

GOOD FRIDAY 2020
FREE AT LAST!

Here we are on this Good Friday celebrating the death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Now that does not sound right. Celebrating the death of Jesus, how can that be a celebration? The answer is simple, and we will see that in our study this evening.

The death of the innocent to pay in full the penalty for the guilty. Or, as Peter tells us **“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”** I Peter 3:18.

You see, Jesus was just, He was sinless, and we are guilty before God, our sins have separated us from God. And Jesus paid the price so that He may bring us to God through His death and resurrection!

I am calling this study, **“Free at Last!”** and in reality, as Martin Luther King put it, ***“Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, I am free at last!”***

That truly is what we are celebrating here this evening. That the work that Jesus did on the cross of Calvary paid in full our debt of sin and we are no longer guilty before God, but we have been set free in Christ! We are truly free at last!

Let me share this with you and it will lead us to where we are going this evening. We are told,

The fall of man, and the depravity that is ours; as its fruit, is “total,” in the sense that it extends to the whole of our human nature. Mind, heart, imagination, will; all are injured and marred in their operation. If a finger be poisoned it is not the finger only that is affected. The poison circulates in the blood, and if it be not expelled the life will be threatened. So sin in the soul is moral blood poisoning. It injures every faculty and power; weakens all that is noble, and biases to all that is opposed to God’s absolute reign in the heart. Hence, as Savior, he comes to put away sin, as a whole, and in each one who trusts in Him.

- Practical Bible Illustrations from Yesterday and Today

In our study, “*Free at Last!*” we will be looking at four main points. They are:

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SIN

DEATH SPREAD TO ALL MEN

NO HOPE FOR MAN TO RECTIFY THIS PROBLEM OF SIN

HOPE IN JESUS

And what we will see is we will be taking a journey from sin entering this world, to sin affecting the entire world and man not having a way to rectify this problem. And then God steps in and our hope, our salvation is found in Jesus alone!

With that said, please turn to Genesis chapter 2 as we look at this first point, ***THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SIN!***

When God created the heavens and the earth everything was very good. There was harmony in this world, there was no violence, there was no sin, none at all! In fact, all the animals lived together with man. At this point in time, all the animals and even Adam and Eve were vegetarians.

And God told Adam that everything in this beautiful garden that He had placed them in was for them to partake of except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that was off limits.

Now that sounds kind of strange. Why would God make this beautiful garden for them to live in and then say it is all yours except this one, don't eat of this tree?

Because God had to give them a choice. To either listen to Him or disobey Him. You see, apart from choice there is no love. But now, with this tree in the midst of the Garden of Eden, they had a choice of listening to God or rebelling against what God had said.

This is what took place starting in Genesis 2:15, **“Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”** Genesis 2:15-17.

As you can see, God tells Adam that all this is for him to eat except for that one tree.

Like I have said, Adam had a free will, he had a choice to make, but if he disobeyed the Lord, God warned him of the consequences, **“... for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”** Genesis 2:17.

Now we may read that and laugh because when Adam and Eve partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they did not die. So what is going on here? Was God wrong? Did God lie to them? In fact, they lived on for several hundred years, so how can this be correct?

This is 100% correct. You see, this verse can be literally translated, “**Dying, thou shalt die!**”

What does that mean?

Here is what I believe the Lord is saying.

The moment Adam disobeyed God, his spirit died and now his body appetites controlled him. He lost that fellowship with God that he once had because sin separates us from God.

We see that in Genesis chapter 3, that after Adam sinned that intimate fellowship with God was broken. He once walked with God in the Garden of Eden but now he was hiding from God. His sin separated him from God!

But there is more to it than that, which is horrible in itself. You see, what we also need to keep in mind is that the moment he sinned the death process started in Adam or the second law of thermodynamics.

This law speaks of things wearing down, moving from order to disorder.

Prior to Adam’s sin he could live forever, but now, he would eventually go back to the dust of the earth from which he came from.

So God clearly gave Adam the warning and I am sure when Eve was created, Adam gave her the warning as well. They knew what God had said, and now it was a matter of choice on their part if they were going to obey God or not!

And I am sure that we all know what happens next. The serpent deceives Eve by twisting the Word of God, by adding to the Word of God, by changing the Word of God and she believes him and takes a bite of the forbidden fruit of this tree and she also gives it to her husband, Adam to partake of and he knowingly eats it. Eve was deceived, Adam wasn't!

