

Baptism and Membership Service of Christy Wesner, Joe Peverelle

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] Tonight we'll also be receiving Christy Wessner and Joe Peverell into the membership of this church along with Nate and Misty Blair and Tom and Diane Lair and their daughter Jessica Lair.

These five have already been baptized upon the profession of their faith. Now it's the glad confession of every true believer that we have been saved by the free grace of God. And so we're going to sing of that tonight. If you take your grace hymns. Grace is favor for those who deserve the opposite. And that's why the grace of God is the song of every believer. We love to sing of the grace of God. And number 24 in your grace hymns is a song that says that we have been saved by the grace of God. I'm going to ask you to stand with me and we'll sing together and remain standing for prayer.

Let's all pray. Our Father we gladly stand in your presence and acknowledge that there is no one like you. You alone are God.

[1:14] You're a God of great power and holiness. But you're also a great God of grace. And we thank you that you have so loved this world that you sent your one and only son into the world.

To die to purchase salvation that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. We thank you for each one here who has partaken of that salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

We thank you for these who have come tonight to bear testimony. And we ask that you help them. That they might be able to speak clearly and tell us what the Lord has done for their souls. It is grace that you have anything good to say to us sinners. And how we thank you for the good news of the gospel. May it ring out from these tonight to the praise and the honor of our Lord Jesus. In his name we pray. Amen. Amen. You may be seated. Christy Wessner, come and declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

[2:25] He asked me to cut it down to about five minutes. I told him the best I could do was 20, so I'll get comfortable. No, I'm kidding. I grew up in a Christian home with amazing parents who taught me from a very early age the truths of the Bible.

I knew I was a hell-deserving sinner and I needed God's grace to be saved. But like many people who were raised in Christian circles, I took it for granted far too long. I always thought it would just be there whenever I wanted to grab it.

But growing up, thunderstorms started to make me nervous. I thought, oh no, God's coming back. I'm not ready. But then the sun would come out and I'd go right back into my ways. When it came right down to it, all I really wanted was to stay out of hell.

As I got older, I developed an unhealthy desire to spiritually impress my parents. For whatever reason, I got it stuck in my head that if God saved me, my parents would be impressed and love me more.

Which is ridiculous because they've loved me unconditionally from day one. I had no desire to live for Christ and actually change into a new person. It was a vicious cycle of empty prayers to be saved and then growing anger when my prayers were not answered.

[3:38] I was not good enough and never could be. God demands perfection and I was helpless. So I decided to lower the bar for myself and compared myself to the other people around me instead of Jesus' perfect life.

I was a decent person compared to most of the world. And I clung to that instead of God's grace. Shortly before high school, I had decided that I was probably saved because I wasn't so bad.

And so I tried... Sorry. I was so tired of the inward battles, so I began to shove those feelings deep down inside of me and just became numb. I ignored my conscience and convinced myself that I wouldn't be such a good person if I wasn't saved by now.

I also thought that if I asked to be baptized, that my parents would be proud of me and everyone else would be impressed by my actions. So that's exactly what I did. Around the age of 14 or 15, I went through the baptism class and recited all the answers with ease and was very proud of myself for making such a big step in my own life.

The more I thought about it, the more I convinced myself that I was saved and everything was going to be okay. However, deep in my heart, where I had banished my conscience, I knew that this was all for show. For a while after baptism, I thought I was saved.

[4:50] I managed to go through the motions of everyday living and to hide in the shadows and go relatively unnoticed here at church. But I was miserable. The glory I had anticipated of what it would be like to be a Christian just never came.

I watched other Christians who seemed to be so happy and I felt like I would never be happy like them. Their life seemed simple and easy and I thought that this is what was expected of me as well. I didn't want to show weakness or struggle, so I continued to force smiles and keep up appearances. I feared disappointing my family if they knew I had messed up. I knew no one was perfect and I began labeling everyone around me as fake or insincere.

I began to hate coming to church and became angry with God for not making my life easier. My Christian life was stiff and rehearsed and just for the sake of saving face.

