

# Christ's Call for Sinners

by Al Martin

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*Jesus Christ calls people to repentance because they are sinners and need to turn away from their sins and towards God.*

**Duration:** 1:02:55

**Scripture:** Luke 5:27

**Topics:** "Sinners"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher expresses his desire to serve God and acknowledges the mercy and salvation he has received. He specifically addresses young people, emphasizing the importance of true faith and repentance. The preacher urges the congregation to reflect on their personal experiences of coming to understand their sinful nature and their need for God's forgiveness. He highlights various ways in which individuals may have encountered the gospel message, such as through Christian upbringing, exposure to biblical knowledge, or through unexpected circumstances. The preacher concludes by emphasizing the power of the gospel and the necessity of genuine transformation in the lives of believers.

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## Transcript

Will you turn with me, please, to the Gospel according to Luke, Luke's Gospel, Chapter 5. Luke's Gospel, Chapter 5, and I shall begin the reading at verse 27 and read through verse 32. Luke, Chapter 5 and verse 27. Speaking of our Lord Jesus, Luke writes, And after these things he went forth, and beheld a publican, or tax-collector, named Levi, sitting at the place of Tob, and said unto him, Follow me.

And he forsook all, and rose up, and followed him. And Levi made him, that is, Jesus, a great feast in his house. And there was a great multitude of tax-collectors and of others that were reclining at table with them.

And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with the tax-collectors and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are in health have no need of a doctor, but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Tonight marks the third message in a brief series that I have entitled Simple Signposts to the Celestial City.

In John Bunyan's immortal work, Pilgrim's Progress, he uses the phrase the Celestial City as a synonym for heaven, that place of eternal blessedness and glory where the Scriptures tell us God will dwell in his

immediate manifest presence with all of his children forever and forever. The Celestial City is the place where there will be no more crying, no more sorrow, no more tears, no more death. And taking John Bunyan's terminology for heaven, namely the Celestial City, we are considering some simple signpost to the Celestial City.

Now I'm conscious that in a real sense the whole of the Bible is one massive signpost to the Celestial City. For the Apostle Paul could say to Timothy in his second letter in chapter 3, Timothy, from a babe you have known the sacred writings which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All of the sacred Scriptures point us to that way of entrance to the Celestial City.

However, within the Bible God has given us a number of brief statements, those things that we call texts or verses, which capture in a few words the very heart of the whole message of the Bible with respect to this great and burning question, how can I attain to the blessedness of the Celestial City? How can I know the way for certain to that place of blessedness? And tonight we focus our attention upon the third of these simple signposts to the Celestial City, and it is comprised of the words of Jesus Himself in Luke 5 and verse 32, where He said, I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. This simple signpost contains three unmistakable assertions. And if you are serious about attaining heaven, then listen to the One who came from heaven to tell us how to go to heaven.

For it is none other than He who came out of heaven who is telling us the way to heaven. If you are serious about arriving at heaven, receive with meekness. Not my words, but the words of Him who made the only way to heaven, and who Himself tells us of that way.

What then are the three unmistakable assertions that we see etched on this simple signpost pointing us to the Celestial City? In these words, I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, I have said there are three unmistakable assertions that constitute the printing on this particular simple signpost to the Celestial City. The first assertion is this, that only those who know and feel their true condition as sinners will ever be saved by Jesus Christ. Only those who know and feel their true condition as sinners will ever be saved by Jesus Christ.

Listen to His words. I am not come to call the righteous, but, the words I am come assumed, I am come to call sinners to repentance. I am come to call sinners.

And in those words, Jesus Christ is asserting that only those who know and feel their true condition as sinners will ever be saved by Him. Now in these words, is Jesus saying that there are actually some men and women, some boys and girls who are naturally natively righteous, or who on their own strength make themselves righteous? When He said, I am not come to call the righteous, is He saying that there are actually some human beings, boys, girls, men and women of various ages, from various ethnic and racial and social and economic backgrounds, who are inherently righteous and therefore do not need the saving call of Jesus Christ? Why, of course, our Lord is not saying that, and that for two reasons. First, it would contradict the whole teaching of the Bible in general, and it would contradict the teaching of Jesus Himself in particular.

