

The Depth of Christ's Glory

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[0:00] Colossians 1, and we're going to read verses 15-20 tonight. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

! For by him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[1:26] This is one passage that I would rather not preach, not because it's not glorious, but because it is so glorious.

I visited the Grand Canyon a few months ago, and I took a lot of pictures. And I've looked at them one time, and they are utterly useless.

They don't even come close to doing justice to the Grand Canyon. And I feel very much the same way about this passage of Scripture.

I could preach until my soul burned out, and it would not do Jesus justice. It has been the ache of my heart and my prayer that God the Spirit would do justice to Jesus tonight, that you would see him and enjoy him, and that his glory would make a difference in your life.

In October 1962, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, who preached in London, began preaching a series on the Gospel of John. And he said that the theme of that book is the fullness of the Lord Jesus Christ available for his people.

[2:49] And he spent a long, long, long time preaching through it, over 200 sermons, 250-some on it.

And the reason he took so long was because he said that there is no doubt that the greatest trouble at the present time, and times do not change very much, at the present time, is that we are living so far short of what we should be, what is offered us here, and what is possible to us.

The main trouble in the church today, and I'm speaking of evangelical churches in particular at this point, is the appalling superficiality.

Superficiality. That's small, shallow thoughts about God, about life, about Jesus. And that's the trouble.

We're not in awe of Jesus, and so we're thin, we're shallow. But doesn't your heart cry out for more depth?

[4:02] Doesn't your conscience chide you that Jesus is bigger than what you're making him out to be? He should make a bigger difference in my life than what he does. If all the things that I knew up here really mattered to me like they should, how different I would be.

If he's worth anything, then he is worth everything. And so then it is with this deep soul need for greater depth, to go deeper, to have him more and me less, that we turn now to Paul's words in Colossians.

And they are glorious, great, grand words about Jesus. And we're just going to see today who Jesus is.

He is the image of the invisible God. He's the image of the invisible God. So I want to see tonight one observation, two propositions, that's two statements of truth, and three practical applications.

And so I want to begin with a very important observation. Someone is missing in this passage. Someone is missing in this passage.

[5:19] As Charlie read through the passage, someone has gone MIA. And who's gone? Well, it's the person that we probably don't expect to be gone, because it's the person that we seem to see everywhere.

But they're gone here. So who's gone? You are. We are. Paul's been talking a lot, and he's been saying yous and wees.

But now all of that drops out. Paul has been talking about who you are, who we are, what God has done for us. And then in verse 15, all of the lesser actors back up off of the stage, and the one everyone has been waiting for steps on to the stage.

And in he comes. And then at that moment, there is no doubt what everything is about. There's no comparison between everyone who's gone before and the one who is on the stage now.

And we all disappear in the brightness of Jesus Christ, the glory of his presence. And as we fade to black, as we step out of the spotlight and into the shadows, the crowd roars for him, and we find that this is the way it was supposed to be.

[6:42] This is what it's supposed to be like, with him in the spotlight and me in the shadows. Why has this portion in Colossians 1 been so precious to so many people for so many years?

It's for this very reason that Jesus takes the front and center stage, and it's all about him. And we only come in sort of in a very obscure way.

But it is. And don't you find it that it's in these shadows, when it's all about him, when I'm not thinking about me, when I'm not looking at me, when I'm only looking at him, that we find our joy, and we find that this is what it was meant to be like, him in the spotlight.

And this is good. So, I just talked about going to the Grand Canyon. You go to the Grand Canyon, and in the presence of the Grand Canyon, people do talk differently.

Things are different there, because they don't talk about themselves. You go to the Grand Canyon, and you're standing on the edge of this magnificence, this thing that you is mind-blowing.

[7:58] And you aren't texting. You aren't looking at YouTube videos. You aren't having chatty, gossipy conversations.

You aren't worried about what you look like. You're not worried about eating, or sex, or anything like that. You aren't talking about you.

If you talk, you talk about it. You talk about what you're seeing. And when you're there, all you want to do is go down into it. You want it to swallow you up.

You want to explore it. You can see that where you are here on the edge, there is so much more to see. There's so much more to explore, and you want to go down into it. And so, Paul takes us by the hand in Colossians 1.15, and he says, Now, come follow me.

