

Jesus Didn't Die For Nothing

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[0:00] Joe has success written all over him. He's the VP of sales at a computer software company. His children are grown up and out of the house.

He's got a beautiful home in the best neighborhood in town. And he is a Christian. And he would say his Christianity is important to him.

But his wife would say that his job is perhaps too important to him. He's never been able to relax or spend a little time with his family. And it's really bad now.

His company is teetering on the edge of failure. And the people, the important people in his company, are blaming him. Sales solves everything, they say.

And right now the sales have been falling far short of where they need to be. So the clouds are looming in Joe's life. And so he's been drinking to go to sleep for a while now.

[1:08] And that only works to get him to sleep at 2.30 in the morning. He's waking up in a panic, thinking about what he needs to do and what could happen.

The most troubling things of all for him is he can't figure out what he did to deserve this. Why isn't God protecting his position and protecting his company?

And after all of his hard work, is he going to be ending up with nothing? He can't believe he's turning into a failure. And his identity is very much tied into his success as a man who has his own business, his ability to get things done, to make things happen.

The one who does what needs to be done and then gets rewarded for it. Well, that might be an extreme case.

We're not so extreme, but we can relate to that. We've all had things that we've put our heart and our effort and our time and our energy into, and they didn't turn out the way that we thought they should.

[2:15] We thought we were setting ourselves up for parental success, but instead things turned out differently. We saved and saved for retirement, and then the stock market crashed.

And instead of being able to go on cruises, now we can barely go out to eat. Well, what does John need to remember? What do we need to remember when things like that happen to us?

Unexpected things or things that expose us? Well, we need to remember the gospel. And that's the very reason that we do this. Why do we do this until he comes?

Because we never get past this. We never move past this grade. So tonight we are going to remember again some of the things that we continually need to remember.

And especially when hard things happen and unexpected things happen, we need to remember certain things especially. And so tonight I'm going to ask you to turn to Galatians chapter 2 and verse 20.

[3:28] And while you're turning, I'll give you some context. Paul here is probably still talking to Peter. Peter, you remember, had played the hypocrite.

He had excluded himself from the Gentiles because some Jewish, Judaizing, Christian folks had come. And they were saying that you have to be circumcised.

You have to become a Jew in order to be really saved. Jesus wasn't enough. And so it's in the middle of this. And it's near the end of what Paul has to say to Peter that he says in verse 20.

I'm going to read verses 20 and 21. I have been crucified with Christ. And I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God.

[4:30] For if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing. Well, verse 20 would be a very good Lord's Supper sermon text, but we're going to look at verse 21.

And I think we see three things that we need to remember in verse 21 as we come to the Lord's Supper. And there are three things that we embrace when we say the life I live in the body, I live by faith in Jesus Christ.

This is what it means to live by faith in Jesus Christ. This is what it means to say that Jesus died for me and now I'm living for him. And it's three things that we need to continually remember and get right in our lives.

And especially when we're in those situations that I've already spoken of. And the first is that I need grace. That's the first thing we need to remember.

I need grace. Paul says, I do not set aside the grace of God. I don't grow it. I never move past it. I can't do without it. He says, I can't find another way around it.

[5:41] I don't set it aside for some other way of relating to God. I'm a sinner. And only grace will do.

It was on, I suppose it was a night very much like this one. It was a congregation in Edinburgh, Scotland.

St. Giles Church. The pastor there was a man named John Duncan. And they were remembering the Lord's death just as we are tonight.

And as they passed around the bread, there was a woman, a young lady near the front who was quietly weeping. And as the bread came by, she, with tears in her eyes, shook her head.

And then the cup came around. And the elder who was offering the elements to them, offered her the cup.

[6:41] And again, she shook her head as the tears flowed down her face. And the pastor, John Duncan, saw what was happening. And so he grabbed the cup away from the elder.

And he stuck it in front of her face again and handed it to her and said, take it, woman. This is for sinners. And that's something we need to remember.

That who is the gospel for? It's for sinners. And too often I'm not that girl. I may be the man or the woman who is quietly thinking that she needs to get her act together or hold it up or what's wrong with her.