Listen to what transpired in Genesis 3:6-7, **“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.”**

The moment they partook of that tree, they knew that they disobeyed God and their sin was open and they were ashamed!

And their solution to their problem was to make fig leaf clothes, which were probably the most uncomfortable clothes to wear. Why did they do that? They were trying to appease God by inflicting pain in their lives to cover or atone for their sin, and God was not impressed with this.

You see, without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin and God makes a coat for them from the skin of an animal! The death of the innocent to cover the sin of the guilty!

And that is man today with his religions that he puts together. Man makes rules and regulations to appease God, but that is the problem, you broke His Law, and now your sin has separated you from God, just like it did with Adam and Eve!

And you can go to church every day, say this prayer and that prayer, do these sacraments and those sacraments, you can wash in these waters or whatever, and that does not atone for your sin. It may make you feel better, but that is just what Satan wants. He wants you comfortable in your sin thinking you have atoned for it, when there is no way you can!

Now let me also say this. There are many today who try to deny the Genesis account. In fact, they will go as far as to say that the first ten chapters of Genesis are just a story, they are not real.

I have a huge problem with that line of thinking. You see, if you discount the first ten chapters of Genesis, then how in the world can you trust anything else in the Bible? You can't and that is the problem. You see, sin entered this world through Adam and as we will see in a few minutes, that sin nature was passed on from Adam to the whole human race. We are born in sin as David said in Psalm 51:5.

If you doubt the Genesis account, you have an even bigger problem, because you are denying what Jesus said!

What do I mean by that? Simply, listen to what we are told in Matthew 19:4-6 as Jesus has this encounter with the Pharisees regarding marriage. We are told, **“And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning “made them male and female,” and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.’”**

What's my point? Simple. Jesus, as He speaks of marriage, wants these religious leaders to think about what God did in the Garden of Eden. He told them, **“Have you not read . . .”** In other words, ***“You guys should know this, I am sure you have read the Scriptures!”***

And here in Genesis we have the establishment of the marriage relationship and listen carefully to what Jesus said again, **“Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female.’”**

Here is the marriage relationship, between one man and one woman and to make His point, Jesus reminds them of what took place in Genesis, like I have said.

Why is that important? Because Jesus is telling us that the Genesis story is true and not some allegorical story not based in reality!

And here's the thing. If Jesus believed it, and He is Almighty God, I think He knows what He is talking about, then I am going to believe it. If you have a problem with that, then you truly have an even bigger problem because, like Satan said, you are saying, "**Has God indeed said?**" That is a dangerous place to be as we start to doubt the Word of God!

So what we have seen here is ***THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SIN!***

Now, for many, they see this as Adam's problem, Adam's sin. They don't believe that this sin has anything to do with their lives and if you doubt the Genesis story, there is no original sin and I guess you are doing good!

Obviously that is not true and it leads us to our next point, ***DEATH SPREAD TO ALL MEN!***

First of all, let's deal with this inherited sin from Adam and then we will deal with the fact that we have plenty of sins in our own lives to keep us out of heaven, to keep us from having a relationship with God.

In Romans chapter 5 we are told, "**Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned . . . Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.**" Romans 5:12, 14.

As we look at this, we see Paul speaking of the *ruin of mankind*. And look at how he does it.

First of all, we see that Paul believed that Adam was a historical figure and not just a story to promote a spiritual truth. So both Jesus and Paul believed this to be real and we also need too!

Here we see Paul open up with this word, “**Therefore**” and when you come to this word you need to ask yourself what it is there for!

Obviously, it speaks of all that Paul has spoken of so far, but I also believe it takes us back to Romans 3:23 where Paul said, “**for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**”

Now he is going to explain how we have sinned, where it came from.

He tells us that through Adam’s sin, all have inherited Adam’s genetic makeup, not only his physical nature, but also his spiritual nature by birth.

It is as David said in Psalm 51:5, “**Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.**” That is true of all mankind!

Bruce summed it up like this as he wrote, “To Paul, Adam was more than a historical individual, the first man; he was also what his name means in Hebrew – ‘humanity.’ The whole of humanity is viewed as having existed at first in Adam.”

Now some would like to deny this fact, but every grave is evidence pointing to the spread and the reign of sin since the time of Adam.

Remember what the Lord said in Genesis chapter 2, “**And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’**” Genesis 2:16-17.

Thus, sin is universal, affecting all of mankind and thus, death is also universal! The death rate is still one per person!

