girls that do." You would probably live a little longer and feel a little better. But self-reformation is not repentance.

Look in Matthew 12, beginning in verse 43. Our Lord says, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return unto my house from whence I came out; and when he's come, he findeth it empty, and swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with him seven other spirits, more wicked than himself. And they entered to dwell there. And the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also in this wicked generation."

What is He saying? Self-reformation is not repentance. Where does that leave a sinner? It leaves him at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, begging for mercy. He must seek repentance from the Lord Jesus Christ. He must acknowledge his responsibility and yet his inability. He must understand that if he is not given the gift of repentance, he is doomed. The realization of this should make him cry and beg for mercy.

The same, by the way, is absolutely true with faith. In 1 John 3:23, the Scripture says, "And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment." What? "And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." Wait a minute. God has also commanded men to repent. Now God commands men to believe on the name of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am not going to ask you to turn to Ephesians 2:8–9 because I know you can quote this passage. Listen: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." What did he just say? "For by grace are ye saved through faith, that not of yourselves." Faith does not originate in man. Faith is not inherent in man. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

I was being facetious earlier when I told you to repent, because I know you cannot on your own. So let me be a little facetious here:

Have faith. Go ahead and exercise faith right now. You cannot unless God gives you faith. Faith is the gift of God.

Now, if you want to turn to 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, I do ask you to turn there, just because I want you to see this, to prove a point. There is a—I suppose the Apostle Paul and Peter would refer to it as a damnable lie—that is very prevalent in Christian circles. Unhappily, a lot of preachers preach it as a truth.

They try to say that every man has faith; he simply needs to exercise it. I have heard preachers say that. Look in 2 Thessalonians 3:2. Paul is asking prayer for himself and those traveling with him, and he says, "And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith." Who are you going to believe—the Apostle Paul, or some preacher who says everybody has faith and only needs to exercise it?

I have heard preachers use this illustration: "Here is a chair. Do you believe that chair will hold you up?" "Yes." "You do not really believe it until you sit in it." Sitting in it, they say, is exercising faith. The only problem is that there is a real difference between believing a chair will hold me up and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. One is a physical act; the other is a spiritual act.

Who can give faith? God alone. Who can give repentance? God alone. Where does that leave the sinner? It leaves him right where he should be: at the feet of Jesus Christ, begging for mercy, repentance, and faith. Every sinner has a responsibility to repent and believe, but no sinner has the ability to do so. Only God can give him the ability to fulfill his responsibilities.

Sinners need to hear the truth. If you think the key to salvation is in your hand, and that you can insert it into the door of salvation and turn it whenever you want, you may say, "I am going to sin as long as I can, and right before I die, I am going to insert that key in the door of faith."

The Power of God and the Wisdom of Man

You must remember that repentance is not yours in and of yourself. Faith is not yours in and of yourself. If God does not give it to you, you will never repent and you will never believe. It is just as one

scholar said: many who plan on repenting at twelve o'clock die at eleven-thirty. Repentance and faith are not yours; they are God's.

There is a second truth I want to communicate: we must understand the difference between ability and responsibility, and the difference between the power of God and the wisdom of man. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, beginning in verse 1:

Second Truth: Power of God vs. Wisdom of Man

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

Go back to verse 1. Paul said that he came not with the excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto them the testimony of Jesus Christ. He determined not to know anything among them save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. In verse 4, he says that his speech and preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. There is a vast difference between the power of God in salvation and the effects of human wisdom in producing a decision.

I should make this exceedingly clear: a decision does not save. Jesus Christ is the one who saves. Many people have decided to become Christians. They have decided to be baptized or to join the church. They claim to be Christians, yet their lives are totally and completely unchanged. Contrary to Scripture, they live like the world, love the world, have no holiness, and have no obedience in their lives. Practically speaking, you cannot tell them apart from any other individual who is unsaved. The only difference is that every now and then they go to church and profess that they are Christians. Their salvation is based upon a decision.