I still believed I was a Christian. However, in the back of my mind, I was tormented by the verse Matthew 7:21. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

[5:56] Cut to the age 16. Life had become very confusing. I had a bunch of head knowledge of doctrine and it really meant nothing to me. I had not actually received God's grace through the gospel.

But it was this summer that God handed me a blank slate to begin to sort out what it meant to be a Christian. I was blessed with the opportunity to work at a Christian camp in Pennsylvania. Rock Mountain Bible Camp was God giving me a very undeserved second chance.

He provided a new venue and new perspective to present his truth to me. Through working at camp, God opened my eyes to the truth of his grace of the gospel.

However, the change did not happen overnight. The first summer at camp, all I really saw was a whirlwind of fun and excitement. I was surrounded by people with similar personalities as me and I felt very home there.

Looking back, I can now see God was laying down the groundwork for personal relationships that would speak great truth into my life. Coming home from that summer was a struggle. It meant that I had to go back home to the shallow conversations and fake smiles.

[7:09] I was not a very pleasant person to be around. I'm sorry. Despite my poor attitude and grumbling, God blessed me with ability to return to camp the next three summers. He opened my eyes to the realities of the Christian walk.

It was this summer of 2008 that God's word came alive. I worked directly with three other people all summer, Reed, Christian, and Brittany, who unknowingly showed me how to apply all the doctrines I had simply memorized.

I saw these imperfect people living and serving Jesus in a very real and practical way.

Conversations about Jesus were included in just everyday topics. Suddenly, nothing seemed rehearsed, faked, or forced in conversations.

We shared struggles with each other and then we prayed for each other. I could see in a very tangible way that these normal, imperfect people were living and serving Jesus.

Living for and serving Jesus. This changed how I saw what it meant to be a Christian. Being a Christian no longer was just a way out of hell or something that I deserved. It was a way of living.

[8:18] To be a Christian is not to be perfect or good enough in ourselves because everything we do on our own is just tainted with sin. I could never do enough good to pay for my sin.

Christ came and died and paid the unpayable debt for sin. All I had to do was humble myself and accept his grace in me and he would change my heart and life.

This is not to say that my life became easy. I am still going to struggle and yet in spite of that, Jesus would still love me. The amazing truth is that Jesus is a friend of sinners.

He's my friend. The impossible standard that once made me miserable were fulfilled in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. And nothing I did wrong could change that.

Christ had been good enough for me. And each day he would give me the new measure of grace to tackle the struggles that came along. I also came to realize that my salvation was between me and Jesus and I could not determine whether or not I was saved by comparing myself to the others around me.

[9 : 23] I was responsible for what I did and had to give an account for that one day. Romans 14.12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

I had to stop blaming my misery on the people around me or the situations I found myself in. I cannot pinpoint a specific moment in time where I was saved, but I believe it was sometime during that summer of 2008 or shortly afterwards.

I must confess there have been many ups and downs since then. I am still far from perfect. I struggle with being vulnerable and opening myself up to people around me. And I am in constant need of grace.

I am a very weak Christian. And every day seems to present itself with new struggles, but praise Jesus that now it is not my own strength that I depend on. I am also learning to find encouragement in the fact that I do struggle and I am no longer comfortable in sin.

I thank God for amazing people, amazing example for my parents that I can glean from, and especially for my sister Jeanette, who has always been so open with me and a safe place to go whenever I needed help.

[10 : 28] Her moving away was probably one of the hardest challenges I had to overcome, but it forced me to grow stronger in my walk with Jesus by going outside of my comfort zone and opening up to other people in church.

I am so thankful for patient people here, like Jackie Barr, who continues to ask me very often, are you in the word? Most of all, I am thankful that Jesus did not leave me to myself and showed me the hypocrisy, pride, selfishness, and anger that was in my heart.

It wasn't until about a year ago that I seriously considered being re-baptized. Before this, the devil would play with my mind and tell me that I was just searching for attention or that this was no different than the first time that I had been baptized and it was all just for show.

