

Lie: You Are Not Ready to Be Saved

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[0:00] Well, if you aren't a Christian, then you are believing a lie. And by Christian, I don't mean whether you go to church or not.

Not everyone who goes to church is a Christian. And being on the church rolls is not the same thing as being on the rolls in heaven.

And I don't mean that your parents are Christians, and so you are too. And I don't mean that you're trying to be a good person. A Christian is someone who is joined savingly by faith to Jesus Christ. So a Christian is someone who has seen their need and have given themselves completely to the Lord Jesus in total reliance for their salvation. And if you are not a Christian, it is because you are believing a lie, a lie of some kind.

Maybe you think there's no danger. But again and again, the Bible asks, how will you escape? How will you escape if you neglect such a great salvation? There's no escape.

[1:09] There's no way around. It's Jesus or death. Maybe you think, I'm too sinful. But the Bible again and again shows us people who are very big sinners.

So we say, and Jesus Christ saved them. There's no sinner too far gone that Jesus cannot save them. Maybe you think, I want to be saved, but I'm not sure if Jesus is willing.

Well, Jesus suffered. Mockery. Humiliation. Suffocation. Beating. Spitting. Nakedness. Agony of body.

Torture of soul. In order to save sinners. That shows you something of Jesus' heart. That he is willing to save sinners. It doesn't make sense to go through all of that. And then to turn around and not save someone when they come to him by faith.

Maybe you think, I want to be saved, but I haven't done enough to get ready. I don't feel as badly as I ought for all my sins.

[2:13] I know my sins are bad, but I don't feel like I've sufficiently repented. I haven't repented enough. I haven't felt bad enough. I'm not prepared.

I'm not qualified yet. Jesus says that he saves only those who know that they're really wicked. I know I should feel that way. I just don't feel as bad as I should. I wish I did.

But until then, Jesus will not receive me. Well, that sounds kind of true. That last one sounds kind of true, but it's a lie as well.

And I'll tell you how I know it's a lie. Because if you're standing there, not coming to Christ, then it's not the truth. All truth leads us, when we properly understand it, to run to Jesus Christ.

Remember that old saying, all roads lead to Rome? So all roads of truth lead to Jesus Christ. So if you're believing a truth, the thing to be doing is, the way that you know that you're believing a truth is, you're coming to Jesus Christ by faith.

[3:19] Well, on these Sunday luncheons, we've been looking at Satan's lies to keep you lost. And today, we want to talk about this lie. This lie that says, where Satan says to us, well, you're not prepared yet.

You're not prepared yet to come to Christ. You aren't ready to receive him yet. You need more humility. You need more heartsickness. You need more terror. You aren't repenting enough. You need more of all that before Jesus will receive you.

Now, maybe that's not where you're at, but that's where some people are at. Now, can you think of a hymn that we sing pretty often that deals exactly with this lie? And it shoots it full of holes.

This song, this hymn, I love it. It corners a sinner, and it takes away every excuse, every reason for them not to come to Jesus Christ. So a sinner says, oh, I'm poor, and I'm wretched.

There's no one as bad as I am. There's no way Jesus could love me. Do you know the hymn, how it starts? Come, you sinners, poor and wretched, weak and wounded, sick and sore.

[4:26] Jesus ready stands to save you. Some sinner says, oh, I'm needy. I have nothing to give to him. I've got nothing to offer him.

Come, you needy. Come and welcome. God's free bounty glorify. You say, I don't have anything to offer him. That's okay. He's rich enough for both of you. You say, oh, I don't believe like I should. I can't repent like I should. I don't know if I'm believing hard enough. I don't know if I'm repenting hard enough. Don't I need to feel more? Well, true belief and true repentance, every grace that brings you nigh, without money, without money, without money, come to Jesus Christ and buy. Well, I'm not ready yet. I'm not in the right frame of mind. Let not conscience linger or make you linger, nor a fitness fondly dream. All the fitness he requireth is that you feel your need for him. And this he gives you. That very emptiness that we need, he gives you. The very faith that you need, it comes from Jesus Christ.