Mark this down in your little black book: psychology, oratory, persuasive arguments, and pressure are often enough to make, to

coerce someone into a decision. Many times, those to whom you are witnessing, if there is enough pressure, will make a decision just to get rid of you. They will. I find it strange that all of these churches have all these decisions. I know of churches in certain areas that claim that, in one year, they have had a hundred thousand decisions for Christ.

The Necessity of Divine Drawing and Revelation

The people are never baptized and never added to the church. No culture changes. No society changes. Their home does not change. Their lives do not change. What has happened? Well, they had a decision. Do you realize that most people can be talked into a decision, especially a child, in order to come to Jesus Christ savingly? One must be drawn by the Holy Spirit of God.

Now, I told you I wanted you to go back to John chapter 6, and I want you to see this. Look in John chapter 6, verse 44. We read this verse earlier, and I am reading it just so I can read the next verse. John 6, verse 44: "No man can come unto Me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him, and I will raise him up the last day." Our Lord has just gotten through saying, "No man can come unto Me, except the Father draw him."

What good is a decision if the sinner has not been drawn to Christ by the Father? Our Lord says, "No man can come unto Me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him." And, by the way, the word here is draw, not drag. When the Father draws a man to Christ, the man does not come kicking and screaming, hollering, "I do not want to be saved! I do not want to be saved!" No. That is ridiculous. But here is how the Father draws. John 6, verse 44: "No man can come unto me, except the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him up the last day."

"It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." How does God the Father draw men to Christ? The answer is through illumination and education. The importance of this fact is that they are taught of God. God may use men to speak the truth. God may use men to communicate the truth. But if the

illumination of the Holy Spirit and the education of the Father are missing, so is salvation.

In Matthew 11:27, look carefully at what our Lord says. Our Lord said it so plainly: “All things are delivered unto me of my Father. And no man knoweth the Son, but the Father. Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son. And he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” What? He says no man knows the Father but the Son, and no man knows the Son but the Father, and he to whomsoever He reveals Him.

So let me put it like this: if there is no revelation, there is no salvation. If there is no illumination and no education, there is no salvation. Let me show you how this works. Look at Matthew 16, beginning with verse 13. “When Jesus came into the coast of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and other Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Watch. Jesus answered and said unto him, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah.” Peter was not smarter than everyone else. He had not figured this thing out by himself. “For flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” How did Peter know that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, the Son of God? God the Father revealed it. It was not Peter’s intellect. It was not Peter’s education in the school of the Pharisees. It was the Father in heaven who revealed it unto him.

It was not that he had a college degree. The only way that he knew who Jesus Christ was, was that the Father had revealed it unto him. If people are satisfied with a decision and a pronouncement by some preacher that they are Christians, that is their choice and their problem. If someone genuinely, truly wants to be converted and saved according to the Word of God, he must have a revelation of who Jesus Christ is. He must be illuminated, educated, and drawn by the Father to Jesus Christ.

Saving Confession by the Holy Spirit

I want to show you how simple this is, and yet how complicated it could be if you do not understand the Scripture. Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 12, and look at verse 3. Here is one verse that should blow a hole in most modern-day evangelism. The Apostle Paul says, "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

The first part of this verse is very simple. The word accursed is anathema—to be damned, doomed. No man speaking by the Spirit of God can curse Jesus Christ. Very obviously, the reason is that the Spirit of God, according to Scripture, exalts Christ and honors Christ. If anyone is cursing Christ, it is the work of the flesh, the work of the devil; it is not the work of God.

The Holy Spirit does not curse Jesus Christ. We understand that. But look at the latter part of the verse and understand the impact of that statement: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Obviously, anyone who has a tongue and the ability to speak could frame the words in his mouth and say, "Jesus is Lord." Now here is my question: Does the ability to frame those three words with the tongue—"Jesus is Lord"—make a man a Christian? Obviously not.

What you have to understand in verse 3 is this: no man can, and I would insert one word here, savingly say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost. In other words, it is the power of God the Holy Spirit, the work of God the Holy Spirit in man, that enables a man to savingly confess Jesus Christ as Lord.

Men may imitate, but only God can authenticate. Many people go around using their tongues to say that Jesus is Lord, with no earthly idea of what they are saying. The word Lord literally means boss, owner, sovereign, and master. When you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord, you are saying, in essence, that He is in charge. He is the boss.