We're leaving the path. We're going to the edge. And he says, Now, look at Jesus. And in the presence and the glory of Jesus, we flee away, and Christ becomes everything.

[9:06] He becomes all of our attention. And we say, Lord, this is the way it was supposed to be. Take me. Swallow me up. Use me as you see fit. My heart is yours.

And that's why Paul did it. Why is Paul taking them to the edge and saying, Now, look at Jesus. Why is he making them disappear and Jesus take the center stage?

It was because he wanted them to give their hearts to Jesus. The Colossians have been wavering at this point. And they're saying, Oh, well, Christ isn't enough. Or some people are saying Christ isn't enough.

You have to have these rules. You have to do this or that. You need these angels. You have to have the secret knowledge. There's something more that you need in your life than Jesus.

And Paul says, No, you would never say that if you saw who Jesus is. So let's now go look at who he is. And then you'll be saying, Lord, I'm yours.

[10:04] I'm yours. He wants you to give Christ the praise, the worship, the devotion of your heart. And so he shows you who he is. So my question is, does Jesus have that devotion?

How much of your life feels the weight of who Jesus is? How much are you worrying against that superficiality that we talked about?

Where we have these small thoughts, where it doesn't really matter. It doesn't make much of a difference. How much do you disappear in your life? Do you know what I mean?

How much do you disappear where you're not thinking about you and your problems and what you want, but you're just thinking about him? How much do you disappear? How deep are you? Depth and disappearing, they don't happen in five-minute increments. They don't happen in five-minute quiet times, in a hurried prayer at the dinner table.

[11:10] Depth is not gained in a superficial perusal of God's word. It is not gained by riding the same two rails, reading the same two books over and over again, because that's where you're comfortable.

That's what you know. Depth and disappearing don't come from busyness. They don't come from busyness. Everything that you are busy with might be right and good.

It might be perfectly good and okay, but so often the good is the enemy of the great, and the okay is the enemy of the profound, of the deep.

Now, you know your life. I'm not standing here accusing you of anything. You know your life. You know the choices that you've made and your priorities. And all I ask is, will those choices and those priorities serve you well in the day of judgment?

Will you be able to give a good reason for them when you're standing before Jesus in all of his glory? Will you be able to stand before him and say, You've had my heart.

[12:16] I've wanted you. Only you. You've been what's making me happy. You have been my pleasure and my delight. You're my portion and my cup. I've always wanted you.

All along, those lesser things have been lesser, and I've made you the first thing in my life. Well, that's the observation.

Jesus has taken center stage now in Colossians, and I'm missing. So I'm asking you, how often does that happen in your life?

Well, now to our text. Two propositions explaining this text. It's very simple. Jesus, the Son, he is the image of the invisible God.

Now, two propositions. The first proposition is this, explaining it. That Christ makes the unknowable God known. He makes God as he is, as he really is, known.

[13:19] He makes the unknowable God known. He's how we come to know him, know about him, know what he's really like. Paul says he's the image of the invisible God.

Now, he's not talking about God's physical invisibility, although that is certainly true. He's talking about God's unknowability. So in John chapter 6, Jesus says, No one's seen the Father except for the Son and those to whom the Son reveals him.

So there is a seeing the Father that's not physical seeing. There's a seeing that is knowing the Father that comes through the Son. And that's what Paul is talking about here.

Jesus is the way that we as human beings come to know what God is really like. It's sort of like this, except it's not at all.

It's sort of like seeing a vampire. You know how you're not supposed to be able to see a vampire in the mirror? So you can see the vampire, but if you look in the mirror, there's no reflection there.

[14:23] It's like that except backwards. You cannot see God except you look at his image, Jesus Christ, his Son.

But maybe there's a thought going in your head, but Paul, haven't you said before? And how can you say that Jesus is the way that we come to know God and who he is and what he's like?

Don't we see that in creation? Paul said that. Since creation, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and his divine nature have been clearly seen. So how do we fit these two together?

Well, this is not a total answer, but just to say that, yes, creation does tell us about God. It tells us that there is a God. It tells us that we owe him worship.

