

Salvation: Always Given, Never Earned

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[0 : 0 0] Before we have the preaching of God's Word, please turn again to the book of Mark, chapter 10. The book of Mark, chapter 10. Last Sunday evening, Pastor Aaron Hope preached from 1 Thessalonians and showed us the necessity of the Word of God being faithfully proclaimed.

But then we who also receive the Word of God by faith must work in us. And as the Word of God is read and preached this morning, will we hear it?

Will we meditate upon it? Will we obey it? That should be our prayer as we read and hear the Word preached. Mark 10, and I'll read from verse 17 through to verse 27.

This is the Word of God. As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. Good teacher, he asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Why do you call me good? Jesus answered. No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal.

[1 : 1 2] Do not give false testimony. Do not defraud. Honor your father and mother. Teacher, he declared, all these I have kept since I was a boy. Why? Jesus looked at him and loved him.

One thing you lack, he said. Go sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me. At this, the man's face fell.

He went away sad because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. The disciples were amazed at his words, but Jesus said again, children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God.

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. The disciples were even more amazed and said to each other, who then can be saved?

Jesus looked at them and said, with man, this is impossible, but not with God. All things are possible with God. Amen. There's a United States Marine baseball cap that has embroidered on it a slogan that says, always earned, never given.

[2 : 3 1] And knowing something of what those recruits must go through in order to become a Marine, that's a fitting slogan because it wasn't just handed to them as a free gift.

No, it was a reward earned by his blood, sweat, and tears. And when the valedictorian of the senior class has the privilege of giving a speech at the graduation, that honor did not just come to her willy-nilly, but rather was a reward for her self-sacrifice that while others were out playing and partying, she was in studying to get good grades.

The reward earned. And when a new hire works his tail off on the job, working with excellence and with all of his heart and therefore receives a promotion and a pay increase, that was not a gift given, but a reward merited by his hard work.

Indeed, most of life is rightly ordered by a merit-based principle that you earn what you get. But all of this is turned on its head when we come into the realm of salvation.

For here, all your works count for nothing. Indeed, the Bible calls them filthy rags. They work against you, not for you.

[4 : 02] And the Bible insists from cover to cover that salvation is not the work of man, but is the work of God. That salvation is never earned and always given as a free gift to the undeserving.

I wonder if you've noticed how often in Scripture, God corrects us on this very point with a three-letter word, N-O-T, not.

Salvation is by grace through faith and this not of yourselves. It's the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

Titus 3.3, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. Galatians 2.16, we know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 1.9, God who has saved us and called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done, but because of his own purpose in grace.

[5 : 14] This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. Why all the negatives in the Bible? Not by works, not by anything we have done.

Because sinful man refuses to let go of this cherished idea that we can earn our salvation if we just be good enough.

So salvation must operate on the same merit-based principle that we see in other areas of life. It works here and here and here, never given, always earned.

That's why every other religion in the world, including perverted Christianity that's often preached today. Every such religion clings to this idea that salvation is merit-based, a reward for being good.

Now, this was the majority opinion in Israel when Jesus walked the earth, because it was promoted by those revered rabbis and teachers of the law in Israel.

[6 : 26] And we find this idea alive and well in the heart of this rich young ruler that came to Jesus in our text this morning. And it was taking him to hell just as really as if he'd have been a murderer.

You know, the devil doesn't care how he gets you there, whether by being religious or by being a murderer, an adulterer, an abuser of mankind. And so we see how Jesus, the faithful witness, deals with this man in love and in truth.

So let's meet this man who comes to Jesus seeking eternal life. Verse 17, as Jesus started on his way, last we saw him, he's working with children, welcoming children to come to him.

And now, as he started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. Good teacher, he asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Now, Matthew tells us he was a young man. Luke tells us he was a ruler in some position of authority and leadership. They all tell us he was a wealthy man.

[7 : 41] He had great possessions. And when you put them all together, we find he is a rich, young ruler. And that's how he's often referred to in the Gospels or as he's preached upon.

But there's more to this man. He's outwardly moral and religious. I mean, he says he's kept the moral commands of God as found in the Ten Commandments.

He's an upstanding young man. And many parents would be proud to have him as their son. Many a mother would say, son, be like him when you grow up.

He was earnest in his desire to see Jesus. You know, grown men did not run in those days. But this man is in earnest to get to Jesus before he leaves.