[5:41] This he gives you, this he gives you. Well, when I was a boy, I thought that song, when it was talking about fitness, I really sincerely thought it was talking about physical fitness. I don't know how I made sense of the rest of the hymn, but that's what I thought it meant.

Now, so let me clear that up. Children, we are not talking about some sort of physical fitness. We're talking about spiritual fitness. People are always thinking they need to get ready somehow or other to become a Christian.

And that's just not true. Just not true. And this is why it's so exciting to be a gospel preacher.

Because you just never know. People are this close all the time to being saved.

Jesus says the word, grants faith, and they come. Well, you don't have to get ready. And you don't have to feel or feel really bad. All you need to do is feel your need for him.

So do you want to be saved? Do you feel like, I need Jesus to save me? Then the hymn says, come to Jesus. So all he's looking for is the open mouth.

[6:47] All he's looking for is the thirsty soul. He's not taking out the scales and measuring our faith and our repentance to seeing it. Is there enough faith there? Is there enough repentance? No.

Any little amount of real faith and real repentance, as long as it's getting you to Jesus. Jesus saves. Not faith. Not repentance.

Jesus saves. And it's faith and repentance that gets us to Jesus. That makes us leave all the other stuff behind and it gets us to Jesus. Jesus saves. He saves.

And he does all the saving. Now, what else can I say to dispel this lie and encourage your heart? I just want you to think in the Bible of all the people, or, yeah, all the people in the Bible who didn't have these heart-rending, epic sorrows and terrors of sin.

That didn't wrestle long and hard with guilt before their salvation. There's more than you would think. So let's think of some of them. Turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 9.

[7:52] Matthew chapter 9. And Matthew 9, Matthew finally gets into his own story. He finally slides in. So Matthew 9, 9.

Now, this doesn't say a lot about Matthew. But I just want to point out some of the things that it doesn't say. Matthew 9, 9.

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting in the tax collector's booth. He said, follow me, he told him. And Matthew got up and followed him.

Now, do we know everything about Matthew's heart? Well, it doesn't tell us anything about Matthew's heart. But you notice we don't read of any great anguish. We don't read of any great terror.

We don't read of any great repentance. I'm sure there was faith in repentance. There had to be. But Matthew, as far as we can tell, isn't sitting at the tax collector's booth in abject misery.

[8:50] And because of that abject misery, Jesus called him. No, Jesus calls him and he goes with him. And then they go to a party.

Matthew throws a party. And that's what you read in verse 10 and on. Let's read that. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples.

And when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? And on hearing this, Jesus said, It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

But go and learn what this means. I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners. Matthew was sick.

And Jesus came and healed him. Matthew needed mercy. And Jesus gave him mercy. Matthew was a sinner. And that is what qualified him to believe in Jesus Christ and to be saved.

[9:54] It wasn't Matthew's great sorrows. Maybe they were there, but it doesn't say so. Let's go to another tax collector and another party. Zacchaeus was a wee little man.

And a wee little man was he, and he climbed up in the sycamore tree. Why? For the Lord he wanted to see. And when the Lord came walking by, he looked up in the tree and he said, Zacchaeus, you come down, for I'm going to your house today.

And Zacchaeus came right down, and it said he welcomed him gladly. And so now we're at another party with tax collectors and sinners.

And the people are muttering again, Jesus has gone to the house to the guest of a sinner. And they weren't happy at all at this party that Zacchaeus and Jesus were having.

So they're looking on the outside, from the outside, and they're looking at the mercy that Jesus is showing Zacchaeus. And they're muttering they don't like it. Zacchaeus isn't the right sort.

[11:01] But it says, Zacchaeus' view of this whole party and Jesus coming was totally different. He's thrilled. He's thrilled to have Jesus in his house. And he says, right now, he stands up and he says, right then and there, I give half of my possessions to the poor.

And if I've cheated anyone out of anything, I'll pay it back four times over. He's so happy. And we've got to get Zacchaeus' spirit here. He's not doing this in order to be saved. He's doing it because he's so happy that he's with Jesus and Jesus and him are together.

