

“HE WAS CRUCIFIED AND ROSE AGAIN”  
Romans 5:1-11, I Corinthians 15:3-8, John 5:21-29  
September 2 & 3, 2023

“On day there was a tall man’s parade in the army. In the tall man’s parade, you had to be a certain height to be in the parade. In this particular barrack, there were three guys who wanted to go out and be a part of the parade. One was named Chubby. He was kind of short and plump. Another was named Jim. He was sort of midsized. The tallest of these three was named Slim, and he was fairly tall.

“Well, the officer came in and he put a mark on the door. The three guys had to back themselves up against the door to determine whether they could be in the tall man’s parade. Chubby looked at the mark and he didn’t even bother to stand by the door. He knew it was too high and he would never qualify. Jim figured he would give it a try. He backed up against the door, but alas, he was too short.

“Slim began to laugh at Chubby. ‘You tub of short fatness! You just couldn’t make it to the mark, could you? Sorry Jim. You just didn’t have enough genetic support, huh?’ Slim confidently backed himself up against the mark on the door.

“The officer came to check Slim’s height. ‘Sorry, Slim. You are one-eighth of an inch too short.’

“But wait a minute, what do you mean? I’m taller than Chubby!”

“I know, but you’re too short for the parade.’

“But I’m taller than Jim!’

“You’re right, but you’re too short for the parade.’

“But, I’m only a fraction of an inch too short!’

“The officer said, ‘You might as well be two feet too short! We can’t reduce the standard even if it’s by one-eighth of an inch.’

“You may be taller than your neighbor, but you’re too short for God. You may be taller than your co-worker, but you’re too short for God. You may be only one-eighth of an inch too short, but since God’s glory and His righteousness requires perfection, you might as well be a criminal on death

row. When it comes to the standard of God, nothing short of perfection is acceptable. Your best in the face of a holy God adds up to be zero.”<sup>1</sup>

That’s the situation we find ourselves in - hopeless on our own to gain our own salvation. Oh, we can compare ourselves with everyone else, but none of that is viable when we compare ourselves to God’s standards. And when we look at what is required for us to attain a place in heaven, none of us is able to measure up to God’s requirements because of our sin. God’s standard is absolute perfection, complete holiness in the life of a person. No one with even 1 sin is allowed in. God is very exclusive as to who He allows into His kingdom.

You see, God is holy and **cannot** tolerate **any** sin in His presence. So we cannot just show up in front of Him and expect anything else except the words, “Depart from me!” We have to first measure up to God’s criteria before we can stand in His presence. We have to have some way of removing the sin from our life and to be holy ourselves, before God will enable us to be with Him. And that’s the problem that we have. There is nothing that we can do on our own to become pure and holy. Just being better than the next person does not cut it. We have to have some way of removing all of our sin from us. However, we cannot pay enough to have that sin removed. We cannot work hard enough to earn it. We cannot be good enough to merit it. We cannot sacrifice enough to atone for it. There’s nothing we can do **on our own** to wipe away the sin from our lives so that we can stand in God’s presence. So what can we do?

Our first reaction is to recognize the standard is so high that we cannot possibly obtain it so we give up. We throw our hands into the air and say, “Since I can’t do it on my own, I’ll just stop trying,” and we go on living our lives any ole way that we want to, in complete rejection to God’s standards.

The second attempt is to compare ourselves with everyone else to see how we measure up. But as Slim found out, that doesn’t work. Since all of us are sinners in need of God’s grace, none of us is better off than the other because we all fall short of the glory of God. But we want to make ourselves

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<sup>1</sup> (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009] pg. 288-289, #865)

feel better, so we begin to judge others as to the degree of their sinfulness compared to our own. Those with greater sinfulness are worse than we are, so that helps us to feel better, but it still doesn't make any difference. We're still condemned by our own sinfulness, no matter how great or small that may be. Our judgement of others does not make us better than another. We're all lost when we try to obtain heaven all on our own.

The third way that we use to try to gain heaven is that we attempt to reduce the standards of God so that we CAN obtain heaven. Based upon our own perceived righteousness, we try our best to manipulate God's standards in order to determine on our own what is holy and what is not. So we search the Scriptures and we make our own judgements as to what is right and what is wrong. No matter if God says something is wrong or not, we make our own determination about how we obtain heaven, and we put that out as the new standard by which we are to live by.

But that doesn't work, either. It is not by our standards that we can achieve a place in God's kingdom. It is only by God's standards that He decides who can be involved in His kingdom.