And so he is running and runs up to him with a burning question he once answered. Oh, that more people today would be earnest in getting to Jesus.

[8 : 47] He was respectful to Jesus as a revered rabbi, teacher. He fell on his knees before him. And he said, good teacher.

And then he was sincere in his spiritual desire for eternal life. This man, though he was wealthy, the things in this life could not satisfy him.

He felt there must be something more. Life beyond this life. Eternal life. That's what I want. And he was sincere in that desire as he comes to Jesus Christ for the answer.

So this rich young ruler had many things going for him. But Jesus sees beneath all of this. And what he sees are three fatal flaws.

First of all, a wrong view of the way to be saved. Secondly, a wrong view of himself. And thirdly, Jesus sees that his wealth is keeping him from following Jesus.

[9 : 55] So let's see the way the Lord Jesus exposes these fatal flaws in what otherwise looks like a model citizen, hungry to know the way to have eternal life.

So let's look, first of all, at his wrong view of the way to be saved. He thinks salvation is something that's merited as a reward.

That there's something he must do. That eternal life is something he must earn. Did you hear it in his question? Verse 17, good teacher. What must I do to inherit eternal life?

Matthew says, he asks, what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life? So he senses that though he's obeyed the commands of God, as he will later tell Jesus, he's still deficient in some way.

Something's missing. There must be something more that I must do in order to be saved and have eternal life. Now, to him, Jesus is nothing more than a good teacher.

[11 : 01] Oh, he might be able to inform him of what that good thing is that he might be able himself then to do. Just tell me what it is and I'll do that also, that I might have eternal life.

Do you hear the fatal flaw in the way he asked the question? Now, remember what we saw last week. What had just happened before this man runs up to Jesus?

Jesus had said in verse 15 of chapter 10, I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.

So if we would enter the kingdom of God, how must we receive it? Well, as a little child. And you remember, we saw that little children were thought little of.

They had nothing to produce, nothing to contribute to society. They're just takers. They're just a bother who are a drain on society because they bring nothing of value and worth.

[12 : 07] And so Jesus said to them in verse 15, you must receive the kingdom of God as a child, taking the position of a helpless child who has nothing to bring to Jesus that will come with empty hands just to receive, not to contribute anything to your salvation.

Not a reward earned, but a pure gift from the Lord. Eternal life cannot be had by your works, but by faith alone that receives Christ.

That's what he's just said. But now here's this rich young ruler running up thinking there's surely something he can do in order to inherit eternal life. That's a wrong view of salvation.

As something that he does rather than what God gives. But secondly and closely related is the second fatal flaw, his wrong view of himself.

He thinks he's good. Good enough to do whatever is needed to earn eternal life. Just tell me what it is and I'll do it. Now this is self-righteousness.

[13 : 19] This is self-sufficiency. This is self-help religion. I've got what it takes in myself. Just tell me what I need to do.

Now these two fatal flaws are often found together. Wherever you find this wrong view of salvation that is by our works, you always find a wrong view of self that thinks that we're good enough to do that good work that is needed to save ourselves.

Sinners fail to see their need of God's remedy. The saving work of God's remedy. The saving work of Christ because they fail to see the depth of their sin problem that we are not good, but we are sinners.

And therefore, we cannot do for ourselves what must be done if we are to be saved. So he thinks he's good. And it's interesting how Jesus puts his finger on this fatal flaw.

He asks in verse 18, why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

[14 : 30] You see, this man clearly does not know that Jesus is God. So why is he calling him good? He's using this word good way too loosely.

When I was in high school, someone wrote a book called You're Okay, I'm Okay. This guy could have written a chapter in it.

He says, you're good and I'm good. We're all good. Ligonier Ministries does a survey every other year on the state of theology of United States Adults, and it finds that 66% agree with this statement.

Everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature. Two out of three people, most people are good by nature.

There's only a few baddies out there, but most are good. You see how we like to stretch the word good so that it includes us?

[15 : 41] We're part of that, most people, who are good. And Jesus gives the true definition of good. And in doing so, he shrinks it back to reality.

This is reality. This is the way it really is. No one is good except God alone. Not alone. So Jesus is out to make this point.

And so he divides the whole world into two groups. Good and bad. That's all there are. There's two groups. And everyone is in one or the other.

So let's put everybody in their group. Let's start with God. Where should we put God, children? Is he good or is he bad? God. He's good.

You're sure? He shows it to us every day in creation. Did any of you see that sunset last night? He didn't have to do that.

