

Christianity on Christ Terms - Teaching

by Paris Reidhead

Christ sets the terms for salvation, and it's not just a set of rules or rituals, but a personal relationship with Him.

Duration: 54:21

Scripture: Matthew 5:20, Luke 13:3, John 3:36, Acts 4:12, Romans 10:9, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 John 5:12

Topics: "Teaching"

Description

In this sermon, Reverend Paris Readhead emphasizes the importance of Christianity on Christ's terms. He urges the audience to consider the saying that not everyone talking about heaven will actually go there. To ensure one's place in heaven, Reverend Readhead provides four scripture verses for the audience to write down. He then shares the story of the Roman jailer in Philippi, highlighting the transformative power of God's intervention and the willingness to be taught and informed, just like little children.

Transcript

Welcome to Southern Idaho Bible Conference, July 1988, with Rev. Parris Reedhead. For additional copies of this cassette tape, write to Post Office Box 72, Twin Falls, Idaho, 833-01. ...Bible Conference on this 27th day of July in 1988, and they left a nice white page in the back of it or in the front of it.

And I want you to write down something on that nice white page. In fact, I want you to write down, first, a little phrase. The phrase is this, Christianity on Christ's terms.

And then be prepared to put down under that 1 and 2 and 3 and 4. And I'm going to give you four scripture verses, and I want you to have these. Now, I'll explain why. There's a saying down south that everybody talking about heaven ain't going there.

And there are a lot of people that are very concerned about that. And they are going to come to you and they're going to ask you if you can help them make sure that they'll go to heaven. Well, you've got to be able to do that and do it quickly and do it effectively.

Now, I think you'll agree with me that in this day there are a great many voices on radio, on television, on the corners and streets and with churches and steeples, all different kinds of groups. And they all seem to be convinced that they know the way en route to heaven. But amidst all of these voices saying, lo, this way, that way, come here, go there, we need an authority.

Someone that knows more about it than anybody else. Someone that has more wisdom than anyone else. Someone that has unquestioned love.

Someone that is able to give directions that are going to be absolutely correct. And the only one that I know of that meets that condition and qualification is our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, He knew more about how to get to heaven than anybody else.

That's why He came. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. And He said, in my Father's house are many mansions.

Well, who better than He knew how to get to that Father's house? And so, when people come to you and say, I'm not sure I'm a Christian. I'm not sure that I've been saved. I don't know whether or not it's real in my life.

You'd better be prepared to help them. Now, you don't want to be foolish and pat them on the back and say, well, you remember the same church I am. And everything's all right.

Because it just may be that everything isn't all right. And the subject is too important to take a chance on. And therefore, you'd better be prepared to help take that person very kindly and very gently by the hand and lead them into the Word.

And let the Lord Jesus Christ Himself do the speaking. Now, you've already written down Christianity on Christ's terms. He sets the terms.

These are His terms. And I want you to see number one. Opposite number one, you will write Matthew.

Now, the abbreviation, as you know, is M-T, period. Matthew 5, and then a colon, and then verse 20. Matthew 5, 20.

So what you're going to do, by the way, don't do it on the company's time. Bosses don't like that. We had a man out in the east that ran a bakery, a fellow that made Thomas English muffins.

Maybe you've never heard of him in Idaho, but we had him there. And the family that made that was very, they loved the Lord. It was the Swanson family.

Well, actually, it was invented by Mr. Thomas, whose daughter married Bob Swanson. And he's the one that started the bakery and began to put them out commercially. They'd been out just locally before.

And because Bob Swanson was one of the Christian businessmen in New York City and had a great witness, a lot of Christians wanted to work for him. And they had a lot of trouble. They were running a business.

And so what the people thought was that if they worked for a Christian businessman, it would be all right for them to take an hour or two a day and talk to people about the Lord. But that got to be awful expensive. And so they had a meeting with the employees, and they said, You love the Lord, and we love the Lord, but let's understand that you work eight hours a day, and then you've got 16 hours a day that are yours.

So instead of taking the eight hours we pay you for, you do your witnessing, if somebody says they want to talk to you, you say, Well, that's great. Now, after work, we'll go over here to the cafe and get a cup of coffee, and I'll sit down and do that on your own time, will you? Well, I think that's a good idea. But do it.