If Jesus were saying that there are some people who are natively, inherently, naturally righteous, or who have by their own efforts made themselves righteous and therefore fit for heaven, it would contradict the whole teaching of the Bible in general. For example, in Romans chapter 5 and verse 12, the Apostle Paul, writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, concerning God's saving work in Jesus Christ, tells us, Romans 5, 12, Therefore, as through one man, referring to Adam, sin entered into the world, and death through sin,

and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned. How could language be plainer than this? Through one man, sin entered into the world, and through the one man, Adam, that sin that entered the world did not extend to and touch some men, many men, most men, but it says it passed unto all, for all sinned.

And when did all sin? All sinned in our first father Adam. God who created Adam determined that Adam should stand as the representative of the entire human race. He didn't consult you.

He didn't consult me about this arrangement. There is no indication He consulted angels and seraphim and cherubim. He consulted only Himself.

And He determined that if Adam were to stand in his integrity and not sin against God, all those who would come from Adam would have cashed in on that integrity. God also determined that if Adam disobeyed and fell into sin, the entire human race would fall into sin in him and with him. And therefore the Scripture says, through the one man, sin entered into the world, and death passed unto all men, for that all sinned.

Earlier in this very epistle to the Romans, Paul declared in Romans 3 and verse 23, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The prophet Isaiah, 800 years before, declared it in the language of Isaiah 53, 6, when he wrote, all we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one of us to His own way.

Now, dear people, could language be plainer? All we like sheep have gone astray, all without exception. We have turned every one of us to His own way. And so much is this the overarching teaching of the Bible, that when John, the great apostle of love, writes his first epistle, he is bold enough to say in chapter 1, anyone who denies his sinfulness is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

He is out of touch with reality. If any man says, I have not sinned, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him. So when Jesus said, I have not come to call the righteous, He was not inferring, He was not suggesting, He was certainly not teaching that there are some men and women, boys and girls, who are inherently, natively righteous, or who have, by their own power, made themselves righteous.

That would contradict the whole teaching of the Bible in general. It would contradict the teaching of Jesus Himself in particular. You'll remember, those of you familiar with Luke's Gospel chapter 11, where our Lord is giving a lesson on prayer.

He says in verse 13, If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? He says, if you, being evil, He doesn't say, if you happen to be one of those who is evil, He assumes that all to whom He speaks are inherently evil. If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts, how much more? When He gave what we commonly call the Lord's Prayer, the prayer for His children, those who have been adopted into God's family, what does He assume in that prayer? That even His children sin and sin daily. He said, when ye pray, say, Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Then we are taught to pray for what? Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

He assumes that even His children will sin daily, and that they are in a community of others who will sin, and therefore they both need forgiveness and must extend forgiveness. No, in this passage, our Lord is not teaching that there are some men and women, boys and girls, who are inherently, natively righteous, or who can make themselves righteous. Remember the setting of this story? Jesus spoke these words in response to the murmuring of a group who are described as the Pharisees.

The Pharisees were the official religious leaders of our Lord's day. And one of the marks of the Pharisees was their total ignorance of their true spiritual state. They thought that if you went to the right place, i.e. the temple, at the right time, the special hours of sacrifice and of prayer, and you did the right thing in the right way, everything was all right.

And Jesus called them whitewashed sepulchres. Jesus said they were like sepulchres that had been freshly whitewashed, and when the sun shone upon them you were dazzled with their brilliance. But He said, roll away the stone and stick your head in, and you'll smell the rotting flesh, or you may see the bones, He says, full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

He said, you're like someone who spends all of his hours polishing and cleaning the outside of a cup and a platter, but service after service, week after week, month after month, you never wash the inside, and it's all filled with layers of dried soup and tea leaves, and who knows what else that turns your stomach. Jesus said, that's what you Pharisees are like. You see, it was that crowd that was disturbed that Jesus was eating in the presence of notorious sinners.

It was in that setting that He said, I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. In other words, there will always be people like the Pharisees, who in their own eyes are righteous. Turn please to the 18th chapter of Luke, for this graphic picture of the mindset of a Pharisee.

Luke chapter 18 and verse 9. And He spoke also this parable unto certain, now notice, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and said all others it not. Here were people who trusted in themselves. They thought they were righteous based on what they were and what they did.

And Jesus is going to expose the foolishness of such notions. Two men went up into the temple to pray. The one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself. God, I thank You. That is a good start.

To start with thanks. But that is about the only good thing in His prayer. I thank You.

Not that You have forgiven me, a hell deserving sinner. But He says, I thank You, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. What he is saying is, God, I thank You, I am not a sinner.

That is what he is saying. I thank You, the rest of mankind. That is the rabble.

They are the sinners. But not this Pharisee. He brings his feathers in the presence of deity.