[16 : 44] He's just good. Did any of you eat something more than grass this week? He didn't have to do that. He's good. And not only do we see it in creation, he says it in the Bible over and over.

We heard it in Sunday school or somewhere. We heard, taste and see that the Lord is good. Psalm 34 and verse 8. Psalm 119, 68. God is good.

And he does good. So God's over here in the good group. Jesus says that too.

Now, he says no one is good except God alone. So God's good. That's where he belongs. But it's a very small category, isn't it?

When it comes to true goodness, God is in a category of one. He himself is good. That means he's the definition of good and he alone is good.

[17 : 49] So then, where does that leave the rest of us? Well, I'll start with myself. How about the pastor? Where is he? Good or bad? Bad. I'm not sure who that was, but I'll talk to you afterwards.

And where does that put all of us? Bad. Bad. Okay. Good. I'm glad you're listening. God alone is good.

And if that's true, and Jesus says it is, then that means we're all in the bad column, the bad category. And this rich young ruler, sincere, earnest, religious, obeying commandments, he too is bad.

You see, that's what God was, Jesus was wanting him to see, to move him out of this category of good into the reality that he is a sinner. And he's not good.

Only God is good. So stop using this word, mister, so loosely as if mere men fit into the category. And with that, Jesus would shatter his idea of his own goodness and ability to do good.

[19 : 06] No self-help way of salvation is of any good to sinners. Maybe if we were God, we could be saved by our goodness, but because we're not good but bad, there's no way that being good can save us.

Well, you see, this man's deceived. He's bit the lie of the devil. You're good. Some of you children, people say, you're good little boys and good little girls. God says you're bad.

You're born bad. We all were born bad. We need to know reality. And so Jesus, you see, moved by love.

He looked at the man and he loved him. And because he loved him, he told him the truth. You're not over here, man, with God. You're over here. You're on the outs with God.

You need to be saved. And you're not good enough to do anything yourself to save you. So he's wanting to know, what is the one thing I need to do?

[20 : 11] And Jesus says, well, okay, this will help you to see that you're not good. He says, well, you know the commandments. Verse 19, do not murder. Do not commit adultery.

Do not steal. Do not give false testimony. Do not defraud. Honor your father and your mother. He's quoting five to nine of the Ten Commandments.

The summary of God's moral law. God's law is a reflection of God's holiness as it comes to bear on man. This is how man must live in light of the fact that God is good and holy.

We must honor father and mother. Not murder. Not commit adultery. Not steal. Not lie. Now, Jesus is the wise winner of souls.

And so he wisely uses the law of God to show this man that he's bad and not good. You see, the law was never meant to be a ladder by which we climbed up and earned our salvation.

[21 : 12] It was meant to show us something. It was meant to be a mirror that we could look in the face of these commandments and see, I am bad. I'm a rebel against that good God.

And so by the law is the knowledge of sin, the awareness, the consciousness that we are sinners and that we need mercy and cannot be saved by anything we do.

So Jesus sets the law of God before him, quotes these commands. And he's still clinging to his goodness, isn't he? Verse 20, teacher, he declared, all these I have kept since I was a boy.

How can he say that? With a straight face. The same way Paul said it when he was a Pharisee and still lost in his sins. He gives his testimony in Philippians 3 and verse 15.

He says, as to the righteousness that's in the law, I was flawless. That's how he saw himself. Sure, I've kept every one of those commands.

[22 : 20] And that's what this man is claiming. But you see, that was the popular idea taught by the Pharisees, taught by their teachers of the law.

They had externalized the law. They had lowered the bar of the law. And they had made it easy for anyone to say, I've kept those commandments.

When really, reality is the bar was up here. You see, they thought that as long as I don't put a knife in the back of my neighbor that I hate and I'm angry with, I've kept the sixth commandment.

Do not murder. As long as I stay out of bed with my neighbor's wife that I'm lusting after, I've kept the seventh commandment. Don't commit adultery. They had externalized it.

But no, Jesus, there in the Sermon on the Mount, the true lawgiver, the true word of God, the true witness, He says, if you've hated and harbored anger against your brother, you have murdered him in your heart.

[23 : 28] If you've lusted after the woman, you have committed adultery with her in your heart. You see, Jesus could have come to this man on any one of those commandments and proved him to be the sinner.

The law makes requirements of the heart, our inner desires, what you think, your motivations, your desires. So unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees, you'll never enter the kingdom of heaven, Matthew 5, 20, Jesus said.