Do it. When somebody shows an interest and they want to talk to you, arrange a time. And then instead of trying to preach to them or trying to do much of anything other than just let the Lord Jesus do the talking, you say, Well, now look, you've got a question.

You're not sure that you're a child of God. You're not sure that you're born again. Now, I want you to just let the best authority on this subject in the world talk to you.

And so you open your testament, and you have it to him or to her, and you say, Will you read that for me? Read it out loud. And this is what they'll read. And this is the words of Christ.

For I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now, they're going to say, Well, what's that mean now? Who are the scribes and who are the Pharisees? And you've got to tell them that in the day of our Lord, the religious people were divided into two groups. I hope you'll remember this.

The one group were the Sadducees. Now, the Sadducees would be like the liberals or the modernists today. They didn't believe in the inspiration of the Torah.

That's the Old Testament books. They did not believe in the existence of angels. They did not believe in life after death.

They did not believe in the necessity for blood sacrifice. Religion to them was social, economic, and political. These were the Sadducees.

But there was another group called the Pharisees. Now, the Pharisees were just the opposite of the Sadducees. The Pharisees believed in the inspiration of the Bible, the Old Testament.

The Pharisees believed in the existence of angels. They believed in life after death. They believed in the necessity of blood sacrifice.

Well, we could say several things about them. Let's look at it. Now, what Christ said was this.

Except your righteousness shall exceed, go beyond the righteousness of the scribes and of the Pharisees, you shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven. Well, we'd better find out in what the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees did consist. Now, the first thing you learn about the scribes and Pharisees, I've already told you.

And that is, they were orthodox in their theology, as in contrast to the Sadducees. They believed in all of these things. Now, is there anything wrong with being orthodox in theology? No.

It's good. Only problem is, it's not enough. Oh, they believed in the plan of salvation.

They believed the only people that were ever going to go to heaven were the people that had come through Phariseeism, through Judaism. The second thing about the Pharisees is this. They were devout in their practice.

The Pharisees fasted two days every week, from sunup till sundown. They didn't drink any water. They didn't eat any food.

And they didn't even swallow their own spittle, their own saliva. They fasted two days a week. And they prayed three times a day.

The shortest of their prayers, if they hurried, was about 12 minutes. And they prayed whenever the prayer time came. They prayed.

They prayed on the street corner or wherever they were. They stopped and prayed. And then, we find something else.

They gave to the Lord. They tithed. Everything they got.

Even down to the ridiculous. If somebody would come up and pluck some mint. You know what that is, a little herb that grows in the garden and used to flavor tea.

Or if you're from the south, mint juleps or something of that sort. It was a mint. And take it off the wall and come up and say, Here, Mr. Pharisee, here's some mint from my garden.

And the Pharisee would take one sprig here, put it down. Another here, another here, count out ten. He'd have all that mint divided in ten piles.

And one pile went to the Lord. If somebody brought him anise. Now, anise was a little seed used to flavor a cookie.

And you have it in your kitchens. And somebody said, Here, Mr. Pharisee, here's some anise seed I got from my garden. He'd count out one seed, two seeds, three seeds, four seeds, five seeds.

Even down to the separate seeds. And cumin, well, that's also a spice that's used. And he'd count out each little piece.

He got to the ridiculous, tithed everything. Mint and anise and cumin. Right down to the absurd.

But he tithed everything he had. Well, what did I say? They were devout in their practice. What did they do? They fasted.

Anything wrong with that? And they prayed. Would you say there's anything wrong with that? And they tithed. Was there anything wrong with that? So now we've got the Pharisees.

They're orthodox in their theology. And they're devout in their practice. Now, something else about the Pharisees.

They were evangelistic in their zeal. They were convinced that no one would go to heaven unless he was of Judah. And so they went out to the Gentiles and they made converts from the Gentiles.

So that when Herod rebuilt the temple, he had to put in a greatly enlarged court of the proselytes, they were called, to take care of the converts of the Pharisees to Judaism. In fact, it was said that the Pharisees would encircle the globe to make, I didn't even know they knew then it was a globe or not, but encircle the world to make one proselyte. So we have got three things now.