I would play with the idea of it and then just shove it to the back of my mind, saying that I had been baptized once and no one would know the difference if I didn't say anything about it. I thought that to bring it up would be too embarrassing, but it's not something that I could keep from resurfacing and convicting me.

It was a sin and I needed to deal with it. I praise Jesus for the grace he has given me to deal with this. Psalms 32, 5-3 For when I slept, when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

[11 : 45] For day and night your hands was heavy upon me. My strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged to you my sin and I did not cover up my iniquity.

I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and you forgave me of the iniquity of my sins.

Thank you, Christy. Joe Peverell, come and tell us what the Lord has done for your soul.

Those of you who don't know me, I'm Joe. I've tried to spread my message to everybody that will listen. Now I have a captive audience. I grew up rural Midwestern, poor family, dirt farmers.

My mom was Roman Catholic. My father was pretty much non-denominational. But we really didn't attend church after 1976. I was heavily abused in my childhood.

Physically, verbally, you know. And I felt like God was punishing me. I didn't know why. You know, I felt like I was being singled out.

[12 : 56] Church seemed like punishment. I smacked around in the name of the Lord. And that was misguided people, you know. But it made it very hard for me to believe in God.

To believe, you know. You know, when the person abusing me was, you know, they pray to God, you know. They'd smack you around and God forgives them.

And it's like, I blame God for that. Well, I learned that it wasn't God. It was the other end, you know. When I became an adult, I raised my family outside the church.

I always encouraged love and respect in my family. But not with Christ. We were very hit and miss. In church attendance, a friend would invite or we would go just, I don't know. I'd get a tug and we'd go to church. But I never really followed through. And if I go back and redo it, I would raise my family in Christ.

[14:10] That is, that's rough for me. I should have done that. On July 15th, 2014 at 510, I was in a motorcycle wreck.

My right leg was, boy, this is rough. My right leg was crushed and ripped apart. My artery, it was spurting.

It was severed. It looked like a garden hose. My left leg, it was trapped underneath my motorcycle. I pretty much thought I was a dead man.

Dread and fear. It overwhelmed me. I was scared.

I was scared to death. I was scared to leave my family. And I knew I was going to hell. At that point, I knew I was going to hell.

[15:11] I had fear of the unknown. What would happen to my wife and my kids? You know, pain overwhelmed me. It's impossible to describe the pain.

But maybe as a last-ditch effort from going to church or hearing friends and, you know, about Jesus, my friend Rick, you know, give me the good word.

You know, every time I was around him, he rubbed. He rubbed on me. I didn't realize it, though. But I reached out to God. I asked God to take my pain or help me through it.

Now, I cried. I begged God's forgiveness. I confessed my sins. I knew that my only hope at that point was Jesus.

And I just knew it. It's like click-quitch, you know. I asked God to help me through the pain or take it from me.

[16:21] And he helped me through it. I felt like I was wrapped in a warm blanket at that time.

The pain, it subsided. It didn't go away. You know, and there was... It seemed like an eternity, but it was about 10 minutes before, you know, EMTs and, you know, there were some other people that was there to help me.

But it was... It was a long, long time that I was laying there. But I knew that God was going to help me.

He helped me to that point. I knew he was going to help me through it. I understand that Jesus died for my sins. I know that.

I did not realize it as much then as I do now. But I know that he died for all of our sins. But I feel he died for me.

[17:31] And, you know, I can't... Everybody has a feeling, and my feeling is something I can't explain to everybody.

But it is... It's from what I was to what I am. It's a big, big swing. You know, I want to glorify Jesus at every step I can.

You know, some days I'm a little better about it than others. Some days I'm not so much. But I know that... I know that I am a sinner.

And I confess my sins. And I do what I can to make it right with God at the time. You know? I've also come to know that God did not abandon me as a child.

I could have bled to death from abuse in my childhood or bled to death from a motorcycle accident. But neither my abusive childhood or my accident was a punishment.

[18:32] It was not a punishment. But I believe it was from God to guide me. To help me learn. To teach me. Since I've taken Jesus as my Savior, my relationship with my wife is better.

Some days better. Some days worse. You know? But... Before it was way worse. And we've been together 30 years.