He tells you how to live, how to talk, where to go, and where not to go. He can tell you whatever He wants to; He is the Lord, the boss, the owner, and the master. Scripture tells us that only the Holy Spirit

of God enables us to savingly say that Jesus Christ is Lord. The evidence that we have savingly acknowledged Him as Lord is that we are enabled to submit our lives to Him and obey Him.

That is why I said, “If you continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.” We bow to His lordship. What is it sinners must hear? They must hear the difference between ability and responsibility, and the difference between the power of God and the wisdom of man. Paul said, “I did not come with excellency of speech.”

Applications and Conclusion

There is no amount of oratory, illustrations, or sermon outlines that can save. Only Jesus Christ can save. You can persuade someone to make a decision, but if God has not opened his eyes, illuminated him, educated him, and brought him to savingly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, he is not converted, no matter how many decisions he makes.

The first application is this: ability and responsibility are not the same. Every sinner is accountable and responsible to God, but not one has the ability to please God in and of himself. Sinners are commanded to throw themselves at the feet of Jesus Christ and beg for mercy, repentance, and faith—for the ability to fulfill their responsibilities.

The blessed truth of John 6:37 is true: “All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and he that cometh unto me I shall in no wise cast out.” If we come to Him seeking repentance and faith on His terms, He will in no wise cast us out.

The second application is that if one is not convicted of his sins, given repentance and faith, drawn by the Father, and enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit to savingly confess Jesus Christ as Lord, he is not saved.

I don't care which church he is in. I don't care how many times he's been baptized. I don't care how long he's taught or how long he's preached. He's just not converted. Salvation is not by decision. Salvation is by grace through faith. Salvation is the work of God and not the work of man. Jonah said it in Jonah 2, verse 9, when he said,

“Salvation is of the Lord.” He is the author and the finisher of our faith.

Everything rests upon Jesus Christ. Like that hymn: “Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling.” We rest only in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to You. We thank You for Your love, for Your grace, for Your mercy. We pray, Lord, that You would help us to see these truths, help us to be able to communicate them, Lord, because this is what sinners need to hear: Thy Word, Thy truth, Thy mercy, Thy grace, and its salvation is of the Lord. Help us, Father, to honor Thee. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

What Sinners Hate to Hear

Part Two of Two

Introduction and Review

In Isaiah 55:3, God says, “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” The emphasis is upon these words: “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live.” Hearing is vitally connected to salvation.

Romans 10:13 says, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” However, verse 14 asks, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” Once again, hearing is vitally important unto salvation. The passage shows that sinners must hear before they can believe, and they must believe before they call upon the name of the Lord.

There is a difference between an external and an internal hearing, between a physical outward hearing and a spiritual inward hearing.

It is true that we must hear the Word externally, but hearing the Word externally does not save us. There must be an internal hearing of the Word of God, and that internal hearing is the work of God the Holy Spirit. The Word may be heard with the outward ear, while the heart remains unchanged; genuine conversion requires the inward hearing produced by the Spirit.

Two truths are absolutely needed and necessary for sinners to hear if they are going to be genuinely converted. The first truth is that they must know the difference between ability and responsibility. Over and over in Scripture, the Word of God declares our responsibility, but it also declares at the same time our inability. This distinction is taught through many passages of Scripture. While sinners have the responsibility to repent and believe, because God has not lost His right or power to command, responsibility does not equate with ability. No sinner, in and of himself, has the ability to repent and believe.

That's why our Lord says, "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." I took you through the book of John and showed you how sinners cannot see, enter, hear, or believe. The emphasis, then, has to be on this fact: everyone has a responsibility, but the ability comes from God alone. Therefore, sinners are responsible to seek God for His mercy and grace.

Isaiah 55:3 says, "Hear, and your soul shall live." Then, in verses 6 and 7, we read: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 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."

Sinners have the responsibility to forsake their evil ways and turn from their unrighteous thoughts, but they do not have the ability. Only the grace of God can give them that ability. Therefore, they are thrown at the feet of Jesus Christ, begging for mercy and for His grace to enable them to fulfill their responsibilities.