I thank You, I am not as the rest of men. Then he goes on to tell God what he has done. If there is anything lacking in what he is, in and of himself, he says, I make it up by what I do.

I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I get. But the tax collector, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast saying, God, be merciful, be propitious.

Turn away your wrath from me, not a sinner. Remember, in the original there is the definite article. Turn away your wrath from me, the sinner.

Now, notice what Jesus says. I say unto you, this man went down to his house justified. He went down to his house with his sins forgiven.

He went down to his house with a title to heaven, rather than the other. That Pharisee came to the temple on his way to hell. He prayed his prayer and went down to his home, still on his way to hell.

Why? He had no heart, knowledge, and felt experience of his true condition as a sinner before God. And Jesus said, I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Only those who know and feel their true condition, as sinners, will ever be saved by Jesus Christ.

Now, that's the first assertion on this simple signpost. And based upon it, I want to ask you some very personal questions. Men, women, boys and girls.

Where? When? By what means did God bring you to see and to feel your true condition as a sinner? Was it by means of the gradual impartation of biblical knowledge in a Christian home, where as you learned the law of God and the ways of God, and were carried to the house of God and heard the truth of God, your conscience began to feel the light of the word and the law, and you became, perhaps at a very early age, conscious that I am a sinner. I know I've offended God. And though people look at me and call me a nice little boy and a nice little girl because Mommy and Daddy won't let me cuss and tell dirty jokes and talk back and smart mouth the neighbors and run across the neighbor's lawn and stick my tongue out at them if they dare to say anything to me.

Everybody thinks I'm a nice little guy, a nice little gal. But I know that in my heart, I've got a heart that's full of lies, that's full of deceit, and full of pride and full of stubbornness. Maybe God brought you to know and feel yourself to be a sinner in a gradual way through the combined influence of a Christian home and a gospel preaching, Bible preaching church.

It may be that like this Pharisee, you were religious and moral and upright and your external life was rocking along in the cursed spirit of self-deception. And God used a set of circumstances to hedge you up and to get you to think about heaven and hell and am I ready to meet a holy God. And maybe through a radio broadcast, through a tape, through someone handing you a book that contained the gospel, it was like the bursting forth of the bright light of a noonday sun through clouds that had enveloped the heavens.

And suddenly and almost with shock to your system, you saw that your whole sandcastle of righteousness was just that in one wave of the light of Holy Spirit conviction just blew it all out to sea. But you see, my concern is not whether it was gradual in the more ordinary means of a Christian home and sitting under the gospel or a sudden and unusual intervention of God. My question is this, my friend.

Have you been brought to know and feel your true condition as a sinner before God? Do you know yourself to be and do you own without reservation what God says you are? A sinner in Adam. A sinner by practice. A sinner in your nature.

A sinner in your practice. A sinner in your desires. A guilty sinner.

A bound sinner. An enslaved sinner. Yes, the Bible even says you have been made alive who were dead.

In your trespasses and sins. On this signpost to the celestial city, Jesus has forever etched with His own words this great assertion. Only those who know and feel their true condition as sinners will ever be saved by Jesus Christ.

And we're told in our day that we must not tell people they are sinners. That's very damaging to their self-esteem. My friend, listen to me.

The day of judgment will be very damaging to self-esteem. When Almighty God takes in hand every proud, self-righteous man, woman, boy or girl who would not own what God said about them and God convinces them before the whole moral universe that they are infinitely worthy of hell and says, depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire. That's the eternal bruising of self-esteem.

I'd rather have my deceptive self-esteem bruised by Holy Ghost conviction now than have it eternally shattered in the day of judgment. But shattered it will be now by Holy Spirit conviction or then by eternal rejection. Don't pride yourself if you can strut about saying, God, I thank you, I'm not as others.

Cry to God that He would by His word show you that indeed you are a sinner worthy of God's judgment and His wrath. That you are a sinner in Adam. A sinner in nature.

A sinner in practice. For the Scripture tells us in 1 Timothy 1.15 this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance Christ Jesus came into the world sinners to save. There is no rationale for the coming of the Son of God apart from real, rotten, stinking, human sinnerhood.

There is no gospel without owning the reality of real, rotten, stinking, hell-deserving sinnerhood. But then there's a second assertion on this simple signpost. Not only does it tell us that only those who know and feel their true condition as sinners will ever be saved by Jesus Christ.