You know? I'd like to... I'd like to make it another 30. Today I would. Tomorrow maybe not.

But we can go to Scripture and work out our problems. We're learning to start there instead of fighting.

Old desires have dropped. I was a... I was a rotten person. I realized that any sin is... Is horrible.

[19:50] It's completely distasteful to God. Well, some of mine was pretty... Pretty bad tasting. It's hard for me to swallow now. Even knowing what I was.

But knowing that now I am not. I was envious of others. You know? Keeping up with the Joneses. And find out, you know, Well, the neighbor's got this.

Well, I gotta have that. Well, you know. You always gotta have bigger, better, badder. Motorcycles. You know? Now I know that what I have is what God wants me to have.

And I'm happy with it. If I have nothing. If I walk out of here today with nothing but Jesus. It's a good day. My old habits have died down quite a bit.

I've learned that my body is the Lord's body. And I will not abuse it like I did before. And my big thing is the worry and the anger.

[20:56] I have been able to push it. Not completely out. But it's not as bad. And I've also learned that when I have a problem, the first place I turn is to God.

Not the last place I turn. Thanks for your time. Thank you both for testifying of what the Lord has done for you. I'm going to ask you to make your baptismal affirmations at this time.

Three questions. Do you confess that you are a hell-deserving sinner whose only hope of mercy is found in Jesus Christ and what he's done for helpless sinners?

As so say, I do. Do you trust only in his blood and righteousness to save you and realize that the waters of baptism do nothing to wash away sin or merit favor with God?

And do you desire tonight to publicly identify yourself as a disciple of Jesus Christ and purpose by his grace to turn from your sin and to follow him in faith and obedience for the rest of your life?

[22:08] I do. I'm going to ask the Layers and the Blaers to come and join them at this time for their membership commitments.

Nate and Misty both came to know Christ in their high school years and it's been a joy to see you raising your three children in a way that would honor the Lord Jesus and we're welcoming them to the membership tonight.

And then Tom and Diane 14 years ago or so the Lord saved you and a precious thing to see that he saved you at the same time and able to share the gospel with your daughter as well and for Jessica and your other daughter Sarah to come to know Christ and we appreciate too your fellowship in the Lord Jesus.

So I'm going to ask you to make public to the members of this church your commitments of membership. With the grace of God helping you do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and commit to follow his word in every area of your life?

Do you agree to submit to the discipline of this church and to the oversight of its elders and to make attendance at its meetings a priority? Do you agree to serve in this body according to your talents and spiritual gifts and God-given responsibilities and to cooperate in the outreach of the church to the world by bearing witness to Christ praying for the spread of the gospel and giving your financial resources?

[23:49] I do. Do you understand that the 1689 confession of faith is the doctrinal statement of this church and affirm that you are in basic agreement with it and agree for the sake of unity not to spread doctrines contrary to it?

I do. Do you then commit yourself to the body of believers here at Grace Fellowship Church to love them and to seek their good to work and live with them in harmony to the end that Jesus Christ may receive glory in this church?

I do. I'm going to ask that the members of Grace Fellowship Church stand at this time to make your commitment to these seven new members. You've heard their commitments to you.

Do you then welcome these seven into the membership of this church and thereby commit yourselves to them as they have to you to pray and labor for their building up and growth and grace to encourage and watch over one another in the Lord and to esteem them in love as brothers and sisters in Christ all that Jesus Christ may be glorified.

If so, say I do. I do. I do. Let's pray together. Our Father, we thank you for the testimonies that we have heard.

[25:16] We thank you that each of these seven have a testimony of how they came to see that they were sinners lost and perishing and how Jesus Christ was their only hope that through his perfect life, his atoning death and his mighty resurrection from the grave that they could be saved and so they put their trust in you.

Oh, we thank you for the grace that seeks and finds and saves sinners and we thank you for your idea of the church that you join us to a body of believers.

You put us in a family, a local family of God to pray for one another, to love one another and to walk to heaven together and I just pray that you would make us as a body here the richer for the addition

of these seven new members that they would minister to us and we would minister to them that we would learn to worship and love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ together and that he might be praised because of it.