The second truth I covered last week is that sinners need to hear the difference between the wisdom of man and the power of God. In 1 Corinthians 2, the Apostle Paul wanted to make sure that his

preaching did not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. There is a vast difference between someone making a decision and someone being genuinely converted by the grace of God. If you have the personality, persuasive ability, and oratory, you can usually talk someone into making a decision. Often they will do it merely to get rid of you because they do not want to be bothered. But that does not equate to salvation. Paul's ministry did not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. It is not personality, oratory, outlines, or illustrations.

Faith and Mental Assent

It is not the greatness of the preacher that saves; it is the power of God. If God does not save you, then you are not saved. It is just that simple. Decisions are absolutely useless and worthless without the power of God. If one is not convicted and converted by the Holy Spirit of God, he is not saved, no matter how many decisions he makes.

We looked last week at 1 Corinthians 12:3, where the Apostle Paul wrote, “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” Men with the ability to speak can frame the words, “Jesus is Lord.” Anyone who can speak can say those three words, but that does not mean he is saved. Paul is saying that no one can savingly say that Jesus Christ is Lord except by the Holy Ghost.

In other words, men may imitate, but only God can authenticate. If one has not been enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit to confess and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, it does not matter how many lip professions he has made; he is not saved. There is a vast difference between the work of man and the work of God. Sinners need to hear these truths.

The Difference Between Faith and Mental Assent

The third truth is this: sinners need to know the difference between faith and mental assent. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Faith is real and genuine. When we think of a substance, we

think of something real and genuine, something we can lay hold upon, something we know is real and there.

The Greek word translated “substance” means the thing put under, the substructure, the foundation, or that which has a foundation; that which is strong and firm, has an existence, and is real being. When Hebrews 11:1 says that faith is a substance, it is speaking of a foundation—something real and genuine. This word has also been rendered “a title deed.”

SCRIPTURE READING - Luke 6:46-49 (KJV)

A title deed is something that is real and genuine. But the word actually refers more to a substructure or foundation. Every house has a foundation, a substructure upon which it is built. Our Lord spoke of the different foundations in Luke chapter 6. This familiar passage shows the importance of a foundation, which shows the importance of faith, for faith is a foundation. Our Lord says in verse 46:

“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

“Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: he is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.”

Here our Lord is showing the absolute necessity for a foundation. If there is not a foundation, inevitably, invariably, there is going to be a real collapse.

There are some homes that you can look at, and you really cannot see the foundation. Yet the foundation is there, for the house could not stand apart from it. What our Lord is telling us is that saving faith is the foundation upon which our Christian lives are built. Without real, genuine, saving faith, our lives are nothing but shifting sands.

> Now listen to this one simple statement: Mental assent is not faith. It is true that real faith involves knowledge and understanding. Yet giving mental assent to facts is not faith. Look back in Luke 6 and verse 47. Our Lord said, "Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and what? Doeth them."

In other words, there is more than hearing. There is application. Christ said, "I will show you what he is like." Then, in verse 49, He says, "But he that heareth, and doeth not." In other words, there is no foundation, and the one who did not do what he heard collapsed.

Mental assent is mere agreement or acknowledgment. Faith always evidences itself in obedience. Faith affects the entirety of our lives. Faith changes our lives; it makes us different. Just giving mental assent to something does not make us different. It is like the T-shirt I have seen one man wearing. On the front it said, "Bomb Squad," and on the back it said again, "Bomb Squad: if you see me running, try to keep up." You could give mental assent to that and stand there and get blown apart. You might say, "Well, yes, he is probably right," but if you are not keeping up with him, you are in real danger. Faith is something that changes our lives. We have to realize the absolute importance of faith.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Faith leads us into obedience. Faith leads us into submission and worship of the one true and living God.

One may hear truth for years, assent to it, agree with it, and acknowledge that it is truth, and still be lost. There are thousands of people who have been raised in church and still attend regularly and faithfully. They will shake their heads at the truth, agree with it, and say, "Yes, those are the facts. I agree with it." Yet they are as lost as they can be, because mental assent is not faith.