However, there is a way for us to obtain the salvation of our sins. It's not by our own doing, but rather by God's doing. God saw that we could not reach His standards of perfection to gain eternal life with Him all on our own, so instead of changing the standards of His holiness to allow us the possibility to accomplish redemption on our own, He made a new way for us to find the elimination of our sins and be able to stand before Him blameless and perfect. He established a perfect Sacrifice for us, so that as we commit ourselves to His sacrifice, we would find complete forgiveness of all of our sins.

Now, throughout the whole Old Testament of the Bible, the people sought favor with God, and God accepted the sacrifices of animals and grains and wine to atone for the sins of the people. But that did not make up for their sinfulness. The sins of the people were imputed onto the animals, and the animals were put to death, paying the price for that sin. However, since the people were not always able (or willing) to offer these sacrifices, their sins were not redeemed, and they were not able to find forgiveness. So many of them simply gave up and chased after idols as their god.

So the Lord God Almighty established a new sacrifice that would be available for all people, all of the time, and once and for all. He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to the earth to become like us in every way, except for sin. He is perfect in every way, and teaches us about the standards of God. And then He gave His life as the perfect sacrifice.

And we hear that in the next section in our study of the Nicene Creed which states, “For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered death and was buried. On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.” This is our statement of faith, recognizing the work that Jesus did on our behalf, since we are incapable of gaining salvation on our own.

The Apostle Paul put it well in His writing to the people of Rome. He says in Romans, chapter 5, “*You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly... God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Rom. 5:6 & 8). God saw us in our helpless condition, when we were powerless to free ourselves out of the depths of our sin, and He provided the perfect Sacrifice to atone for all of our sin. So once more, God not only set the standards for access into heaven, but He now provides a way for us to reach those standards and be with Him when this life ends. God has made a way for us to find eternal life, and it is ONLY through Jesus Christ.

Nothing else bridges that chasm between God and humanity. It’s not through reincarnation, repeating life here on earth until we get it right. It’s not through personal sacrifice to wipe out the infidels. It’s not through ascetic behavior, separating ourselves from the sinfulness of the world. It’s not through indulgences paid to the church. It’s not through social witness programs of meeting the needs of the poor or speaking out for the unborn or the striving for justice for all peoples. It’s not by anything that we have done or can do. Salvation from our sins and from the penalty for that sin, which is eternal death, ONLY comes through Jesus Christ, who took all our sins upon Himself, was nailed to the cross

for those sins, and died for those sins as the perfect Sacrifice.

But just the fact that Jesus died to make it possible for us to find forgiveness does not bring salvation to everyone in the world. Just because Jesus died does not automatically make everyone clean and free from sin. No, we must believe that Jesus is God's perfect Son, our perfect sacrifice, and that His death on the cross was the propitiation of our sin. We must acknowledge that it was His death that became the ultimate sacrifice that, once and for all, paid for our sins. And we must accept Him into our lives as our Messiah and Savior.

Again Paul states it well in Romans 5. *"Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!"* (5:9-10). The only thing we can do to gain the forgiveness of our sins is to claim that Jesus is our Savior, our Messiah, who died and rose again to take our sins away. Only by letting Jesus become our Savior, do we find forgiveness of our sins and become pure and holy before the Lord.

You see, Jesus not only died to pay the price of our sins, He also rose again from the dead to demonstrate that we gain new life by trusting in Him. His appearance to the 12 disciples, His appearance to the 500 believers in Jerusalem, His appearance to James and all the apostles, and last of all, His appearance to Paul (I Corinthians 15:3-8) proved that Jesus was indeed risen from the dead, having purchased our pardon on the cross. His resurrection from the dead is what gives us hope.

And it was His perfect blood, shed on the cross, poured out onto the ground for the sins of the people, that bridged the chasm of separation between God and us. It is only as we claim Jesus as our Savior that we are able to come back into the presence of the Lord God Almighty, covered and washed clean by His blood. So God no longer sees us in our sinfulness, but as we confess that Jesus is our Savior, God looks through the blood of Jesus Christ to see us, redeemed and made new creatures in Him (2 Cor. 5:17). We are forgiven and set free from the condemnation we once faced.

So when all of His work of Salvation was completed, Jesus returned to heaven and took His rightful place at God's right side as the Son of God. The disciples were witness to His ascension (Acts 1:9). And God has now given Him the power to judge the living and the dead.

I invite you to listen to Jesus' own words about the judgement of the world. This is John 5:21-29. (READ John 5:21-29)

Since Jesus is the perfect sacrifice who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29), He is the avenue from death to life. God sent Him into the world in order for each of us to escape eternal death. Yet the choice is ours as to what we will do with Jesus Christ. We, in essence, are the ones who bring life or death to ourselves as we either trust in Jesus as the Savior, or we reject Him as the Savior. That one choice determines what happens to us. *"Very truly I tell you,"* Jesus says, *"whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life...those who have done what is good (claiming Jesus as their Savior) will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil (rejecting Jesus as the Savior) will rise to be condemned."* (John 5:24 & 29). But it is our choice to believe in Jesus.