We ask these things in Jesus' mighty name. Amen. Amen. You may be seated and we'll prepare for baptism. Christ, real salvation is different from pretend salvation, isn't it?

A real relationship with Jesus Christ. There's nothing like it and you have testified to us that the Lord Jesus sought you and found you and truly saved you.

[26 : 59] And that's why you're here being baptized tonight. On the basis of your profession of faith in Jesus Christ, I then baptize you, my sister, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Buried in the likeness of his death, raised in the likeness of his resurrection. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Joe, I've heard you say that losing a leg was worth gaining Jesus Christ.

It takes the grace of God to teach a man that, doesn't it? His grace has sought you and found you and he's made you a new creature in Christ. That's your testimony and it's on the basis of your testimony that I baptize you now, my brother, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Buried in the likeness of his death, raised in the likeness of his resurrection. Amen. Amen.

Well, we've seen testimonies from two different kinds of sinners. There's all kinds of sinners.

There's many different kinds of sinners as there are people here tonight.

[28 : 33] And yet, what we've seen is that the Lord Jesus Christ seeks and saves sinners. Amen. And it's our desire to see everyone who is here trusting in this same Jesus.

Amen. Well, what did you just see? What did you just see? Did you see someone getting saved?

No.

You didn't see someone getting religion? What you saw was a picture of something God already did.

Amen. A picture of something that God already did. So, what did God do? What did God do for Joe and for Christy?

Well, we're going to look at a passage that shows us what he did and why he did it. So, if you have a Bible, please turn in your Bibles to Titus chapter 3.

[29 : 30] The book of Titus chapter 3. And I'm going to go ahead and read just verses 3 through 7. Titus chapter 3, verse 3 through 7.

At one time, we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures.

We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But, when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy.

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

So that having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. In the next few minutes I just have three questions, three questions and then three takeaways, three things I want you to walk out thinking about.

[30 : 49] The first question is this, what kind of people does God save? What kind of people does God save? You might find this very surprising, but the answer is easy enough to find.

You see it right there in verse three. At one time, we too were these four things, foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved.

So what kind of people does God save? Those kinds of people. Is that surprising? It's those kinds of people. It's the exact opposite of what you would think.

He saves the foolish. foolish. Now, in the Bible, the word foolish, or the idea of being a fool, it just means someone who doesn't care about God, who lives their life like there is no God.

God doesn't ever intrude into their thoughts and their priorities. They live like there is no God. So the fool says in his heart, there is no God.

[31 : 54] He might say there is a God with his mouth. He might even logically in his mind say, yeah, I believe there is a God, but in his heart, that's where this fool is, not saying that there is a God, in his heart, where he thinks, and where he plans, and where he decides what is worth living for, and what's not worth living for, what's good, and what's bad, what's worthwhile.

He says, in that place, in his heart, he says, there's no God. He's a fool. Now, does that surprise you, that it's those kinds of people that God has mercy on, the foolish, and the disobedient. Not the obedient, not the pretty good, the disobedient, disobedient. And that's me, and that's you. Because God has told us to do things, the law has said do this, and we have not done what we ought to do. We all, like sheep, have gone astray.

Each of us has turned to our own way. So, like sheep, we've wandered off the path, we've disobeyed. So, not obedient, disobedient.

[33 : 13] Well, it's more than that. Deceived. Deceived is the next word. That's the duped, the conned, the misguided, the confused. They're not thinking right.

They're thinking certain things are true when they, in fact, are not true at all. And that's what's sad about all of this. Everyone thinks, just by nature, that they are doing enough for God.

That, in the end, God will give them salvation. God will give them heaven. They think they're on the right way, but the whole time, they're going the wrong way. One time going around Chicago, and when you're from small town Indiana, going around Chicago can be kind of daunting.

One time going around Chicago on one of those interstates, I was supposed to exit on one of those other interstates, and I didn't. And so, there I went, down the interstate, making great time, going the exact, wrong way.