And not only does sin affect our physical bodies but also our spirits, as we have been separated from God by sin and the spirit nature is dead, allowing the body to be controlled by its fleshly appetites.

If you still are having a hard time with this, think of it this way.

You don't become a horse thief when you steal a horse; you steal a horse because you are a horse thief! You see, it just shows what you are!

Applying this spiritually speaking, a person doesn't become a sinner when he sins; he sins because he is a sinner! It is part of his nature that he was born with!

In fact, the verb "**sinned**" is in the aorist tense which tells us that it is a completed action in the past - no exceptions – we all have inherited sin from Adam, our spiritual nature just as we have inherited Adam's physical nature! And we have plenty of our own sins!

Listen to what the heart of man is apart from God. Paul wrote in Romans 3:10-18, "**As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.' Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit; The poison of asps is under their lips; Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.**"

As you look at what Paul is saying here in this indictment against man, he looks at the human condition from top to bottom. He begins with the head and moves down to the feet!

Warren Wiersbe calls this passage “An X-ray study of the lost sinner, from head to foot.”

And the idea here is that the entire body of man is filled with sin and rebellion against God.

“What are you saying Pastor Joe, that there are no good people out there?”

I am not saying that, but God is! You see, according to God’s standard, how many of us are righteous before Him? ***NONE!***

Thus, the heart of man is evil, not good. Now please, don’t get me wrong, some are better than others when you compare man to man, but that is not the standard. God is the standard and we all fall far short of that standard leaving only God to be good!

Now, I don’t know about you, but this look at the human condition is depressing. What’s the point? The Apostle Paul wants us to understand our complete inability to save ourselves. The fall touches every part of man’s being, and the inventory of body parts corrupted by the fall demonstrates this.

Yes, we have inherited sin from Adam, but we do have plenty of our own sin as well!

Now the question may be, ***“Why does man behave like this?”*** And I think that Romans 3:18 tells us, **“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”**

When you don’t fear God, when you don’t have the proper respect for Him, then sin will flourish! This summarizes the entire thought. Every sin and rebellion against God happens because we do not have a proper respect for Him. Wherever there is **sin**, there is **no fear of God**.

Look at this 14-count indictment that Paul spoke of regarding man.

Indictment number 1: ***NONE ARE RIGHTEOUS!***

Indictment number 2: ***NO ONE UNDERSTANDS GOD!***

Indictment number 3: ***NONE SEEK AFTER GOD!***

Indictment number 4: ***THEY HAVE ALL TURNED ASIDE!***

Indictment number 5: ***SINFUL MAN IS UNPROFITABLE!***

Indictment number 6: ***THERE IS NONE WHO DO GOOD, NO, NOT ONE!***

Indictment number 7: ***THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN TOMB!***

Indictment number 8: ***THEY PRACTICE DECEIT WITH THEIR TONGUES!***

Indictment number 9: ***THE POISON OF ASPES IS UNDER THEIR LIPS!***

Indictment number 10: ***THEIR MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS!***

Indictment number 11: ***UNREGENERATE MAN'S FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD!***

Indictment number 12: ***DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR WAYS!***

Indictment number 13: ***UNREGENERATE MAN DOES NOT KNOW THE WAY OF PEACE!***

Indictment number 14: ***THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES!***

William MacDonald put it like this for us,

Here we see the total depravity of man, by which we mean that sin has affected all of mankind and that it has affected every part of his being. Obviously every man has not committed every sin, but he has a nature which is capable of committing them all.

If Paul had wanted to give a more complete catalog of sins, he could have mentioned the sins of sex: adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, perversion, bestiality, prostitution, rape, lewdness, pornography, and smut.

He could have mentioned the sins associated with war: destruction of innocents, atrocities, gas chambers, ovens, concentration camps, torture devices, sadism.

He could have mentioned sins of the home: unfaithfulness, divorce, wifebeating, mental cruelty, child abuse.

Add to these the crimes of murder, mutilation, theft, burglary, embezzlement, vandalism, graft, corruption.

Also the sins of speech: profanity, suggestive jokes, sensual language, cursing, blasphemy, lies, backbiting, gossip, character assassination, grumbling, and complaining.

Other personal sins are: drunkenness, drug addiction, pride, envy, covetousness, ingratitude, filthy thought-life, hatred, and bitterness.

The list is seemingly endless - pollution, littering, racism, exploitation, deceit, betrayal, broken promises, and on and on. What further proof of human depravity is needed?