But when I receive Christ, when I receive Christ for the first time and when I live by faith on him, I am that girl. I am that sinner.

I'm the homeless one. I'm the runaway that comes back. I'm the last to be invited. I'm the sinner. And so I can't set aside the grace of God.

[7:47] Because if God doesn't do something for me, I'm lost. Now, the gods of our culture tell us to be strong, to impress people, to take care of our own, to cover our sin, to keep people at length.

But for our sake, he became weak. And for our sake, he washed feet. And for our souls, he was stripped. And for our salvation, he was deserted.

And more than anything, I need that. I need him. Because I have no argument. I'm not an imaginary sinner.

I'm not a theoretical sinner. I'm a real, true-blood sinner. Not excusable. Not even understandable. Reckless. Even unnecessary sin. Now, what does Joe need to remember? He lives on grace.

[8:55] His identity isn't based, it never was based on his success. Yes. But it starts with this. He had nothing when he came to Jesus Christ. He could do nothing.

And God owes him nothing. It was all grace. And Joe forgot it. He forgot it when he had a big head. And he forgot it every time he drank to deaden his fear and his pain. And when God let Joe fail in this area, he wasn't showing Joe something new.

He was showing Joe something very old about himself. That it was grace all along. And so in receiving Christ, and as we receive the bread and the cup, we are saying, I need grace.

I need this. The second thing I remember, I embrace and say, is I can't do it. I can't do it.

[9:56] And that's what Paul says. For if righteousness, or the SV says, if justification could be gained through the law, then Christ died for nothing. So here, Paul is using an argument.

And so I want you to think with me. Think through the logic of this. If I could do it, if I could live well enough, obey perfectly, and earn this good standing with God through my obedience, through what I've done, through my performance, if I could gain this righteous standing before God, then Paul says, then Christ died for nothing.

He didn't need to die. It was unnecessary for him to die. Jesus died to make people right with God. But if I could have done it all along, then he didn't need to die.

He died for nothing. And Paul's argument is this, even though it's an implicit one. Jesus did die. And it wasn't for nothing.

And so therefore, that means I couldn't do it. I couldn't earn my salvation. Now, the cross is totally unnecessary until you realize you can't do it.

[11:12] As long as you believe that by your obedience, you can please God, make him happy and save your soul, then you don't need the cross.

As long as you have found some other way that you can save yourself, then the cross is unnecessary. I think we forget just how drastic it is to put your faith in someone who has died and we say rose again.

So who will put their trust into someone else? Until the situation is totally hopeless. Until they are in desperate need.

See, I don't call a tow truck if I think I can fix my truck alongside the road or my car alongside the road. I don't ask a stranger for money or for a favor unless I absolutely have to.

See, and that's our humanity and our sin. We turn everywhere. We'll turn anything and everything into a savior as long as instead of taking Jesus.

[12:22] But when all that gets stripped away. And we have nowhere else to turn. And we realize that I cannot do it. Then Jesus is good news.

It's not until we see that it's impossible to save ourselves, to take away our sins, to earn our forgiveness, that we embrace Jesus and the cross.

And so right now, by faith, as we receive Jesus Christ. We remember and we say, I can't do it. I couldn't do it.

I couldn't do enough good to make up for what I've done. My performance would have never cut it. And in myself and in my own strength, my deeds are filthy rags.

Paul said, I know nothing good lives in me that is in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do.

[13:23] No, the evil I do not want to do. This I keep on doing. Well, why do we need Jesus? Why do we even as Christians need Jesus? Because this is our life.

The things that we want to do, we don't do. We don't even do the things we want to do, let alone all the things that we are supposed to do.

And before you know it, our hands are in the cookie jar. And we say, I don't even know how I got here. I said I wasn't going to do it. I vowed I wasn't going to do it.

And yet here I am doing the very thing I don't want to do. That's why we need Jesus. Why do I need Jesus and his death for me?

Because I don't obey like I should. And I don't even obey like I want to obey. See, if Jesus doesn't die for me, then I'm done. It's over for me.

[14:21] I can't do it. So I need grace. I can't do it. And third, Christ didn't die for nothing.