And Jesus responds, today salvation has come to this house. Because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. Jesus is saying he believed like Abraham believed.

That's what they have in common. So what did Abraham and Zacchaeus have in common? Not great sorrow. Not great anguish. They didn't get themselves heart ready for this great blessing.

But when Jesus came in, they gladly received him. When they saw Jesus, Abraham from afar, Zacchaeus from the tree, they believed and they were thrilled that Jesus had come into their lives.

[12:10] That's saving faith. It's being happy with the gospel promise. And Abraham had that faith. And Zacchaeus now has that faith.

Lydia was down by the river. And Paul preached to her. And it said the Lord opened up her heart. And she believed. Lydia didn't get all prepared. The Lord had been preparing her.

Paul didn't get prepared. The Philippian jailer, he didn't get himself all cleaned up and prepared. He believed. God called with a sweet voice.

And all those people answered. So if you're on the outside wanting to come in, wanting to be a Christian, don't get all hung up on certain methods.

God has all kinds of methods to get his people home. All kinds of methods to get people home. Sometimes he uses the law and thunders and people scurry in to Jesus Christ.

[13:13] But other times God uses the sweetness of the gospel. And it draws them in so sweetly. Thomas Brooks, the Puritan, said, God thunders from Mount Sinai upon some souls and conquers them by thundering.

God speaks to others in a still voice. And by that, conquers them. You who were brought to Christ by the law, do not judge and condemn those who are brought to Christ by the gospel.

And you who are brought to Christ by the gospel, do not despise those who are brought to Christ by the law. Some are brought to Christ by fire, storms, and tempests. And others by easy and gentle gales of the spirit.

And then he adds this. And this is the point. Thrice happy. Three times over happy. Ultimately happy. Are those souls that are brought to Christ.

Whether it be in a winter's night or a summer's day. That's the thing. It's getting to Christ. It matters. It doesn't matter. You don't need to wait for some long winter's night of the soul.

[14:23] If it's summer's day and Jesus is calling you, then come and close with him and be saved. The thing is to get to him. Now, someone might say, But what about that verse where it says, Come to me, where Jesus is standing up, and he says, Come to me, all you who are heavy, or who are weary and burdened, heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Doesn't that mean that someone has to be burdened and heavy laden in order for Jesus to give them rest? Isn't the promise for those who are burdened and heavy laden? Well, it certainly is for those.

Don't I need to feel my sin like a ton of bricks? Don't I need to be like Christian in Pilgrim's Progress? You've seen the pictures, and he has that heaping burden on his back, and he can barely walk. He's so guilty all the time.

That's how John Bunyan felt his sin. Don't I have to hate my sin a lot and be utterly miserable about it before Jesus will give me rest?

Not at all. The promise is to those who come, he will give rest. It's not just because you are heavy laden that he gives you rest.

[15 : 37] It's for those who come, and it certainly counts. It certainly says if you are heavy laden and you come, no matter how big your burden is, he can take that off and give you rest. But the promise is to those who come, and the promise is for those who believe.

Yet Jesus is talking about especially those who are weary and heavy burdened, but it's an invitation to all. It's an invitation to all. All are free to come.

So do you feel, do you need to feel God's, or do you feel God's displeasure on you? Then come. Put your faith in Jesus, and he will save you.

But this verse doesn't prove that everyone has to feel a certain degree of burden before they can come, before they have the right to believe.

It's that you are a sinner that gives you that right. It's the gospel has, is for all sinners, that gives you the right to believe. So the problem, again, is our hearts.

[16 : 36] Our legalistic, natural hearts will make anything and everything a work. A work to offer. A work to qualify myself to be saved.

A work to say, God, you can forgive me because this is how I feel, and so you should. Now, we'll make good deeds into works.

That's the most common thing. That's a reason for God to save me. But evangelical people, we know differently than that. We know that it's not our good deeds that will do it. And so, in our tendencies, we take our sorrow and our repentance and our faith and we make those things into a work.