Because there's just an external righteousness. You must be righteous inside and outside in order to enter the kingdom. So you see how Jesus deals with those who think they're good enough to merit eternal life by their law keeping.

There's only two covenants promising eternal life. The first was the covenant of works in Adam. If you obey, eternal life is yours. If you disobey, you die.

The other covenant promising eternal life is the covenant of grace in Jesus Christ. He obeyed. And he suffered for sins.

[24 : 42] And if you believe on him, you will not perish, but have what? Eternal life. That's what he came for. That's the covenant of grace.

The covenant of works says, I must keep the law in order to enter into life. So if you think that by doing something, you can earn eternal life, you show you're still under the covenant of works in Adam.

And if you are still under that covenant of works with Adam, you must know that the kind of obedience you need in order to gain eternal life is perfect obedience. Remember, it was just one sin by which Adam, under that covenant, forfeited eternal life.

That's why the gospel, why Galatians 3.10 says, all who rely on observing the law, if you're going to make that your way of self, if you're still in Adam, all who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it's written, cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything that's written in the law.

So if you're in Adam, you must obey perfectly to gain eternal life. Well, that's a dead end street, isn't it?

[26 : 00] Because we're born sinners. We're born under the condemnation of Adam's sin and given his fallen nature. Do you know that the covenant promising eternal life was never given to sinners as a way to be saved?

It was only given to Adam in his state of perfection and sinlessness. Only he was given the way to eternal life by continuing to obey God.

But once Adam sinned, that covenant was broken for all of us. And that's why eternal life has never been offered by God to sinners on the basis of their works.

And if you're not in Christ, that means you're still in Adam and you will still be judged by that covenant of works. When you get to judgment, the books will be opened and it will be asked, did you obey everything in the law continually, perfectly?

That's where this man was. He's thinking by my doings, I can save my... He needs to see he's not a law keeper.

[27 : 23] He's broken the law. Jesus quotes the commandments to him and he still holds out. I've done them all since my youth. Well, Jesus, verse 21, looked at him and loved him.

Hear that, sinner friend. He looked at him and loved him. There he was on his knees at Jesus' feet, longing to know what he must do to inherit eternal life.

Jesus loved him. Sinner that he was, arrogant man to think he was good enough to do something to earn salvation. Jesus loved him as he looked at him.

But Jesus looked right through the outward veneer and what he found in his heart was the idol of possessions. And Jesus saw that, that this man is enslaved to his wealth.

And so loving him, Jesus said to him, one thing you do lack.

[28 : 32] You asked what one thing you lack. Let me give you one thing. Go sell everything that you have and give it to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven.

The treasure you came seeking for, eternal life. You'll have it. Then come follow me. So once again, Jesus is confronting him with the fact that salvation is not man's work but God's, that he is not good enough and cannot do the things that God's law requires of him.

He doesn't have it in him. And he's telling him because he loves him, knowing he'll never be saved unless he knows he's lost. He'll never come and trust in God's mercy in Jesus Christ until he knows he can't do what he is required to do.

And in a sense, Jesus is sending him back to another moral law. The one he didn't quote to him, the last of the Ten Commandments, you shall not covet, that is exposing his greed and covetousness, his love for money.

And so Jesus is applying the Tenth Commandment to this man in his particular need. Jesus sees he's got an idol of his wealth and Jesus says, that must go if you're going to follow me, if you're going to have that treasure of eternal life that you came seeking.

[30 : 01] And this is the last of his fatal flaws. His wealth was an idol that kept him from following Jesus.

You think you can do the one thing that you lack? Do you? Okay, here it is. Friend, go do this. Sell it all. Give to the poor. You'll have treasure.

Follow me. But you can't follow me and bring your idol with you. It's your money or me. You can't have both. Now, we shouldn't think that Jesus was being overly hard on this rich young ruler.

No, the call to follow Jesus has always involved a steep cost. The cost of yourself. Remember, he said that back in chapter 8, verse 34.

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. There's a death to self involved. That's a steep cost.

[31 : 03] A death to me and my way. A self-surrender of repentance to his way. And then he says again in chapter 9, verses 43 to 48, if your eye offends you, if your hand, your foot causes you to sin, cut it off.

It would be better for you to enter into eternal life with one than to go into hell with two. There's a cost involved. True conversion involves turning from your idols to the living God in Jesus Christ.