Biblical Examples of Mental Assent Without Faith

The Israelites who came out of Egypt heard the truth. They saw with their own eyes the miracles and works of God. They had the oracles of God; at Mount Sinai, God gave them His law. But in spite of all the

benefits and blessings they had, what good did it do them because they did not have faith? Hebrews 3:17 says, “But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness?”

"And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Did they not hear? The answer is yes.

Did they not assent to what Moses said? Yes, they did. In fact, all you have to do is read Scripture, because when Moses came down, they said to him, "All that the Lord hath said unto us, we will do." They assented. They knew what the Bible said. They believed, quote unquote, in the sense that Moses went up, Moses came down, God gave him the law, and they assented to that. Yet the Bible says the gospel was preached to them, but it was not mixed with faith.

And they fell in the wilderness. I get amazed every time I read 1 Corinthians 10:5: “But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” Many of them—how about all of them except two? Do you realize the only two men who originally came out of Egypt and entered Canaan were Joshua and Caleb?

What happened to the rest of them? They died in the wilderness. These were the ones to whom the gospel was preached, but it was not mixed with faith. They may have given mental assent to everything Moses said and everything God said. They assented: yes, God did this miracle; yes, God did this work. But it did them no good. Mental assent is not faith.

One may mentally assent that Christ was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death, was raised bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God, and is coming back again. You may assent to all those facts and yet be lost. Mental assent does not save; faith does. True saving faith will acknowledge, believe, and fully and freely embrace all those facts.

Yet it is faith that acts upon them, because faith believes in Jesus Christ.

It is not the facts about Christ that save us; it is Christ who saves us. We believe those facts only because we believe in Jesus Christ. Merely assenting to facts about Christ does not make one a believer in Christ. Scripture shows that plenty of people assented to facts but were lost.

The Apostle Paul was giving a testimony before Festus and Agrippa. Notice particularly what he says about King Agrippa. In Acts 26, beginning at verse 22, Paul gives a defense of himself as well as a testimony: "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead,"

"And should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." Then Agrippa said unto Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Did Agrippa know the facts? Of course he did. The Apostle Paul said, "You know about Jesus Christ. This thing was not done in a corner." He believed the prophets and mentally assented to the truth taught in the Old Testament. Here was a king who had the facts concerning Christ, Old Testament prophecy, and Old Testament truth, and yet he was lost. Paul acknowledged that he did indeed believe those facts.

The point is very simple: believing facts does not save you. If the weatherman announced, "There will be an earthquake tomorrow at such and such place, at such and such magnitude; count on it, it is going to happen," you could believe that fact. But if you stayed and

the earthquake happened, it would not save you merely because you believed the fact. If you genuinely believed it, you would leave the area. You would demonstrate it by obedience.

If simply believing facts were sufficient to save, there should not be one lost evil spirit. James 2:19 says, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” They know the facts and believe them. When Christ would cast out an evil spirit, it would cry, “I know who thou art, the Holy One of God.” Yet knowledge of the facts did not save it. There was no faith. They may have had the facts, and had them correct, but they had no faith.

Stop and think about all the men and women who followed Jesus Christ and gave mental assent to everything He did and said. John chapter 6 says, “After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.” Did they believe those miracles were real? Yes. They assented to the fact that Christ actually performed them, and they followed Him because they saw the miracles.

They may have wanted to be entertained, but they had the facts: Yes, He did those miracles. When the people reached the other side of the sea, “When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”

He had already fed the 5,000. They assented to the reality that He had fed them. Now it was not just entertainment they wanted; now it was food. They acknowledged that Jesus Christ had performed all these miracles.

“These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?” Notice that it was the disciples—the same people who went to Him for miracles and

food, and who gave mental assent. When He began teaching the truth, they said, “This is an hard saying; who can hear it?”

“When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?” “What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not.”

Now, Lord, you may be assenting, agreeing, and acknowledging, but you do not really believe. “But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”

“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” Mental assent may keep you around for a while, but it will not save you. You may agree with the facts, but if you lack faith, you will not stick it out. The apostle John said, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

If you leave, it is proof that you were never converted to begin with. These people left Christ. Then Jesus said unto the twelve, “Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”

If you are genuinely converted, you will stick it out. No matter how tough, you will stick it out. There will be perseverance. What do sinners need to hear? They need to hear not only the distinction between ability and responsibility, and between the work or wisdom of man and the work of God; they also need to hear the difference between mental assent and real, genuine faith. Mental assent does not save. Only faith in Jesus Christ saves.