I was deceived. I thought I was going the right way, but I wasn't. And that's the kind of people God saves, because that's the only kind of people there are.

[34 : 26] We're all deceived. Satan has cast a shadow on our minds, and our hearts are glad to receive that shadow and live in the darkness. And so, I've had lots of people come to my door.

Do these people ever come to your door? And they want to tell you about their religion. And so, I ask them, I ask each one of them, this question, what are you going to say when God says, now why should I let you into my heaven?

And to a man, to a woman, and it's been old women, it's been young men, it doesn't matter, they say, well, I've done the best I could.

I've done my best. So, when you boil down all their religions, as different as they are, it's the same religion, I'm going to do my best and God will receive it. And I want to say, you've done your best. Really? You've done your best? You never could have done a little better? But the whole thing is that you will never find anywhere in this Bible where it says, God sends people to heaven who have done their best.

[35 : 41] You can look through it. You can look through it four, five, six, seven times. You can Google it. You can do whatever you need to do. You will not find a verse that says that. You see, they're deceived. They're misguided.

They're going the wrong way. They're on the wrong road, and yet that road seems right. But they aren't going the right way. Finally, it says, they're enslaved.

Now, that's a harder one to even swallow than all the rest because we like to think, if I'm anything, I am free. I'm an American. I'm free. No one tells me what to do.

No one controls me. But yet that's what Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ, is saying about all sinners. They are enslaved.

They're slaves to passions and pleasures. They're slaves to anger and envy and malice. They're slaves to their pride.

[36 : 43] I can't let him say that against me. They're slaves to their dignity. They're slaves to their sin. And so it's not just that they don't want to live righteously. righteously. They don't want to submit to God.

Every now and then they'll agree to do something with God, but they're never going to submit to God. It's not that they just don't want to live righteously. It's that they can't. They're enslaved.

Sin binds! Sin owns them! Sin controls them! Sin is the master! And they serve that master relentlessly. Sometimes their service looks quite worldly.

Sometimes that service looks quite religious. And yet at the end of the day it's the same master.

And so do you get the picture? Left to ourselves, what hope do we have of ever being saved?

What hope do we have? What chance do we have of finding our way to heaven and to God for being right with God? See, we're lost in the woods, and the whole time we don't know that we're lost in the woods, and we have a compass, but it's pointing the wrong direction, and there is my sin, and here am I, and there's a chain.

[37:54] I'm bound to my sin. We're chained to each other. It's not a pretty picture that God paints of people, of humanity.

It's not a flattering picture. The Bible tells us the truth even when it hurts, even when we don't like to hear it. God does your God ever step on your toes?

Does your God ever dare to step on your toes to disagree with you? And let me ask you, if your God never steps on your toes and never makes you feel uncomfortable, what are the chances that he's the real God?

God? So, an all powerful, all knowing, perfectly good, perfect being, and he never, ever disagrees with you.

What are the chances that he's the real God? The God of the Bible is always stepping on people's toes. He's not afraid to offend.

[39:08] He's not afraid to say the truth, because the truth is what the truth is. And he says, I love you too much to let you just go on thinking whatever you're thinking. Now, that's the first question.

What kind of people does God save? Well, it's the surprising group, out of the surprising group. It's not the religious, so to speak. It's not the extra good. It's the foolish, the disobedient, the deceived, the enslaved.

And that, he's describing all of us. Now, the second question is, why does God save people? Why does he save them? And if you're thinking, you're realizing, well, this is not going to be because of something in them, because this group is not an attractive bunch.

So why does God save these people? Again, and it's right here in verse 5, he says, it's not because of righteous things that we had done, but because of his mercy. Mercy.

mercy. So what are all these people at my door telling me? What are they all telling me? And what do all of our hearts naturally tell us?

[40:17] It's just this, that God's going to save me because I've done the best that I could. It's because I've done enough of the right things. But what does this say?

What does Titus say? It's not because of righteous things. You can't go to heaven if you're thinking you're going to go there by doing these good things because God says right here, it's not because of righteous things.