But it asserts a second thing. It tells us that Jesus Christ Himself and Jesus Christ alone can save sinners from their sins. This signpost tells us as its second assertion that Jesus Christ Himself and Jesus Christ alone can save sinners from their sin.

Look at the text again. Luke 5 and verse 32. I am not come to call the righteous but again I remind you the words I am come to call sinners to repentance.

And here are the key words. Notice He doesn't say, I will give sacraments that sinners may come to repentance. I will give priests or ministers that people may come to repentance.

I will give rituals and institutions and forms and rituals. No. He said, I in my person have come that I in my person might call sinners to repentance.

You see, He is speaking of the great reality that Jesus Christ Himself and Jesus Christ alone can save sinners from their sin. And in those little words, I am come is bound up all of the glorious gospel mystery of what happened in Mary's womb. None of us would dare say, I am come with respect to our entrance into this world.

We would say, I was born on such and such a date, and as I grew up and as I listened to the counsel of others and sought to know my own capacities, I chose such and such a calling in life. But only if we are demented or under a demonic spirit of cursed, hellish pride would we ever dare say, I am come. For if you trace those words through the Scriptures, you find at times Jesus adds these words to them.

I am come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me. I am come down from heaven. Bound up in these words is His consciousness of His eternal preexistence as the second person of the Godhead.

The one described in John 1, 1, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. This Word became flesh.

He didn't cease to be the Word. The Word was God. God became flesh.

God takes to Himself something He never had before, while never ceasing to be what He had always been. I am come contains the mystery of what happened in Mary's womb when by the power of the Holy Spirit, the second person of the Godhead took to Himself a true human soul and body. And there in the normal nine-month development until the fullness of the times as it is described in Galatians 4, in the Gospel narrative, it tells us that when her time to bring forth the Child came, she brought Him forth.

I am come involves the mystery of the One who is as much God as though He were never man. As much a man as though He were never God. United in the one person.

Two distinct natures in the one person. I am come involves not only the mystery of what happened in Mary's womb, but all of the marvelous realities of that life that was so human, so vulnerable, and yet so utterly, utterly spotless. The Scripture says He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.

He could look His most bitter enemies in the eye and said, which one of you can convict me of sin? I do always the things that please My Father. I am come. And in those words is the mystery of what happened in Mary's womb.

The wonder and the marvel of that holy life. The wonder and the marvel of that amazing ministry. I am come.

And He opened the eyes of the blind, unstopped the ears of the deaf. He raised the dead with one word. Lazarus, come forth! And Lazarus came forth.

Death itself could not stand before His omnipotent voice of power. I am come. I am come in all the uniqueness of My person.

In all the validation of My identity. I am come points us to the uniqueness of His work. For in other passages He said, I did not come to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give My life a ransom for many.

Matthew 20, 28. I am come to give My life a payment to buy back slaves to sin at the price of My own life, the pouring out of My own precious blood. None can do it for Me.

There is no proxy ransom available. I, as we heard this morning in our reading from John 12, I, Jesus said, as the Good Shepherd lay down My life for the sheep, I have power to lay it down. I have power to take it again.

No one takes it from Me. I lay it down of Myself. You see, packed into these words, I am come to call sinners to repentance is the great truth on our signpost that Jesus Christ Himself and Jesus Christ alone can save sinners from their sins.

Jesus Christ in all the uniqueness of His person as the God-Man. Jesus Christ in all the wonder and marvel of the validation of His identity as God's Messiah. Jesus Christ in the perfection of His work of a perfect life, a sin-bearing, sin-atoning death, a glorious, triumphant resurrection.

That's why when Joseph was scratching his head and if he had a beard, stroking his beard, wondering what to do, when he discovered that Mary, the woman to whom he was engaged, was pregnant, wondering what course of action he should take according to the ancient law of Moses, an angel appeared

to him as recorded in Matthew 1.21 and said, I fear not to take unto you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit, and she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He it is that shall save His people from their sins. Now, dear people, could language be plainer? The angel said, Joseph, Joseph, take her to be your wife. She's not pregnant because of some shameful unfaithfulness behind your back.

The Spirit of God has brooded over her womb. She has been marked out by God the Father to be the human instrument through which God the Son will come into the world enfleshed. And Joseph, this is necessary, for He it is, His person, not His church, not His ministers, not His sacraments, not His rituals, He it is that shall save, rescue His people from their sins.