It tells us that he is not like us. He's not like any created thing or he could not create. That we owe him obedience, that he's divine, that he's powerful.

[15:22] But creation does not tell us about God's glory as a father. Does creation tell us about God's glory as a savior?

Can you look at the trees and the mountains and the Grand Canyon and say, yes, my God is full of grace and mercy. Can you look at the creation and see the Trinity?

Can you look at the creation and say, yes, my God is love? Well, no, because Jesus, not creation, is the image of God.

In him, we are able to see God as he is. The creation reveals the glory of God. Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God. He is the glory of God shining into our world.

So Jesus shows us God as he is. He's not just powerful. He's a father. He's not just divine. He's a heavenly father.

[16 : 28] God is love. Without the son, we can never know that God is love. Islam doesn't believe that God is love.

They might believe that God is loving, but they never take that extra step and say God is love. It's a part of who he is essentially.

How could he be? He's one. He's just one. There's not a trinity of persons for him to love. So Allah loves incidentally.

The God of the Bible loves essentially. He's always loved. Allah creates people, and then he might love them. But God has always loved. And so in Christ, we see that God is not merely a God who loves, but he is love.

He is a loving community of persons. That there's always been a father, and there's always been a son, and they've always lived face to face with each other. And there's always been love going back and forth between them.

[17 : 34] And so God didn't create to love. He is love. And so Muslims have a very big God. Allah is great. He's the creator. He's the great lawgiver.

He's absolutely just. But he isn't a father to a son. He isn't full of grace and mercy. He isn't a savior. You obey the rules. Then you get to go to heaven.

You don't follow the rules. You die. There's no intimacy there. And so in their human ingenuity, in their wisdom, they have created a very great and divine being full of power.

But the real God isn't there. That's not what the real God is like. So do you see how important and how glorious Jesus Christ is?

Without him, we're blind. We're blind. We don't know what God is like. God is invisible and we're lost and we're just shut up with our own ideas. And they're all the wrong ideas.

[18 : 33] And so we're shut up to the ideas of philosophers and thinkers telling us, well, God must be like this or that. But there's no revelation. And there's no salvation. But Jesus has come.

He has shown us God. And he hasn't just shown us his power, but he's shown us God's heart. He hasn't just shown us God's divine nature.

But what that divine nature is like. He's shown us a God that saves. He's shown us a God that is full of grace and truth. And so we go to the cross.

And that's where we see. As the son of God is dying. We see the heart of God. The cross is God tearing open his chest and showing us a heart that's pulsating with love for sinners.

Jesus shows us what God is like. So will you believe him? Will you believe that that is what God is like? Everything.

[19 : 38] Our salvation. All humanity. Stands or falls at Christ. He's the rock. Some trip over him. And they don't want anything to do with him. They would rather have their ideas of God. They trip over him and are destroyed.

Others take him and build their lives upon him and are saved. And your eternal destiny rides on this same question. Will you come to Jesus? Will you fall down at his feet and bow down to him as the only image of God?

And say, Lord Jesus, teach me. Teach me what God is like. Help me to see what God is like. My ideas of God are wrong. My ideas of God are human.

They're small. They're wicked. Teach me, Jesus. Show me what God is like. And he's the only one that can do that by his spirit.

Because he alone makes the unknowable God known. That's the first proposition. And here's the second. As the image of God.

[20 : 37] He is the pattern of true humanity. He's the pattern of true humanity. So he not only shows us who God is. He shows us what it means to be human.

He's the image of God. And the most obvious reference that comes to mind when you hear that word, the image of God, is Genesis 1.

And it's repeated again in Genesis 5. We read it this morning. Where God says, I make man in my own image. According to my own image. And so we are made in the image of God.

But here is the image of God. So Jesus is not in the image of God. He is the image of God. So there's a distinction.

We're made according to the image of God. We're made according to the pattern. But he is the image of God. So we're made according to the pattern found in him.

[21:46] Now, what am I saying? That Adam was created after. In accordance to the Son of God.

And that's why the relationship that Adam had with God. Was a relationship of sonship. That's why Adam was called the Son of God.

In Luke. Image has to do with sonship. In the Bible. It has to do with being the children. A child of God. So Seth was in the image of Adam.