- William MacDonald

I think that is very clear, “**There is none righteous, no not one . . . There is none who does good, no not one.**”

In other words, ***DEATH SPREAD TO ALL MEN!***

Now again, many don't see this as a problem. In fact, somewhere around 90% of people in this world believe that they are a good person. But if you look at that list that Paul mentioned, we all fall far short of the standard that God set, which is ***PERFECTION!***

Let me give you a picture of this as we look at the genealogy of Cain. In this genealogy it will show us the life of a person apart from God. Let me show you what I mean:

CAIN = ACQUISITION

ENOCH = DEDICATED

IRAD = FUGITIVE OR WILD ASS

***MEHUJAEEL = "BLOT OUT THAT YAH IS GOD" OR WIPE OUT THE
NAME OF GOD***

METHUSHAEL = THEY ARE DEAD WHO ARE OF GOD

LAMECH = POOR AND LOWLY

What does that all mean? This is what we see in the ungodly, in those who do not know God. Listen carefully as we put these names together. It reads:

An acquisition that is a dedicated fugitive or wild ass who is trying to wipe out the name of God, saying, "They are dead who are of God" and the reality is, they are poor or lowly!

I think that is a pretty good description.

So how do **WE** rectify that problem of sin in our lives?

That is our next point that we need to understand, ***NO HOPE FOR MAN TO RECTIFY THIS PROBLEM OF SIN!***

I realize that there are many people out there that feel that they are good enough to get into heaven. They have done a lot of good in this life and thus, God has to accept them in.

Folk's, it is not your good deeds outweighing your bad deeds. One sin will keep you out of heaven and we all have many more than that, millions more!

But, like Adam and Eve, we sow fig leaves together to cover ourselves, we do this, and we do that thinking God is pleased with our fig leaves. He is not!

In Ecclesiastes 7:20 we are told, **“For there is not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin.”**

That sums it up for us very clearly. None of us are just, we are sinners and our sin separates us from God as Isaiah 59:1-2 tells us, **“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.”**

You see, God is holy, and there is no darkness in Him at all. We are sinners and there is darkness in each of us. And God cannot look upon sinners with favor and thus, our sin has separated us from God!

Now again, for those who think they can do good to appease God, listen carefully to what we are told in Isaiah 64:6, **“But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.”**

Did you notice that Isaiah did not say that all our sin is like filthy rags! No, he wrote that all our ***RIGHTEOUSNESSES*** or all the good things we have done are like filthy rags before a holy and righteous God!

Why is that?

Think of it like this. You have been a good person all your life. You have helped people out. You have cared for the sick. You do this and you do that, and it is all good.

Then one day, for whatever reason, you go into a store and you steal something. And as you are leaving the store, you get caught. Security takes you in and they call the police and, in your pocket, as you were leaving the store, is this item you did not pay for. In other words, you are guilty, you broke the law!

So you end up going to court for stealing this product and this is your defense before the judge.

“Your honor. I have done good all my life. I am fifty years old and there is not a spot on my record, not even a speeding ticket. And yes, I did steal this item but with all the good I have done in this life, won’t you forgive me and let me go?”

What do you think the judge is going to say?

He might say something like this.

“Sir. Having done good all your life means you were just doing what was right. You don’t get credit for that. And, just because you did good all your life and yet, here you were caught stealing, doesn’t mean the good outweighs the bad. You are guilty of stealing this product and you will suffer the consequences for your actions. Case closed!”

Now we do understand that with the judges in our courts today that that defense would never fly. So why do we think that this defense will fly with God, that He will accept that?

He won’t and He can’t because if He looked the other way, if He ignored our sin or used the justification of our good deeds outweighing our bad deeds, that would make Him an unrighteous Judge, and He is not!

Let me show you what I mean about God being a just Judge. We are told,

The scriptures clearly represent God as a righteous judge who is always just and fair.

“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne” (Psalms 89:14).

Jesus claims, ***“My judgment is just because I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me”*** (John 5:30). Jesus clearly regards his Father’s will as upholding justice.

God is ***“One who impartially judges”*** (1Peter 1:17).

- <http://bit.ly/2T10SWL>

Thus, since God is a righteous Judge, He can’t ignore sin. But here is that problem again, where man thinks he can atone for his sin and God will then accept him. Not going to happen.

It is as Paul said in Romans 3:20, **“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”**

In other words, you will never be justified before God by keeping the Law or for us, in being a good person. We have the sin of Adam we inherited, and we have plenty of our own sins that separate us from God!