It's not based on that. And if you've been paying attention, you know why. You know why it can't be that way. Because what kind of people does God save? It's the foolish, the deceived, the disobedient, the enslaved, and those kinds of people don't do the kinds of things that God asks.

They don't do righteous things, at least in God's sight. And so no one is qualified. No one, not a single one of us, not me, not you, are qualified if it's going to be because of righteous things that we have done.

That way is completely blocked up, completely shut off. It can't be that way. So why does God save them? Well, for a totally different reason. He saves them because of his mercy, his pity, his compassion, his kindness, his love, his generosity.

[41:41] He saves it not because of something in me or something in them. He does it because of something in him. And so he looks at these people, hated, being hated, and also returning that hatred.

So hated and hating, full of malice and envy and all the rest, deceived, silly, enslaved, condemned, guilty, not a good thing to say for themselves.

And he has mercy on them. He has pity on them. He looks at their situation and he has mercy on them. And that's the good news, that God has mercy on sinners.

The good news you saw tonight in baptism is not that God saves the good, it's that God saves the bad. God. And so because it's mercy, it's compassion, it's grace, it's giving people what they need rather than what they deserve.

And that's why he saves them. It's not because we are something, it's because he is something. He is kind, he is merciful. Now the third question, how does he save them?

[42:58] What does his salvation look like? How does he do that? Well, it says here, he saves them through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Now Jesus one day was sitting with a very religious person.

It was the evening, very outwardly religious person named Nicodemus, and Nicodemus had done all kinds of good and righteous things. He had lived for obeying the law.

But Jesus didn't say, everything is all right with you. He didn't say, you're on the right road. Everything's good. Just keep it up. No, he said, no one, and he's saying, Nicodemus, you're part of this no one.

No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. You must be born again. Rebirth. So how does God save?

He saves by giving you a new start at your life. Going back, a new you to live. He gives you new eyes, a new mind, a new heart, new spiritual DNA, new spiritual senses, new spiritual loves, and new spiritual hates.

[44 : 09] Joe said something about that, didn't he? Things that used to be tasteful are now distasteful. Have you ever tried to change your taste buds?

I don't know if you can do it. And you certainly can't change your spiritual taste buds. But that's what God does. He gives you a new you, a new spiritual tongue. He makes you new.

And so you're still you, but you're not you. It's a new you. It's a new born you. The old is gone, the new has come. And so instead of being foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved, you become the exact opposite.

He starts working wisdom in you. Well, now you're saying, well, what does God have to say about that? Whereas before you never said, what does God have to say about that? And you become obedient, say, not my will, your will be done.

Right thinking, you become free, he calls it renewal, it's the same sort of idea, you're made new again, you're refreshed, that's how God saves. It's not a change, it's not a change in what you do on Sunday, it's not different, it's not a bunch of new habits.

[45 : 22] change, it's not a change, it's not a change, but they change because you've changed, you're different, so you're going to do different things, you're going to use your time differently.

And so what has happened? What have we just, what has happened with Joe, with Christy, with many of us here? It's just this, God has reached in into a dirty, ugly, wicked, rotten heart and given us a new heart.

My heart, many of your hearts, new hearts. But there are other words here, verse 7 says, having been justified. Justified means you're declared right with God, whereas before you're on the outs, you're condemned, you're guilty, now you're justified, you're forgiven, all your sins are forgiven, and now you have this right standing with him.

And so God can say to you, you and I, we are right. We're right. You're in good standing with me.

And then it says, we've become heirs.

Heirs are children. So how does God save you? Well, he does more than change your insides and he does more than give you a new record in heaven. He gives you a new identity.

[46 : 45] Now you're a child of God. Once you were a child of the devil, he did whatever he wanted. Now you're a child of God, a new status, and he's adopted you into his family, and so now you're his heir.

And so you are going to go to heaven, but not because you've earned it, but because you're his child. You don't earn your inheritance, you're given your inheritance from your parents.

And heaven is our inheritance, eternal life. Heaven is God's free gift to his loved children. And so how does God save? Well, he gives you a new inside. He gives you a new record in heaven.