The Pharisees were orthodox in their theology. And they were devout in their practice. And they were evangelistic in their zeal.

Have you found anything yet you object to? I haven't. And then there was one other thing about the Pharisees. They were premillennial in their hope.

They were looking for the personal bodily coming of Messiah to set up the throne of David and to give back to Israel the glory that she had under David. Now that doesn't sound terribly bad, does it? Fundamental in theology, devout in practice, evangelistic in zeal, premillennial in their hope. And yet Christ said of them, Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, they shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

A lot of the people you talk to are going to have been catechized, as you young people, or they're going to have been baptized, or they're going to have been made church members. They're going to have had something else. They may be even fundamental in their theology, or devout in their practice.

But what did Christ say? There's nothing wrong with these things. It's just that they're not enough. Not enough.

Anyone with common sense, good sense, and a strong will can do all of those things the Pharisees did, even if there wasn't a God. Nothing in there that required grace or love or power. Just discipline, that's all.

And what the Lord Jesus was saying is this. That which prepares you for heaven is more than you can do by yourself. It's a miracle.

It's supernatural. What the Pharisees had was all right, but it wasn't enough. They had everything but life.

You see, salvation is not a scheme. Salvation is not a system of theology. Salvation is not a decision.

Salvation is not a list of scripture verses. Salvation is not signing a card or saying a prayer. Salvation is a person.

That's what we have in Psalm 27. Jehovah is my light and my salvation. He is my salvation.

And that's why Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, in his second letter, chapter 13, in verse 5, said, Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith. Prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Christ dwells in you, except you be reprobate.

Salvation is a person. It's Christ. He that hath the Son hath life.

He that hath the Son has life. Because life is in the Son. We lived in Chattanooga, Tennessee, some years ago.

And we had a church in our area. In fact, at one time, we were members of that church. In fact, I don't even know, but they still may have our name somewhere on the roll.

They said they never took names off. They just put them on. And if that's the case, then I suppose they're still there.

I don't know about that. But this particular church had a practice. Now, I'm sure you don't do that out here in Idaho.

But in the East, we do. They did. Some do.

I don't, but some do. And this church did. The pastor would give an invitation.

And people would come to the front. And somebody would meet them with a clipboard and get their name and address and telephone number. And, why did you come? Rededicate my life was one of the common ones, or sometimes to be saved.

Well, there was one man that was always doing personal work in every service. A friend of mine was on the radio. And he was teaching the word much the same way as I would had I been on the radio.

And he was telling people that salvation is a person. And that the only way anyone ever is going to be prepared for heaven is for Christ to come into their hearts. And the only way you'll know it is because he tells you when he comes by the Holy Spirit.

Well, this man who was doing the personal work listened to the broadcast of my friend. And he called him. He said, I heard you on the radio the other afternoon.

And I want to talk to you. Yes, last Sunday, after the service, the pastor gave the invitation. And a very fine appearing businessman came down.

And I took his name and his address. And I said, what did you come for? He said, to be saved. So I opened my Bible to that verse that says, He that hath the Son hath life.

And I asked him, read it. And I said, now do you believe that? And he said, yes, I believe that. So I wrote down saved.

Then I asked him if he wanted to be baptized. Because in that church, as soon as they said yes, they were baptized. And he said, well, before I answer that, I've got to ask you a question.

You asked me if I believe that He that hath the Son hath life. And I said, yes. And you said that I'm saved.

But I've just got one question to ask you. Sure, I believe that verse that He that hath the Son hath life. But my question is this.

How do you get the Son? You know what I told him, said the man on the phone? Well, I told him that it was just enough to believe that he could be baptized. And the pastor would explain it in the class later on. And the voice on the telephone said, do you think I did right? And my pastor friend said, do you think you did right? And he said, no.

I deceived that man. Well, the Lord Jesus Christ never wanted to deceive anybody about anything, and especially about the most important subject in all the world. And so he said, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Because he knew that salvation is a person himself. Now, that's the first thing. And as I say, when you're over that cafe, over that cup of coffee, by this time, you probably got the attention of the person you're talking to.

And you didn't say it, you know. The Lord Jesus said it. Wasn't something you're not making any trouble.

You're just having him read what Christ said. Well, now you can't stop there. So you got a number two.