Here is the bottom line. It is not so much how we get to heaven, but Who gets us there!

You see, as we have seen, there is ***NO HOPE FOR MAN TO RECTIFY THIS PROBLEM IF SIN!***

But there is ***HOPE IN JESUS!*** And that is what we are going to look at next.

Remember how we looked at the lineage of Cain and saw that this was a picture of man apart from Christ. He was hopeless or, as we read,

An acquisition that is a dedicated fugitive or wild ass who is trying to wipe out the name of God, saying, "They are dead who are of God" and the reality is, they are poor or lowly!

But we don't have to be cast out from the presence of God. Look at another lineage and you will see what I mean.

Let's look at the genealogy beginning with Adam and see what that has to say. It goes like this,

ADAM = MAN

SETH = APPROVED

ENOS OR ENOSH = SUBJECT TO DEATH

CAINAN = SORROWFUL

MAHALALEEL = FROM THE PRESENCE OF GOD

JARED = ONE COMES DOWN

ENoch = DEDICATED

METHUSELAH = DYING HE SHALL SEND

LAMECH = TO THE POOR AND LOWLY

NOAH = REST OR COMFORT

Notice how this plays out for us and the comfort it should bring to us. It reads like this,

The man approved to death, sorrowful. From the presence of God, one comes down, dedicated. Dying, he shall send to the poor and lowly, rest and comfort!

That is the Gospel message given to us thousands of years before Christ came. It is the Good News to a world that was moving quickly into darkness and it is Good News for us today.

It is as Paul said in Romans 1:16-17, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”**

Let me ask you this. Why is Methuselah the longest living person in the Bible, living some 969 years?

Because it truly shows or gives us a picture of the grace of God!

Judgment was coming but God was patient and longsuffering, giving man every opportunity to repent before the flood came! In the year that Methuselah died, the flood came!

It is as Peter reminds us in II Peter 3:9, **“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”**

God is so gracious and merciful to us!

And let me drive this point home because there seems to be so much confusion today regarding grace. Some feel that yes, we are saved by grace but then we must continue to work to maintain our relationship with God or we will fall from grace, we will lose our salvation. That is not true, and it would negate what the word **“grace”** truly means.

Grace means unmerited favor or God is giving to us freely, something that we don't deserve and that is eternal life with Him, not based on my good works but upon His finished work on the cross of Calvary. That is what we are celebrating here this evening!

Let me show you what I mean.

In Romans 11:6 we are told, “**And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.**”

Paul is making that very point that I just shared with you. If we are saved by grace, then it is only by grace that we are saved. You see, once you add works to grace it is no longer grace, but it is works that have saved us and thus, God owes us heaven.

If you truly believe that you are saved by good works, you are in trouble, or as Paul put it in Galatians 2:21, “**I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.**”

That is a powerful point and so many miss that today. If we are putting aside the grace of God and believing that our good works save us, then why did Jesus come? In fact, He died in vain if I can work my way into heaven!

Peter put it like this in I Peter 1:18-19, “**knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.**”

Did you see that? We are not redeemed from our sinful condition by buying our way out of it. That would be horrible because those who do not have enough money would be lost.

Also, we can't be redeemed from our sinful condition by keeping the Law, by being good or the “**aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers.**” Again, that is not how we are redeemed and if it was, then you would not have to believe in Jesus, all you would have to do is be a good enough person and you can be saved!

But, again, that is not what the Scriptures tell us. Peter said in Acts 4:12, “**Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**”

Let me be clear on this. I don't care what you believe in, there is salvation in no one else but Jesus! Not one person will get to heaven apart from Jesus! You can't be saved apart from Jesus! Is that clear enough for us? I hope so because apart from Christ we are still dead in our trespasses and sins!

In John 14:6 Jesus said, “**. . . I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**”

Now some would say that Jesus is being narrowminded! I guess He is but if that is true, why would you want Him to say that you can enter into heaven by the broad way when that is a lie. We are saved only through Christ!

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

Here's how God solved this problem for us and we read about the solution in 2 Corinthians 5:21 which says that it was “*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*” It was not for our sake or our work's sake but for Jesus' sake alone. God sees us as having Jesus' righteousness and that's what it takes.

You still want to consider that your good enough to go to heaven by your good works and that your good will outweigh the bad? Listen to what God says about our works in Isaiah 64:6, “*We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.*”

To anyone who says that they're a good person, I say that either you are right and the Bible is wrong or you are wrong and the Bible is right but both can't be wrong or both can't be right.