The fourth and final truth that sinners really need to hear is the difference between works and grace. Works do not save us, nor do they help save us. Works have absolutely nothing to do with our

salvation. It is impossible for anyone to work his way into the Kingdom of God.

The Difference Between Works and Grace

It is impossible for anyone to work and become good enough to be saved. One would think that if you read the Bible, and read no other passage than Mark 10, dealing with the rich young ruler, that would be sufficient to clarify this issue. The passage in Mark 10 concerning the rich young ruler is sufficient to clarify this issue. He came running to our Lord, knelt, and said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Our Lord began with a rebuke: "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." In other words, if I am God, and if I am good, I am God. If I am God, you do not come running into my presence demanding something of me. When our Lord answered his questions, the young man went away exceedingly sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Our Lord said to His disciples, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" The disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again, "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

They were astonished beyond measure, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?" And Jesus, looking upon them, said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible." The question is, "Who then can be saved?" Look back at verse 26. The answer is, "With men it is impossible." What is the "it"? It refers to salvation. With men, salvation is impossible, but not with God.

In other words, no one can save himself, nor can anyone help save himself. Salvation by man in any shape, form, or fashion is absolutely, totally, completely impossible. You cannot save yourself. If you are not saved by Jesus Christ, you are not saved.

Do you understand that a dead man cannot become a good man? All a dead man can be is dead. He may rot and stink a little more, but he cannot become whole, good, or alive in and of himself. The

Scripture says in Ephesians 2 and verse 1, “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Spiritually dead.

You remember Isaiah 64 and verse 6: “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” All of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. That is, we do not have any. It is worthless. Useless.

Galatians chapter 3, verses 11 through 13, shows the absolute impossibility of works having any influence upon salvation: “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.” “And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.”

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Now, let me tell you what verse 11 is telling us: "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith." God does not justify a man based upon works, but based upon faith in Jesus Christ. It does not matter how many good deeds one thinks he has performed. Justification is in the realm, or sphere, of faith; it is not in the realm of works.

The Impossibility of Salvation by Works

Suppose I told you to go to a certain factory and do something, and it would help you. Instead, you went to a totally different factory, did an awful lot of work, and received no help. You might come to me and say, "You lied to me." No, I did not lie to you; you went to the wrong factory. You did not go where I told you to go. Our Lord is saying that if you are in the realm of law and works, looking for justification, it is not there. You will never get it there. It is in the factory, or realm, of faith.

Remember that the law demands three things from every individual: personal obedience, perfect obedience, and perpetual obedience. Verse 12 says, "And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them." If you put yourself under the law of works, you must obey personally, perfectly, and perpetually every aspect of the law—which is impossible.

No one has ever done this except the Lord Jesus Christ. Even if, from this day forward, you were perfect in word, thought, and deed and never sinned again until the day you died, that still would not save you. What about all the sins you committed before you became perfect? It is impossible to be saved by works.

Moreover, Scripture tells us that there is a curse attached to the law. If you do not render to the law what it demands, you are cursed. The Bible tells us that the wages of sin are death, so you die, and all your good deeds are worthless. You are in the wrong factory, the wrong sphere, and the wrong area. Works apart from saving faith in Jesus Christ will only damn you.

They will not save you. Romans 3:20 says, “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” What? “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.” No flesh—no one—will ever be justified by keeping the law, by doing the best they can, or by doing what they think is right. No, it is impossible. Romans 3:28 says, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

Our works have nothing to do with our salvation. Galatians 2:16 says, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” My goodness. How much plainer can it be?

Titus 3:5 says, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Now listen to what he said: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.”

So the truth is very simple. We are not saved by works. We are not saved with the help of works. We are saved by grace through faith alone.