And we see it in the Thessalonians. They're said to have turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for a son from heaven, even Jesus, whom he raised from the dead, who delivers us from the coming wrath.

To turn to God is to turn from our idols. Conversion is a supernatural work of God turning us from our idols when we couldn't turn from them ourselves.

Because idols are not only things that we hold on to. When they get into our hearts, they hold on to us with a death grip.

[32 : 17] And if you're not following Jesus, rejecting your idols, maybe you haven't known it, but you need to know it.

That idol has a hold on your heart and it's keeping you from Jesus. And if it's keeping you from Jesus, it's keeping you from eternal life.

The very thing that you want. Only Jesus can break the chains of our idols and free us to serve him.

With you, it might be your possessions just like it was for this rich man. It might be your reputation that you're ashamed to stand up for Jesus and his word. Too ashamed to come out as a follower of Jesus of Nazareth in a wicked and adulterous generation that laughs to scorn Christians' old-fashioned ways and beliefs.

Maybe it's your freedom. Freedom to do whatever you want, whenever you want, with whomever you want. And you're holding on to that, which is really bondage.

[33 : 23] It's really got a hold of you. And so anyone who would follow me, Jesus said, must deny yourself. You must turn your back on your idols and receive salvation from me.

Well, that's what faith does. It sees in Jesus Christ a value and a worth that is far more than whatever it is that we have. Possessions, reputation, freedom.

But this man, who is so earnest and sincere to have eternal life, finds that the cost of following Jesus is just too much. Verse 22 says, at this the man's face fell.

This is the eyewitness account. They were there. They saw him go from this eager, excited anticipation of how I can get eternal. And his face fell. And he went away sad.

Why sad? We hardly ever see people go away from Jesus sad. They go away glad. Why sad? Because he had great wealth.

[34 : 29] And that wealth had a hold on his heart that valued wealth as more important than Jesus. No man can serve two masters.

Either he'll hate the one and love the other or he'll be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. So Jesus found him out. He would not and could not seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

He would not and could not free himself from his sinful idolatry of wealth. He would not and could not keep the ten commandments. He would not and could not sing I'd rather have Jesus than anything.

And if you're not in Christ today, it's because you'd rather have something else rather than Jesus and you're not willing to lose what you cannot keep, to gain what you cannot lose.

So rather than leaving his possessions behind, he left Jesus behind. He left the kingdom of heaven behind. He left what he came seeking for behind, eternal life.

[35 : 41] Jesus has a lesson for his disciples.

He was looking at the man, but he's now gone. And so Jesus turned and looked around and said to his disciples, how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now I just want to remind you that probably every single one here today is rich. Don't write yourself out of this verse. We are rich, every single one of us.

You learn how most of the world lives. We are rich. And Jesus is saying how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. And the disciples were amazed at his word.

Could they have heard him correctly? They're dumbfounded because wealth was thought to be the proof of God's favor. And indeed it may be, but it can also be a hindrance to be overcome.