And in number two, you write down Luke, chapter 13, verses 3 and 5. Luke, chapter 13, verses 3 and 5. And what do you read there? You turn, you hand your Bible or New Testament to the one sitting across the table from you. And how will you read this? And this is what he'll read. I tell you nay, but except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.

And then verse 5, the second time. I tell you nay, but except you repent, you shall all likewise perish. Well, now that gets to be pretty much of a problem, doesn't it? Here Christ has said twice in three verses that except people repent, they're going to perish.

Well, this fellow sitting next to you, across from you in the cafe, over that cup of coffee, is going to be looking at you right about then, and he's going to say, well, that's all right, but tell me, what does it mean to repent? If I got to do that or perish, I better know what it is. Now, what would you tell him if he asked you that right now? What would you tell him? What does the word repent mean to you? Well, I don't want to have a quiz on that. I'm going to tell you what it means to me, and I believe I'm right.

In fact, I'm quite sure I'm right. And I've been doing it a long time, and if I wasn't, I know there are a lot of folk that would like to come around and set me straight. And if you're one of them, well, I welcome it, but I'm going to tell you what I believe and what the Scripture teaches, and that is repentance.

The word is a word that means to change one's mind. Now, you've heard people say, oh, repent means to be sorry, sorry enough to quit. Ah, where did you get that? Oh, I know where you got it.

In Corinthians it says, godly sorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of. Let me illustrate it. Here I've got a board.

It's the desk here. And in this hand I've got a spike, and in this hand I've got a hammer. Now watch what I'm going to do.

I'm going to put the spike on the board, and then I'm going to take the hammer, and I'm going to work the spike into the board. Godly sorrow worketh repentance. Sorrow is the hammer.

Repentance is the spike. And the board is the heart. Godly sorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of.

All right, that's where we get the idea of sorrow. Sure, godly sorrow works repentance, but that's not the only thing that works repentance. That's just one thing it does.

Repentance is not sorrow. Repentance is something in and of itself. What is it? It's a change of mind from what it shouldn't be to what it ought to be.

Now what's the mindset or the mind direction or the mind aim of the sinner, the person without Christ? What is repentance? I'll tell you what it is. The sinner's mind is this. I'm going to do what I want to do.

I'm going to rule my life, choose how to be happy, do what I please, and I'm not going to let my parents or the school or the police or the government tell me what to do. I'm going to do what I want to do. That's the essence of sin.

I'm going to rule my life. Nobody's going to tell me what to do. That's the very essence of this thing the Bible calls sin.

You see, nobody is wise enough or big enough or good enough to run his own life. We were made to be directed and guided and led by God. And sin is revolt against the rule of God when we take things in our own hands.

That's what the serpent said to Mother Eve. You shall be as God. You'll decide how to be happy.

You'll rule your life. I suppose in every human heart there's a throne so big that it only fits God. Let me give you a picture.

Here's a little child that goes into his daddy's office. He's only about two and a half. And so the little child shinnies up the leg and pulls himself up on the arm and gradually gets himself over and sits there in his daddy's office chair and sits down, has to hold on to the arm to keep from falling off, out, and says, I'm the boss.

I'm going to run this company. You'd say for a child two and a half to run a company is stupid. Doesn't have the brains, the experience, the wisdom, the knowledge.

You know, for a person to climb up into the throne of his life that was made for Jesus Christ and cling to the arm and defy God and shake his fist in the face of God and say, I'm going to rule. You better turn the company over to a two and a half year old and to do that because that's really playing with fire. And that's what sinners do when they say, I'm going to do what I want to do.

I'm going to rule my life. I'm going to decide how to be happy. Now, that's the essence of sin.

I'll do what I want to do. And Christ said, except you repent. Except you repent, you'll perish.

Now, what's repentance mean? Well, the mindset has been, I'm going to do what I want to do. And repentance is a 180 degree turn. Now, from today on, I'm going to do what you want me to do.

You're the boss, you're the king, you're the ruler. You're going to direct and control and I'm going to obey. That's what repentance means.

A change of boss, a change of control, a change of... And listen, don't you understand that, don't you? How in the world can a fellow that has picked up a gun and shot somebody goes into the presence of the judge with a smoking gun and got a long list of people he's going to shoot and say, Judge, I want you to forgive me. I just killed a man. What's that in your hand? Well, it's I've got a gun, I'm going out and get some more.