True Faith Produces Works

Now, let me make something exceedingly clear. True saving faith will work. True saving faith will obey God's law. Everyone can quote the first two verses that I am going to quote, Ephesians 2:8 and 9: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” But listen to verse 10: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” In other words, although works do not save us, and they do not help save us, if we have a real, genuine saving faith, we will work.

We will do what is right, what is holy, and what is lawful. James understood this clearly. In James 2:14, he asks, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?”

Let me give you a little clarification that James shows throughout the rest of the chapter: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can that kind of faith save him?” That kind of faith cannot save anybody—a faith without works. Why? James says in verse 18, “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.” Then, in verse 20: “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”

If you tell me you have faith, but have no works that evidence it, no obedience, no godliness, and nothing in your life showing that you have been changed and are worshipping and living for the Lord Jesus Christ, you have a dead faith. That kind of faith cannot save you, period. James says again in verse 26, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” Faith without works is dead also.

In other words, if we have real, genuine, saving faith, our faith will evidence and manifest itself in biblical works. True saving faith works. True saving faith lives the Bible, obeys God’s commands, and renders worship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Truthfully, our obedience is not perfect. There is no one perfect in this room. I do not care how much my wife praises me; I am not perfect. She knows.

Although none of us are perfect, if we are saved, when we sin, we repent and start back on the path of obedience again. All I am telling you is what James is saying: real faith works. And, by the way, have you ever noticed in Scripture that, in reality, our works are not for ourselves? James said, “Show me your faith.” Henry, can you show me your faith? Reach in, take it out, and show it to me.

He said, "You should know." That's why I said, "I'll show you my faith by my works." God may see our faith, but men cannot see our faith. My neighbor cannot see my faith, but he can see my obedience or my disobedience.

Titus 3:8 says, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." Verse 14 says, "And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful." So we're to maintain good works. We're to have good works. Good works do indeed evidence the fact that we are genuinely saved, and they're useful for other people to see that we are genuinely saved.

Christ's Righteousness Alone Saves

Philippians 3 ties this truth together. Paul demonstrates that we're not saved by works, but by faith. He says, "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." That is according to the Pharisees.

Then he says, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Paul said, “I was willing to lose everything. And I counted nothing but dung, that I may have only the righteousness of Jesus Christ.” That which saves us is Christ and His work, not our works.

The story is told of Dwight L. Moody on a train. He sat by another preacher, basically a Judaizer, who said, “It’s alright to believe in Christ, but you have to add works.” The man was counting on his works to get him into heaven. Moody listened intently, and when the man finished, Moody said, “You know, we’re very close in agreement.” The preacher asked, “Really?” Moody replied, “Oh yes. There’s only two letters that separate us.” When the man asked what they were, Moody said, “You spell yours D-O. I spell mine, D-O-N-E. Done. Christ has done it all. And we’re to trust in His righteousness and not ours.”

Two quick applications follow. First, sinners need to hear the truth. They do not need watered-down, compromised, flesh-exalting opinions. They need to hear that they are helpless and hopeless, responsible and accountable unto God. Their decisions do not save them; only Christ can save them. They need to hear the difference between mental assent and real, genuine faith, and that their righteousness is totally and completely in Jesus Christ and Him alone, not in their works. Christ Himself said in John 14 and verse 6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” One of our problems today is that we are not telling sinners the truth. Most preachers and most Christians are not telling the truth. We are so concerned about offending and hurting someone’s feelings that we are willing to let them be lost and believe a lie.

Applications and Conclusion

Second, real faith works. Works do not save us or help save us, but they manifest and evidence that we have been genuinely saved by grace through faith. We work not to be saved, but because we have been saved by Jesus Christ. Christ, and Christ alone, is salvation.

If you are going to witness to anyone, family or friend, you need to include these four truths: men are responsible, yet they have no ability; their decision will not save them—there is a difference between the work of man and the power of God; there is a great

difference between merely believing facts and believing in Christ—mental assent will not save; and there is a great difference between works and grace. You need to give them truth.

Father, thank you in Jesus' name for your word, your grace, and your mercy. Help us, dear Lord, to love thee, to live for thee, and to apply thy word to our lives in every situation. Give us grace that we may serve thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

Source Notes

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