We saw that in Genesis 5 this morning. So when God made man. He made him to be something like the Son of God.

He didn't make him divine. He didn't give him all of his attributes. Or anything like that. He made a creaturely version of him. He made a creaturely son.

[22:46] To mirror his heavenly son. And that's why it's fitting. And that's why it makes sense. That when it came time for God. To become man.

It was the Son of God. Who became man. It was most fitting that he should take on. The creaturely reflection of himself. Because he was most closely aligned.

To man. Now what does this all mean? Is that there is a pattern. There is a picture of what it means. To be human.

And Jesus Christ. Is that pattern. The Son of God helps us to understand our identity. Who are we? What's our position in this world?

What's our position to God? As we are created. As image bearers. We're meant to live as sons of God. We're meant to live with God as our father. Our relationship with God.

[23:45] Is to reflect and to mirror in some way. The Son of God's reflection. Relationship with his father. Father. So do you see there's these two relationships. And one is a reflection of the other.

So man. We were meant to be. We were created to be. Children of God. So Genesis paints a very. A very interesting picture.

So God came walking. In the garden. In the cool of the evening. And it just says that he did it one time. But I think it was the pattern.

That that's what God did. So why did God come walking in the evenings. With Adam and Eve. Well that's what fathers do with sons.

Isn't it? After the work of the day. The father comes home. And spends time. With his son. So dads. Every time you come home from work. And you talk.

[24:46] And you eat. And you enjoy. And you live. With your children. You are doing. What God did. So being a son.

That's what it really means. To be human. To live with God as our father. To enjoy him. To have him provide for us. To obey him. To listen and learn from him.

To trust him. That's what it means to be human. We were never meant to live by ourselves. We were never to live as. With God as our enemy. Or alone. Or as latchkey children.

Or as orphan children. Wondering. Where's my next meal coming from? Who's going to teach me? Trying to figure out life on our own. We are meant to be children. And children are meant to receive. Instruction. And wisdom. And discipline. And training. And love. And provision from their father. We were meant to be his little partner. His co-worker. And so the dad has his hammer.

[25:43] And the son has his little plastic hammer. Learning. Being God's co-worker. And that's the picture of what the son of God is like.

In the Bible. Everything that God does. The son of God ends up doing as well. The father creates. He creates with him. He's beside him.

He's his friend. He's his co-worker. He lives with God the father. Face to face. They enjoy each other. They work on the same things together. There's something I think of Jesus.

In Proverbs chapter 8. Where it says. I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight. Day after day. Rejoicing always in his presence. Rejoicing in his whole world. And delighting in mankind. That's a picture of the Lord Jesus. Working with his father. And creating. And he's enjoying him. Day after day. So what does it mean to be human?

[26:43] It means to be a creaturely reflection. A creaturely version of the son of God. To live face to face with God. To live under him.

To obey him. To live on his word. To enjoy his presence. To trust and rest and glory. In God as our father. And like we saw today. To spend our time walking with him.

Day after day. The thought that came to my mind. Was Deuteronomy. Chapter 6. And. It talks about a father and a son.

And they're walking along the way. And the father is instructing them. Or. So many times in the Old Testament. God makes them set up a. A pillar.

Or an altar. Or some sort of memorial. And what is it for? Well it's for. The children. To ask their parents. What it's for. So why is this here dad?

[27 : 41] And dad. As they're walking along the way. He tells them. What. That pillar is there. What God has done. That's what we were meant to live like. With God.

As our father. Father. But have you noticed. That as a culture. As we go further. And further away from God. This matter of identity.

About who we are. Is getting so. Confused. Now there are people. Who don't even know. What gender they are. They're unsure.

And we think that we can choose. We don't have a clue. What we're doing here. Or what any of this means to us. But in this world of confusion. Jesus. Is shining.

Telling us. What does it mean to be human? He shows us. What we are meant to be. But more importantly for us. What we can be. Because.

[28 : 38] We know that. There. Something happened with that relationship. Sin. Destroyed that father son relationship. Between God and man.

Sin. But then the image of God came. The son of God came. And he. Took on the creaturely version of himself. And he became the second Adam.