But I want you to forgive me. Any judge that did that ought to be put in prison and hung himself. He's just more guilty than the person who pulled the trigger.

Do you think that God can remain God and forgive people whose will is set to do evil? People have to repent. They have to throw down their guns and throw down their swords and throw down their weapons and cease their crimes and then come over and say, I deserve your wrath. I deserve everything you can do to me.

But from today on, no bargains. I'm going to do what you want me to do because you deserve to be obeyed. That's repentance.

It's a no negotiating deal. From today on, I'm going to obey you. It's a change of mind.

It's a change of intention. It's a change of purpose from what it was to what it ought to be. And there is no saving virtue in it at all.

It's not a work. It's just a change of attitude. Now, Charles Spurgeon, one of the great preachers of England, had this to say about repentance.

He said, if a sinner has a thousand sins and he repents of 999 of them, it doesn't count for anything because all he's trying to do is make a deal with God. In other words, repentance to be real has to be entire and not partial. He said, if a person repents of sin for 90 days and then goes back to it, it doesn't count for anything because repentance to be real has to be permanent and not temporary.

He said, if somebody feels they've got a sword in their back, a knife in their back, driving them on and they say, I repent, I repent, and it is enforced and not freely given, reluctantly given, it doesn't amount to anything. For repentance to be real has to be hearty and not reluctant. It has to be entire and not partial, permanent and not temporary, hearty and not reluctant.

Christ said, except you repent, you'll perish. The only kind of people that are going to go to heaven are the kind of people that have repented. Well, you'd say, you're getting touchy, aren't you? No, I'm not getting touchy at all.

I'm just telling you what Jesus said. He's the one that sets the terms. I didn't set them.

Hey, don't blame me. I'm a devout coward. I'm like a rabbit on the opening day of hunting season.

I just look around for a stump to hide behind. Because I've found, rabbits have found out if they can get a thick enough stump, they aren't going to get shot if they're on the right side of the stump at the right time. And I hide behind a stump.

You know the stump I hide behind? It's this book. And you can shoot at me all you want. As long as I'm hiding behind the book, you're not going to hurt me.

And I didn't write this. It was my words. It's His.

He's the one that said, except you repent and you'll perish. I didn't say it. You read it.

I didn't read it. You read it. He said it.

Well, now I'm not finished yet. Because I've got to take you on over to Matthew chapter 18 and verse 3. There's more to this than you realize. He had something else to say.

Matthew 18 and verse 3. The Lord Jesus, oh, He's got an interesting time here. The disciples came to Jesus saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Oh, brother. You, those guys didn't understand what they were about, did they? I mean, who's the greatest in the kingdom? Well, they had a lot to learn and they were learning it.

That's what disciples mean. Students, they're learning. You're learning.

I'm learning. None of us are there yet. We're all still in school.

But when they come up and say, Lord, who's going to be the greatest? You remember when the mother of James and John came to the Lord and said, Lord, when thou comest into thy kingdom, let James sit on thy

right hand and John on thy left. Sure, she was ambitious for her sons, but she missed the whole point, didn't she? That wasn't what this was all about. And so what did the Lord Jesus do? He called a little child.

Just a two or three year old. And he set the little child on his knees and the people, the disciples were around him. And Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, except you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Whoa. Well, little children aren't paragons of virtue, are they? They got problems. If you don't think so, talk to us about it.

We have six. They're not little anymore, but our memories are long, even if theirs aren't. They thought they were paragons of wonderful behavior.

Hear them talk. We weren't so hot, but they were wonderful. That wasn't the way I heard it.

That wasn't the way we went through it. But that's all right. I'm not going to fuss with them about it.

But a little child, three years old, sitting on... Well, what does a little three year old have? Well, isn't it funny? Mother, father can hardly wait for the little fella to start to talk. He said his first word. Mommy or daddy or something that sounded a lot like it or could be freely interpreted as mommy or daddy, depending on whether it was heard by mommy or daddy.

But they started to talk. Oh, how thrilling. They started to talk.

He's talking. Isn't that great? Well, first word. Six months later, they wonder why they were so eager for him to start to talk.