So "what does it mean to believe in Jesus Christ? (Let me explain it this way.) If I'm on a luxury liner that is sinking, I should want to get off of the luxury liner and get to safety. If the crew calls out to me and says, 'The ship is sinking. Get in the lifeboat so you'll be saved from drowning in the ocean,' that is good news in a bad situation. The lifeboat can save me from death.

"Now, I could say, 'I know there's a lifeboat, but I'm going to take my chances. I'm going to stay on the big boat. I'm a little uncomfortable with the lifeboat. I heard what the crew is telling me to do, but I want to try another way.' If I say this, it wouldn't be because I don't know there is another way. I will be choosing, however, not to accept what I know.

"There may be another person who says, 'Well, if the captain said to get in the lifeboat, I am going to get in the lifeboat.' (But their choice cannot save you. Each person makes their own choice.)

"Believing in the Bible is not merely accepting information. It is entrusting yourself to the

information that you say you accept. In other words, there is no belief until I get into the lifeboat.

“Talking means nothing. I could say ‘Oh, that lifeboat sure looks good. I believe that lifeboat can save somebody. I believe that lifeboat is more than able. I believe that lifeboat is the wheel in the middle of a wheel. I believe that lifeboat is so high you can’t get over it, so low you can’t get under it, and so wide you can’t get around it. I believe that lifeboat is the Rose of Sharon, the Balm of Gilead, and the Bright and Morning Star.’ I could say all of this and still drown in the ocean if I don’t get into the lifeboat!

“To tell me you believe that pew you’re sitting in can hold you up is meaningless until you sit down. It is the sitting down; it is the act of faith that equals real faith, not merely the discussion about faith. How you know that you’re acting in faith? Simple - you reject everything but Christ to save you. You only trust in Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup> He is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no one comes to the Father except by Him (John 14:6).

So it is Jesus who is the pillar of judgement against us. He, as God’s avenue to eternal life, stands as the benchmark to our salvation. What we do with Jesus determines whether we face forgiveness or condemnation. Having Jesus as our Savior is the requirement to receiving entrance into heaven. He has put His banner out for the whole world to see so that each person makes up their own mind as to how they will respond to God’s gift of Salvation.

But this choice is not just a once and done deal. Yes, we have to come to the conclusion that Jesus is the Savior, but we must then open our hearts to Him and let Him live in us. It becomes an every-day decision as to whether we will let Jesus be our Savior for that day. It becomes a minute by minute, second by second decision as to whether we will let Jesus live in us throughout that day. When we say we trust Jesus to be our Savior, we no longer belong to ourselves, but we are now His, and we are inviting Him to rule in our life with everything that we say and everything that we do. That’s what it means to have Jesus not only as Savior, but also as Lord of our life.

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<sup>2</sup> (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, pg. 265, #795)

This means that we give up on our own aspirations for life, and claim what He has for us to do. It means that we give up our own desires in life, to follow His will and His way for us. It means that we sign off on all of the things of the world, and we sign onto all of the things of God. It means that we desire to live in such a way as to follow all of the laws and commandments of the Lord God Almighty, no matter what others tell us how we are to live.

You see, this decision of having Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord goes way beyond this life. The kingdom of God is not just during the years that we live here on the earth, but is for eternity. And when we put our trust in Jesus Christ to be our Savior, the One who saved us from our sins and grants us forgiveness and redemption, He goes with us throughout our lives here, AND takes us to be with Him in the Father's house. And it's all because of His perfect, loving sacrifice for us through His crucifixion and resurrection, that we will be welcomed into God's presence with rejoicing.

It's not because we're better than someone else. It's not because we're more special than another person. It's not because we're privileged. It's not because of our skin color, or our education, or our status in the community, or our economic rank. It's not because of any position we hold, or any popularity we might have. It's not because of our nationality or ethnicity. Our salvation from sin and death to righteousness and eternal life comes only by what we do with Jesus Christ, who gave of Himself so that we might have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10). Chose Jesus. Choose life! Let's pray.

Father, Thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Out of love for us, He came here to be with us so that we might have hope beyond this world, for eternal life through the forgiveness of our sins. Thank You that He was willing to take our place on the cross, die our death, and pay the penalty that we owed because of our sin. Because He suffered, we can have life. Because He died and rose again we are redeemed. Because He ascended back to heaven, we know that He will return to judge the living and the dead. Thank You that we can let Him be our Savior so that we might live in Him and He in us, for Your glory. We pray this in the mighty Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.