He gives you a new identity. Now you're a child of God. He gives you a new future, eternal life. Now you have something new to live for. God's love. And that's what God has done for Joe.

That's what God has done for Christy. And that's what God has done for as many as he's had mercy on. A new heart, a new record, a new identity, a new hope.

[47 : 48] And now my question is, has that happened to you? Has that happened to you? Has that happened to you? Because that tells you if you're saved or not.

That tells you if you're ready to die or not. That tells you if you're ready to meet God. So it has it happened to you. Now three takeaways.

Three things I want you to think about, not to forget. The first is, you're not too sinful for God to save you. You're not too sinful for God to save you.

Who does God save? Foolish? The disobedient, the deceived, and the enslaved. Your sin doesn't disqualify you from God's mercy.

Your sin just says, I need mercy. And the Bible is this whole long, big message about saying God is having mercy upon sinners through Jesus Christ.

[48:50] He's in the business of showing mercy to sinners, to great sinners. And so that's the first takeaway. you're not too sinful to be saved. Your sin is what qualifies you for needing salvation.

It doesn't disqualify you from salvation. The second takeaway is this, it's not too late for you to be saved. When did God save these people in Titus?

Was it before they had sunk their lives into all this nastiness that we read? Or was it after they had sunk their lives into all this nastiness that we just read of? Well, it wasn't before, it was after.

He saved them out of it. He saved them out of it. And so you haven't gone too far. It's not too late. Now the third takeaway is this, Jesus can be your Savior.

Jesus can be your Savior. In verse six, Jesus Christ is called our Savior. Our Savior. Now whose Savior is he?

[49:54] Well, he's all Christian saviors. All Christians. Paul's speaking for all the redeemed and he's saying he is our Savior. He is our special. He is our Savior.

He died for us. He saved me. He saved us. But it means even more than that. It does mean he's humanity's Savior.

It means he's our Savior. Everyone in this room can say that Jesus Christ is the Savior for us.

Because there's no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved.

He alone is the Savior. So you're not going to find another Savior than Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God's given Savior for humanity. And so when John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

he's the only one. He's not one of many. He is the only one. On September 11th, there were lots of saviors.

[51:02] There were hundreds of saviors. Hundreds of brave firemen and paramedics and police officers and just regular old people. There were hundreds of firemen that ran up to those twin towers.

And if you didn't go with one, there was a chance you could go with another one. There might be another one coming. But that isn't how salvation from sin works.

There's only one fireman. There's only one person that ran up into the fires of hell and faced death for sinners. And you either go with him or you go down with the building.

There's only one fireman. And so you either throw your arms around him and you let him carry you to safety or you perish. He's your savior.

He's your savior. And so I say throw your arms around him. Throw your arms around him. Cling to him and whatever you do, cling to him and don't let him go.

[52:09] Cling for dear life and he'll be your savior. Jesus, just as he saved so many others, he'll save you too. So remember our three takeaways.

You're not too sinful to be saved. It's not too late to be saved. And Jesus Christ can be your savior.

Well, let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for your great love for a fallen, sinful people like us.

That when we were foolish and we didn't have time, we didn't have love, we didn't care about you, we were out for number one. At the end of the day, we were out for ourselves.

And if we could fit you in, that would be fine. And yet, to people like that, to people like us, you had mercy upon us.

So thank you. Thank you for Jesus Christ. Thank you that even now, your hands of grace and mercy are stretched out to sinners, and you are pleading with them to come to you.

[53:17] And so I pray, Holy Spirit, come and go into people's hearts and convict them of their sin, convict them of their need, and draw them to Jesus Christ.

Give them faith. Give them repentance. Give them new eyes to see their situation, and new eyes to see Jesus. We ask that you would please save many.

We thank you for what you've done. Thank you for what you've done in Joe's life. We thank you for what you've done in Christy's life. We thank you for what you've done for Grace Fellowship, and adding these seven to our membership.

I pray that we would have hearts full of joy, and thanksgiving, and hope, and expectation, because of the kind of good God that you are. Help us to go on our way rejoicing in your salvation, and trusting you, trusting your kind heart toward us.

I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. God bless you with