The truth is that the Word says ***“None is righteous, no, not one . . . no one does good, not even one”*** (Rom 3:10, 12). It is only ***“by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast”*** (Eph 2:7-8) and believe me, if we could boast, we would.

I am glad that works cannot save us because when would we ever have enough peace of mind to know how many good works was enough?

Could we die peacefully knowing that we'd done enough? No, there is no peace of mind in that. God made peace with us through Jesus Christ and ***“since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”*** (Rom 5:1).

We are saved by grace through faith and not by works. No amount of good works could ever get us there. Only a good God Who sent His perfect Son could get us to heaven and that's by repentance and faith.

There is no way that a good person will ever make it to heaven on his or her own but only bad people forgiven by a very good God. There is positively no other way to get there. Sadly, hell will be full of self-proclaimed “good people” who brought their works and filthy rags to hell with them.

May it never be so with you.

- <http://bit.ly/2V4PJqA>

As we celebrate the work that Jesus has done for us, let's look at what took place from the Gospel of John chapter 19, beginning in verse 17 as they are leading Jesus to Golgotha.

We are told, “And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: *JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS*. Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, ‘Do not write, “The King of the Jews,” but, “He said, ‘I am the King of the Jews.’” Pilate answered, ‘What I have written, I have written.’ Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, ‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,’ that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: ‘They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.’ Therefore the soldiers did these things. Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold your son!’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother!’ And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, ‘I thirst!’ Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth. So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.” John 19:17-30.

John doesn't cover the three hours of darkness that covered the land as Jesus bore the sins of the world for us and the Father turned His face from Him because He could not look upon sin.

But it was then, after He paid in full the penalty for our sins that He cried out *TETELESTAI* in the Greek, or "**It is finished.**" The work of redemption was completed, the price had been paid!

Many miss the point of this word, Tetelestai. Tenney tells us, "The verb *teleo* (*teleo*, 'to finish') was used in first and second centuries in the sense of 'fulfilling' or 'paying' a debt and often appeared in receipts. Jesus' statement 'It is finished' (*tetelestai*, *tetelestai*) could be interpreted as 'Paid in full.'"

Exactly, our debt for our sin was paid in full by Jesus. There is nothing we can do to add to that, it is a completed work.

It is as Paul said in Colossians 2:13-15, "**And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.**"

Or as Paul put it in Ephesians 2:8-9, "**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.**"

We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and we should be so thankful.

And let me add this. We know the work is finished because our Great High Priest, Jesus, sat down at the right hand of the Father. If there was still work to do, He would not have sat down. And we know that the Father accepted this work as well, as Jesus sat down before Him!

In other words, ***“FREE AT LAST. FREE AT LAST. THANK GOD ALMIGHTY I AM FREE AT LAST!”***

As I close this evening let me leave you with this to think about. We are told,

The son of a rich father forsook his fine home for a life of crime and immorality, bringing disgrace to his family and causing his father many years of deep sorrow.

One day he learned of his father’s death and decided to return home at once. He wanted to be present at the reading of the will to see if he had been left anything. He thought possibly his father out of kindness had bequeathed him something.

Together, with other members of the family, he assembled at the lawyer’s office to listen to the reading of the will.

The first part of it was a long recital of his son’s sins. Father had set them down carefully, one by one, expressing the grief of heart which he had borne for so many years.

The son became more and more restless as he heard that sad story of his evil doings. He began to fidget and fuss in his seat, obviously disgusted with the whole proceedings.

Finally, he could stand it no longer and grabbed his hat, rose to his feet, stomped out of the room, and slammed the door behind him.

But he left too soon. For the second part of the will said that his father had left him \$25,000.

He could not subsequently be located and thus never got the money for the simple reason that he declined to hear about the sins which he refused to confess.

He lost his inheritance.

- Illustrations of Bible Truths

I don't know where you are at this evening with Jesus, but if He is showing you your sins and that your sins have separated you from Him, don't walk away mad.

He is showing you where you stand, condemned in your sin so that you can come to Him and repent of your sins and be set free in Christ.

And for all of us, may we never lose sight of all that Jesus did for us. God became flesh, dwelt among us to go to the cross of Calvary to pay in full the penalty for our sins so that we can have our relationship with the Father restored and spend eternity with Him!

And I will close with this, I promise.

“FREE AT LAST. FREE AT LAST. THANK GOD ALMIGHTY I AM FREE AT LAST!”