The first Adam disobeyed. But this new Adam. The second Adam. Obeyed. The first Adam. Lost our life with God. And now the second Adam. Wins our life back to God.

Back with God again. And so. We couldn't be with our father in the garden anymore. And now. We're sticking our fingers in our ear. And we're not hearing him. We're not.

We forfeited our place. We become blind to him. And now. Now what was so apparent. And so clear. Is now dark. And unclear. And we had sided with God's enemy.

[29 : 35] And everything was lost. And the question is. How can we be children again? How can we get back in that relationship. Where God is blessing us again?

Well the son of God humbled himself. And became man. And he did life for us. And that's the hope. That that life that I haven't lived.

He lived that life for me. In his humanity. And he obeyed God's laws for us. And he worked for us. And then he suffered for us. And he did both.

He fulfilled both sides. He obeyed the law. And he suffered the punishment of the law. And so he gave us a righteousness. He gave us a way. That we can now be accepted again.

And brought back. Into God's family. And he did it all. And so now through him. Through joining ourselves to him. By faith.

[30 : 33] We can say now. How great is the love of God. That we should be called the children of God. And that is what we are. He took us from being orphans.

And he made us children. And so we are children. Christians. You are a child of God. And you. By God's grace.

You're learning to live that way. More and more. You're learning to listen more. You're learning to obey more. You're learning to rest in your father's favor more. And you're enjoying it more. See the image of God is being renewed in us.

And it's all because of what Jesus has done. It's all because of him. We lost it all. And Jesus won it back for us. Now. Three practical lessons.

First. See man's true plight. See man's true plight. See the danger. Their true condition. See it when you look at them. At your neighbors.

[31 : 32] At your friends. At those people in the store. At those people that you're sitting by. At those other parents. At those other co-workers. See their true condition.

Until they know Jesus Christ. They are blind to God. God is invisible to them. They can know his power. They can know his divine nature.

They can know a lot of things about him. But until they come to know Jesus. Until Jesus shines in their hearts. They're blind to God as a father. God is not someone that they.

That will save them. That can save them. That they can truly truly trust. So God gives rules. God's powerful. God takes their dead.

But God isn't someone that they can live on. That they can believe in. He's a stranger. Stranger. To them. And every child knows.

[32 : 28] You don't talk to strangers. Strangers are bad. See what we have seen. And felt. And learned.

Through Jesus Christ. They don't know anything about. Maybe the truth. To some degree. Is up here. Maybe it's in their ears. But it hasn't broken in.

On their hearts. God. Is a lurking. Mystery. To them. And then on top of that.

They don't even know what they're about. They have no idea. What it even means to be human.

The things that. We take for granted. Is an utter mystery to them.

They're alone. And they're confused. And they put on brave faces. They have all sorts of gimmicks. To deaden the pain. To try to make sense of something.

[33 : 26] But it doesn't do any good. They need Jesus. They need Jesus. They need Jesus. And all of the gospel.

That he gives. That he's the son of God. Who became man. Who lived. And who was crucified. And rose again for sinners. Give them Jesus. It's only when they have Jesus.

That now God becomes someone. That they can trust. And begin to live with. They'll never know what they have. And what they're about. They'll never know. What God is about.

Until. They have Jesus. So give them Jesus. Second practical lesson. Make Jesus front and center.

In your parenting. You might say. Wow. We're far afield. But just follow me here. Isn't parenting.

Children. About raising them up.

[34 : 22] To be fully functioning. Genuine. Productive. Real. Humans. We want them to. Grow up. And to.

To flourish. We want them to enjoy. All of. What God has made them to be. What they can be. We want them saved. We want them to.

Enjoy. Being a real human. In all of its goodness. Well how can. Well. Jesus tells us. What that. Looks like. Jesus is the pattern.

He's the pattern. And so. How can we parent. Without Jesus. That's like playing basketball. With no. Net. It's playing soccer. With no goal. That's playing. Monopoly. With no money.

You're not keeping track. Of anything. You're just running around. You're dribbling around aimlessly. If you don't have Jesus. He's the goal. Of parenting. He is what we are trying. To bring our children.

[35 : 18] Up in. And to. And so. Paul says. Fathers. Bring up your children. In the training. In the admonition. The instruction. Of the Lord. So he's the curriculum. He's the teacher.