Mommy, what's this? Mommy, why? Why? What? Why? What characterizes little children? They want to learn. They're willing to be taught. And they're eager to be informed.

And so what's the Lord talking about when He says, You'll be converted and become as little children? You know what? So far, and I'm not finished yet by a long shot, I trust by the grace of God, but so far in my life, everybody I've ever met has his own plan of salvation. I never met anybody in this country or in Africa anywhere who didn't have a plan of salvation that he was following. One, I met a lot of guys at the university who said, There isn't any God.

That was their plan of salvation. No God, so they didn't have to worry. And then there were others who said, Yeah, there's a God, but there's no hell.

That was their plan of salvation. I've often wondered why the denominations that are so sure there's no hell go around the neighborhood hanging information on your door to prove to you there's no hell. If there isn't any, why should they worry about it? But no, they've got to convince everybody else there isn't.

I never figured that out. I just can't see how that makes sense. But I've also met, oh, you've met the guy, haven't you? Well, I believe that God has the big scales in the sky.

And he's putting my bad deeds on the left hand and my good deeds on the right hand. And if my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds, I'll make it. That's his plan of salvation.

But what our Lord Jesus said was, If you're ever going to make it into the kingdom of heaven, you're going to have to become as a little child and look up into his face and say, How, Lord, how? You've got to be changed from, I've got the answers, I know how to do this, to, Lord, how? That's what's got to happen. Oh, I've got a good illustration of this. You remember that Philippian jailer that had Paul beaten? Now, he was in Philippi.

And Philippi was a Roman city in Greece. It was an extraterritorial possession of Rome. It wasn't a Grecian city.

It was a Roman city. And it was there named for the father of Alexander, Philip, but it was a Roman city. And it was run under Roman law.

And Paul was a Roman citizen. And Roman citizens could never be scourged. And the jailer scourged Paul.

And after he'd finished scourging, Paul said, You know, I'm a Roman. Oh, that wasn't so good. That was against the law for him to scourge a Roman.

Well, at any rate, he'd gone this far. He put Paul and Silas down in the dungeon, put the shackles around their arms, and they're there chained to the wall. They can't sit down.

They can't lay down. And they can hang, but they'd hang from their wrists, and their ankles have got shackles around them, and they're there in the dungeon. Well, what's Paul going to do when he's there and Silas is next to him? The guys in the other cells are going to say, What in the world did you fellas do to get that dungeon when nobody really get that? Well, we got it.

Well, why? Well, because we were preaching about Jesus. Well, who's Jesus? He's God who became flesh and dwelt among us. He loved us and gave Himself for you and for me.

He died and God raised. Oh, you mean that fella that Pilate killed? Yeah, that's the one. He's alive? Yeah, he's alive.

And after a while, Paul gets tired of talking, and he says, Silas, heist a tune. And I can hear Silas as he says, The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life.

Whom shall I be afraid? Well, no angel wants to interrupt a good praise service. So long about midnight, Silas gets hoarse, and he stops. And the angel of the Lord is there.

Now, he's seen by Paul and Silas, but not by the jailer or anybody else. And all the angel does is point. And when he points, the tumblers in the lock begin to creak, and then when it's open, the doors begin to screech, and the shackles, if they're shackled, fall off, and one door after another.

Funny thing, though. All the doors are open. All the shackles are off.

But nobody leaves their cells. That's strange. You'd think those guys would break out, wouldn't you? But God wasn't trying to put a lot of criminals back in Philippi.

He was trying to get one that was the worst prisoner in any of the others released. That was the Roman jailer. Well, here's the Roman jailer.

First, he scourged Paul, and he never should have done that. That was illegal. And if Paul wants to report him, he's going to be broken.

He'll probably go to jail. And secondly, he's put Paul in a dungeon, hasn't given him any meal, any food. And now Paul's God, whom he said was dead and now alive, has sent an angel to open the prison, and all the prisoners are going to escape.

Well, he's had it. So he's up there in the little balcony overlooking this thing. He wasn't down on the floor, but he was up in the separate door.

And he's out there, and he knows what he has to do. So he just pulls his little short sword out, and he's got breastplate on leaves, a breastplate of metal, and he fits the sword, and he gets ready to fall down on the desk and plunge the sword through his heart. Saves the government a lot of expense.