- [36 : 47] And it's sometimes that very snare that leads them to their own destruction because it becomes more important than Jesus. It tempts a man to find his importance in what he has, to find his security in wealth, to trust in riches rather than in the Lord, to love riches. And to be greedy and selfish and unwilling to give. So again, Jesus sounds the warning to his disciples. Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God.
- How hard? Well, how hard is it? He follows up by saying it's easier, verse 25, easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.
- Now kids, you know what a camel is. You know, it was the largest animal in Palestine. So kids there knew what a camel was, but you might not know what an eye of a needle is.
- Because we don't have as many seamstresses anymore as there used to be. But a needle is that tiny thing that maybe your mom and dad gets the splinters out of your hands with.
- [38 : 00] It's such a thin thing, but at the end, one end of it, there's a hole in it. The needle's little, the hole is smaller yet. About the size of two dots on your Bible, two periods.
- And that's what Jesus is talking about. The eye of a needle. So how hard is it for a rich man to get to heaven, to be saved, to have eternal life?
- Well, it's harder than getting the camel, hump and all, to get through the eye of that needle. And you say, well, pastor, that's impossible.
- And you're absolutely right, kids. You got the point. The disciples got the point too. And it says they were even more amazed and said to each other, well, then who can be saved?
- If it's that hard, who can be saved? Now, interesting, they said who can be saved? Jesus was talking about entering into the kingdom of God.
- [39 : 03] And the rich man, he was talking about having eternal life. Well, they're all the same. To be saved is to enter the kingdom of God, the rule of Christ.
- To be saved is to have eternal life. These are three things speaking of the same salvation that is found in Jesus. So if it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a person to be saved, then they rightly ask who then can be saved.
- And Jesus leaves no room for guesswork. Verse 27, he looked at them and said, with man, this is impossible. It's more than difficult. It's more than hard.
- It's downright impossible. What is? Salvation? Eternal life? Gaining eternal life? Entering the kingdom?
- But don't overlook the first two words. With man, this is impossible. Man is not good enough to earn salvation. He's a sinner, unable to perfectly obey the law.
- [40 : 08] He's incapable of doing anything to contribute to eternal life. He's not able to forsake his idols and repent and turn to Christ. Jesus is stating clearly man's total inability to contribute anything to his own salvation.
- With man, this is impossible. But how slow man is to learn this. How slow man is to learn. That we must come as little children with bringing nothing and receiving salvation not as a reward earned but as a gift given. How many today are on the treadmill of religion trying to do more good to pile up and hope that it outweighs their sin and somehow gets them into heaven.
- This is why people are in church today all across the land thinking that by being there, going to mass, taking communion, being baptized, joining the church, reading the Bible, hearing it preached, that somehow that's what saves me.
- While trying to earn eternal life, Jesus says, you might as well try to push a camel through the eye of a needle. That will happen before anyone will be able to save themselves.

[41 : 32] Oh but thank God man's inability is not the last word. With man this is impossible but not with God for all things are possible with God. And that's why Christ was born.

Did you know that kids? Because God saw us down here trying to save ourselves, trying to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. Kids, you try that. Hold on to your shoestrings and pull as hard as you can and see if you can pull yourself up to God.

It's impossible. And because we could not do what must be done to save us, God out of love sent his one and only son into the world to do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves.

And so he came and was born in the womb of a virgin. conceived in her womb and born of a virgin. You say that's impossible.

That's right. With man this is impossible. But not with God. All things are possible with him. And that little boy grew up to be a man. And in all his 33 years he never sinned once.

[42 : 37] He was tempted in every way like we yet he never sinned, never broke one of God's commands. That's impossible. Yes, with man it is. But with God all things are possible. And then he went to the cross.

And there he took the wrath of God that was due to all his people who were bad sinners under the penalty of God's wrath. And that punishment was poured into one cup that Jesus drank on Calvary to the bottom so that none of his people live under God's wrath anymore.

That's impossible. Yes, that's right. With man it is impossible. But not with God. All things are possible with him. And after dying he rose again.

And he rose victorious over sin and death and hell. And he ascended into heaven where he now prays for his people and he's coming. That's impossible. With man it is.

But with God all things are possible. Dear believers, God has done the impossible for us. Salvation is a miracle. It's a God thing. It's something he did for us.

[43 : 48] And if he never did another thing for us, whatever our troubles, whatever our trials, we should be lost in wonder, love, and praise. And lost friend, don't miss the heart of Jesus for you.

It's because of his love for sinners. He looked on him and he loved him. And because he loved him, he told him the truth about himself. My friend, you'll never get in by something you do.

It is only because of what I've come to do. You are not good. You cannot do good in God's eyes. I have come and obeyed perfectly and I'm going to the cross where I'll pay the price for sin.

So I've suffered enough. I've obeyed enough. Just come to me as you are. Come as a little child with nothing in your hands to bring and just receive eternal life from me as a free gift to you, the undeserving sinner.

Oh, he invites everyone. None are excluded in the invitation. And he turns away none who do come. So come to him. Just tell him, well, Jesus, I can't save myself.

[45 : 01] I'm a sinner. I've heard that you can save me. That you obeyed enough to have a righteousness to give to me.

And you were damned enough on the cross to take all my punishment and to give me peace with God. I trust in you. Save me. And he will. Let's pray.

Oh, Lord, help us to see how things really are. Thank you for Jesus, the word of God, that faithful witness that exposes the lies that we believe.

Take it away from any heart here that thinks that there's something they could do to earn eternal life. Take away this imaginary goodness that they think they have before you.

And oh, give them faith to see Jesus as the substitute, the only one who could obey for us and die for us and make us right with you. Do it for your glory.

[46 : 05] Do it for the everlasting salvation of sinners here and all over the world today that Jesus Christ might be praised. We pray in his name. Amen.