He's graduation. And so. Dads. Moms. What are you aiming for. In your parenting. Do you want successful. Rich.

Wealthy. Children. Who can enjoy. Lots of this world. Or do you want children. That are really.

Genuinely. What they are supposed to be. Do you want them to be.

Children of God. And so. Dads. If you don't passionately. Plead with your children. If you don't.

Earnestly. Press. The truth. Of God's word. And the gospel. Of Jesus Christ.

If you are not faithful. In presenting. Jesus Christ. To your children. Children. Then who will. Who will love them. If you won't. Who will share the gospel.

[36 : 13] With them. If you won't. And you can say. I'm too busy. But if you're too busy. To do this. Then. What are you doing. If you're too busy. To prepare your children. For judgment.

Then you're too busy. And if you're. And. This thought is real. If you're too busy. To prepare your children.

For judgment. Then they will rise up. Against you. On that day. And they will speak. Against you. And I say this.

To myself. As much as I say it. To you. Will our children. Look at us. From hell. And say. Why didn't you warn me? Why didn't you care more?

Took me to all the games. You gave me all this food. You gave me a college education. You were so happy. When I got a. Prosperous job. Look at me now.

[37 : 11] Why didn't you care? Dads. There's no excuses. Jesus has to be everything. In our parenting. And we have to be about it.

Third practical lesson. Live in Jesus. Live as a son of God. Jesus is the image of God. And Colossians 3 says. We have now taken off. The old man.

We've taken off. The old humanity. With its practices. And we've. We put on the new man. We put on Jesus Christ. Which is being renewed. In the image of its creator. And so we are all together. Children of God.

If we are converted. And born again. Then we are all together. In this family. And so live like it. Our old. Old. Confused. Lost. Orphan days.

Are behind us. Are gone. In those days. You have to fight. And scramble. And bite. And devour. To get what you want. But we're in Jesus. And God's our father.

[38:10] And so I'm saying. Live like that. And that's why. Paul says then. As God's chosen people. He speaks to us collectively now. As. Now you're children of God.

You're not. In that group anymore. You're in this new group. You're in this new humanity. You're now. In Jesus Christ. As God's chosen people. Holy. And dearly loved.

So you're set apart from the world. You're holy to God. You're dearly loved. Clothe yourself with compassion. Kindness. Humility. Gentleness. And patience. Those are all. Relational things. Bear with each other.

And forgive whatever grievances. You may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues. Put on love. Which binds them all together. In perfect unity. What is Paul saying?

He's saying that the old is gone. The new is here. And the new is coming. And so be new. Live as a child of God.

[39:09] Jesus Christ is our pattern. As the son of God. He is our pattern. And so let's conform to him. In every way. Let's be like him. Compassionate.

Kind. Humble. Gentle. Patience. Long-suffering. Forgiving. That's all the things that he is to us. So be that now. To one another. And we'll end with the words of John.

And now dear children. Continue in him. So that when he appears. We may be confident. And unashamed. Before him. At his coming. Let's pray.

Amen. Heavenly Father. Will you forgive us. For the way that we. Live so independently. That we. Don't look to Jesus. More than we should.

That we. Fall. So far short. Of imitating him. Of believing. What he has won for us. Will you help us. This week. To live as your children.

[40:11] Will you help us. This week. To look to Jesus. To see what you're like. To believe the gospel. To come to a knowledge. Of who you are. A practical. Working knowledge. Of who you are.

As we. Dwell on. And meditate upon. What Jesus Christ. Has done for us. Who he is. Who he is for us. Right now. Will you help us.

To live this life. Of faith. As we look to Jesus. Day after day. And I pray. That as we look to him. We'll find grace. And help. And strength. To be compassionate.

Be patient. And kind. And gentle. To live. As children. To live. As brothers and sisters. In Christ. Thank you.

Lord Jesus. For all that you've done for us. For all that you've won for us. Help us to walk. Worthy of you. To take every advantage. That we have in you. And please.

[41:06] Seek and find. The lost. Oh how lost they are. Have mercy upon them. They'll never come to you. You must draw them.

So please draw. And save. In Jesus name. Amen.