Christ didn't die for nothing. And here is the answer to all of our needs. Here is here's our hope. Here's our joy. Here's what we put our hope and our faith in.

It's this. See, my sin, my need, my failure, my weakness, my inability. That's not the end of the story. That's not the last word. It's not I can't do it.

Therefore, I'm doomed. Some people argue that way after they've tried to obey for so long. And they realize they failed. They say, well, I'm doomed anyway. So I might as well go do whatever I want.

But that's not how we that's not how faith reasons. Faith reasons I can't do it. So I need Jesus. Christ didn't die for nothing.

[15:17] And so bring your fearful, doubting hearts to this truth. He didn't hang on the cross for nothing.

He wasn't mocked for nothing. Poor, afflicted, doubting, troubled Christian. You can come to the cross and look and you can see his triumph.

Jesus didn't bleed. Jesus didn't live. Jesus didn't die for nothing. God is reconciled.

You are justified. The whole debt has been paid. Your perfect righteousness has been won. Your sins have been cleansed.

See, he didn't die to give us just a little to do. He didn't die to pay off 98% of our debt but leave us with the other 2%. He died to pay it all. Your whole debt is nailed to the cross.

[16:17] There's nothing left. And so think about that when we need to think about that when we start to doubt God's goodness, when we start to say in our heads and we begin to lean on the merits of our works.

And so we start thinking that we can reason with God and say, God, I've done this and this. And so you owe me this. I've been working hard, so you need to provide me with a job, with a spouse. You need to take care of this problem because I'm doing this. That is to be reasoning completely on the wrong basis of things.

So think about what you're saying when you begin leaning on the merits of your work. Think what you are doing when you say, I don't deserve this. I've done this and that.

Think of what you're doing when you doubt God's will and his purpose and his plan for you. You're saying Jesus wasn't precious enough. Your son didn't do enough.

[17:19] He wasn't quite perfect. No. Why can we trust God in our trials? Because Jesus didn't die for nothing.

He wasn't. Jesus didn't die so God would bless us sometimes and then curse us other times. Jesus death didn't win you God's favor some of the time.

He won you God's favor forever. His goodwill forever. His love. And so Jesus death won you grace, not just now, but forevermore. And he won that no condemnation.

Not five years from now. Not 10 years from now when you're a better Christian and you have your act more together. No, it's no condemnation today. Jesus death is your righteousness.

Jesus death is the forgiveness of your sins. Jesus died in obedience to his father. And his obedience is now credited to our account.

[18:24] His obedience has been credited to your account. And so his obedience has become your obedience. So the father looks on you just as if you were stripped and kept on loving.

Just that you were put to the shame and yet you scorn the shame in faith. That's your record, Christian. That's your standing in heaven.

That's your standing before the righteous judge in heaven. All of that righteousness that Jesus Christ won and earned and worked out has been put on your account.

And so Jesus didn't die for nothing. He died to give you this righteousness. So here's a rock you can stand on. All of God's wrath has been emptied on him. Not a drop is left for you.

God's love is forever yours. God's power. God's wisdom. God's goodness. God's glory. God's kindness. All of God is all for you because of Jesus Christ.

[19:28] And we say, how? Well, it's not by what I've done. Jesus didn't die for nothing. He died so that when your company struggles and falters and goes belly up and when your kids break your heart and when your bank account gets hit, you can be sure that God is for you.

And that he's working it for your good and that God still is loving and he still has plans for you. And he's still working this out for your sanctification and your holy and your glorification.

And so, yes, tonight we do embrace that we are sinners. But Christ died for sinners. And yes, we are failures in many ways.

But Jesus didn't die for nothing. And so we don't set aside the grace of God. We put it right in front of us and we believe it. And tonight we remember, yes, I'm a great sinner.

But God is full of grace. And Jesus, he didn't die for nothing. Well, let's pray.

[20:36] Heavenly Father, I pray now as we turn our attention to taking the bread and the cup, will you please help us to focus our hearts and our minds on things that are pleasing and honoring and good.

You would help us to focus on Jesus Christ and him crucified for us. It's in his name I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.