To say, I'm repenting, so you should save me. Look at how badly I feel. Look at, I'm trying to believe. Don't you see that?

And so they'll look at those things and they'll say, well, I feel terrible. Now I'm ready. And I'm really repenting, and so now I'm ready. And that is to turn grace into law.

[17 : 42] And it's to make a work out of accepting a promise. Now people have done it. People have done it in the past. Where they've taken the very things that are supposed to get us to Christ and they make it an alternative to Jesus Christ.

They take the very things that are meant to lay us down on Jesus Christ and they make us lay down upon ourselves. So back about 300 years ago in the Church of Scotland, there was a big blow up, a big controversy.

Controversies are not new to our time. They had this big controversy. It was called the Morrow Controversy. And what happened was good. I would say otherwise, Calvinistic, Orthodox men were saying, you have to repent.

You have to be repenting before you have the right to believe. You have to be repenting before you can believe. You have to be repenting before you can ever hope Jesus will accept you.

And so, you see, they made repentance, my sorrow, and my turning away from sin, into a work, into a reason for Jesus, for me to say, Jesus, now you can save me because I'm doing this.

[18 : 59] And they were telling people to look at themselves and how they were feeling and how they were repenting. And if they were repenting, then they could come to Christ. And the people on the other side, the Morrow men, is what they were called, they said, not at all.

That's a distortion of the gospel. It sounds kind of true, but it's a distortion of the gospel. Right now, you can believe, not because you're doing a good job repenting, not because you feel thus and thus so much sorrow and your faith is so strong.

You can believe right now because Jesus lived and died for sinners. It's because of the cross that gives us the right to believe. So you can believe right now because the gospel of Jesus Christ. He died so that anyone and everyone who would put their faith in him would be saved. And so these good, I would say otherwise orthodox Calvinists called these Morrow men all kinds of names. They called them, they said, you'll encourage people to sin. You're not taking sin seriously enough. And they thought that gospel was just too free. And they thought those men were dangerous.

[20:09] And if they were around today, they would be writing their blog post about how you should watch out for these men because they're so dangerous. But that's the gospel. That's the grace.

It's all in Jesus Christ. It's nothing. Even my faith and even my repentance. How I feel, none of that qualifies me. It's Jesus Christ who saves.

And so you get right out of your sin and you come to him. That's the gospel. Now isn't the point of Romans 3 and 4 that now a righteousness, a way to be right with God has been revealed.

And Paul says, it's apart from works. So here's works and it has nothing at all to do with works. It's clean apart from works.

So there's no preparatory works, no works that go before, no present works, nothing during the process of conversion is a work, no post works, no after works.

[21:18] It's no works. It's all through and completely on Jesus Christ. So the whole burden of my salvation is on his shoulders.

And so by faith, I step in and I say, Jesus, you saved me. Now when you believe in Christ, you will repent. You will repent.

When Jesus in the gospel is shining in your heart and you're seeing his goodness and you're seeing the cross is enough and I can hope because Jesus Christ died for my sins, then you will repent.

You will put all your good deeds in a pile and you will put all of your bad deeds in a pile into the very same pile and you'll just walk clean away from them all and walk right into Jesus' arms.

That's what repentance is. It's putting all the good and all the bad in the same pile and walking right away from yourself right into Jesus. So you can turn right away from yourself and your doings and your feelings and you lie down and let Jesus save you because he does save his people from their sins.

[22:29] And that's how you can be saved today. And dear brothers and sisters, that's how we were saved. So praise the Lord.

Let's pray. We do thank you, Lord Jesus, for your great salvation. We thank you for the sufficiency, the perfection of the cross, that your life and your death is all that we need.

And so we put all of our hope for our eternity, for life, for the forgiveness of our sins. We put it all on you and we thank you that you carry that all and that we can trust you.

That's nothing in ourselves. It's all in your hands. And so we bless you and we praise you for what you've done. We thank you that right now you are standing with arms open wide and I pray that you would sweetly call sinners in this afternoon.

In Jesus' name, in your name I do pray. Amen. Amen.