And just about the time he falls, Paul says, Do thyself no harm. We are all here. No one has fled.

No one's going. Now I want you to see. Here was that haughty, arrogant, proud, authoritarian Roman jailer who knows all about all the gods because the Pantheon in Rome has all the gods of the Roman Empire.

Expert on gods. He never saw anything like this. And boy, his helmet is off.

Plume is broken. And he, what's happened to him? He's become as a little child. A little child.

And you know what he says? Men and brethren, what must I do to be saved? What must I do to be saved? He's become as a little child. Now that's the time. I don't know what Paul said in those previous hours he'd been in that prison.

But I know what he didn't say. He didn't tell the Roman jailer how to be saved. I think he told him how holy God is and how sinful he is and what he must do and then what God would do.

But he didn't tell him how. And so the jailer said, what must I do to be saved? And friend, when you can get people to that place, that's the time to tell them, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. But what we've done is to gospel-harden a generation of sinners by telling them how before they knew why they needed to be saved or from what they needed to be saved.

Well, there it is, except you be converted and become as a little child. You'll not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now I've got one last, we've got one number left.

We're going to quickly look at it because we've already pretty well covered it. We're going to write down on your page John chapter 3 and verse 3. Jesus answered and said unto him, to Nicodemus, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. I told you earlier, salvation is not a scheme and it's not a plan and it's not a system of doctrine and it's not a list of scriptural verses and it's not a decision.

It's a person. And when one has repented, having become as a little child, believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, a miracle happens. A miracle happens.

God in his sweet grace causes a miracle to happen in the heart and the person is born again. His spirit is quickened, he's made alive in Christ and he is told by God himself, his spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God and we can call almighty God, have a father. Except a man be born again.

Now this fellow, this woman sitting across from you in the cafe, over a cup of coffee, has let the Lord Jesus Christ give Christianity on his terms. Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you'll not enter the kingdom of heaven. Except you repent, you'll perish.

Except you be converted and become as a little child, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That's Christianity on Christ's terms.

Oh, it's so important for you to know the reality of what you've just gone through so that you can help the many that will come to you who desperately need help. Now let's just bow our heads in prayer for a moment and let's ask this question. If you were not to see the morning, if in the hours of this night you would be called to leave your body to die, as you know your own heart and as you've heard the word of Christ, would you go to be with Him? Have you been born again? Have you become as a little child? Have you repented? Does your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? Or are you like them trusting in your church membership or your baptism or something else? You know your heart.

You know whether His Spirit is bearing witness with your spirit, that you are a child of God. You know. Well, what are you going to do about it? If you're not sure, what are you going to do about it? Hadn't you better do exactly what Christ required? And if you know, as most of you will and do, do you not see why it is so important to be able to help those whom you will meet, to learn what the Lord Jesus had to say about this most important subject in all the world, eternal life? Our Heavenly Father, there are only two kinds of people here tonight.

Those that have been born again by Thy Holy Spirit and those who have not. And those who have been born know that they are born of Thee. They have the witness within themselves and they know.

And those who don't know, who aren't certain, have every reason in the world to assume they haven't been and then to proceed to make certain that they are. We plead the precious blood of Christ over and upon this company. Oh, we're going to close and leave this hall in a few minutes, but we're not going to leave Thy presence.

Thou art going to be just as real in our bedrooms as Thou art here. And Lord, Thou art quite able to awaken us from sleep, cause us not to find pleasure and rest in our pillows, because we've got something of far greater importance than another night's rest. We've got to deal with matters of eternal importance.

And so we're asking now that Thou will seal the word to every heart. Just plant it there. Seal it there, Lord.

Lay it upon us like something that's put into our hearts. And there let it do its gracious work. And we ask Thee, Father, for those that are here that have discovered perhaps for the first time that they've not passed from death to life, that this will be the night when they set their hands to this plow of truth and are not content until they know with the knowing that passes guess and assumption that they have been born into Thy family and can call Thee Abba, Father.

So to that end, seal the word, seal the truth, move in our hearts, do Thy work in our lives, and we'll give Thee all the praise in the peerless, matchless name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen and amen. Amen.

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