Jesus is echoing those words, I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Now, having seen that second assertion on this simple signpost, let me ask you again a personal question. Where, when, by what means did God bring you to the conviction that Jesus Christ Himself and Jesus Christ alone can save you from your sins? Where, when, by what means were you brought to the conviction that I need a Savior who can bring to His savoring work all of the might and power of the arm of omnipotence and undiminished deity, while having all of the vulnerability and all of the weakness and all of the possibility of suffering both temptation and even death to give meaning and worth to His sacrifice? Where, when, and by what means did you come to the conviction that your sin is so bad and your state so hopeless that nothing less than the God, Man, Christ, Jesus can answer to your need? That's true.

That's reality. And if you've never been brought to that conviction, you're living in a never-never land of self-deception. I don't care if you're 3, 30, or 90.

Because that is reality, my friend. If there were any other way, would God have sent His Son to the confines of a young maiden's womb to have His life sustained by an umbilical cord? To have to toddle around a house and learn His Hebrew alphabet? And go off to Hebrew school and learn the books of the Bible? And be subjected to the dust and to the dirt and to the foul language of the village of Nazareth? And to labor beside His dad in a carpenter's shop? And later on, as we read this morning, to be said that He was demon-possessed? To have it said of Him, say Me not well that Thou art a Samaritan and hast a demon? And to have His own friends think He was out of His tree? For on one occasion, He was so consumed with zeal to minister to others that He was skipping His normal mealtimes. And it says His friends said that He had a few bricks less than a full load.

My friends, I ask you, from a reasonable standpoint, would God subject His Son to all of that? If there were another way to rescue you and me from our sins? But then go further and behold the Son of God in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Father holding up the cup of His wrath against the sins of men. And the Son of God beholding that cup falls upon His face in the dampness and coolness of that night before His crucifixion.

And He wrestles with such agony that He sweats, as it were, great drops of blood crying out in agony of soul, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done. And go on to those scenes where they spat upon Him, beat Him with their fists, beat Him with clubs, mocked Him, pressed the crown of thorns upon His brow, shoved Him, bloodied Him out to a place called Golgotha, hung Him upon a cross.

And then God shrouds the heavens in inky black darkness and gives His Son the horrible felt experience of all of the withdrawing of His own felt communion with Him until He cries in agony, My God, my God, why

have You forsaken Me? My friends, look, let's take our Bibles and trash them and just go out and live like the devil and die and go to hell. There's not something more to all of this than just going to church and going to rituals and forms and ceremonies. This was real enfleshment of deity.

This was real suffering in Gethsemane. This was real agony upon Golgotha. It was real pangs of forsakenness that He felt in the depths of His soul.

Why? Because Jesus Christ Himself and Jesus Christ alone can save sinners from their sin. Jesus Christ in the uniqueness of His person. Jesus Christ in the perfection of His work.

And this is why the Apostle Peter proclaimed in Acts 4.12, Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. You see, that's very narrow. No more narrow than Christ Himself.

We considered His words in the first signpost to the celestial city. I am the way. Not one of many ways.

I am the way, the truth, and the light. No one comes to the Father but by Me. And when Peter stood and preached saying neither is there salvation in any other, he was merely echoing the words of his Savior.

My friend, we stand by a simple signpost to the celestial city. It's made up of these words of Jesus. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

And in those words, assertion number one, only those who know and feel themselves to be sinners will ever be saved by Jesus Christ. Assertion number two, Jesus Christ Himself and Jesus Christ alone can save sinners from their sins. Thirdly and finally on that signpost there is another assertion, and it's this.

Jesus Christ saves sinners by calling them to repentance. Look at our text. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

This right after He had stated they that are healthy have no need of a doctor, but they that are sick. What is the divine medicine for sin sick souls? Jesus says, it is My calling them to repentance. The divine remedy for sin sick souls that Jesus Christ Himself imparts is calling them to repentance.

You see, He does not save sinners by making them into Pharisees. That is, by stroking people and telling, you're okay, I'm okay, everybody's okay, feel good about yourself. My friends, listen, this feel good about yourself religion that is being propagated in every level of our society is a damning lie.

Until you feel so bad about yourself that you're ready to go totally out of yourself to another, you'll never be saved. And feeling bad about yourself is not making up a story. It's just facing reality.

That's all it is. And Jesus Christ saves sinners by calling them to repentance, not by making them into Pharisees who feel good about themselves and preen themselves and say, thank you God, I'm not like other men. And if there's any deficiency in what I am, then Lord, look at what I do.

I've been baptized, I've joined the church, I take the sacrament. My friends, don't insult God with such trinkets. He's not impressed.

Remember, this is the God who punished His Son upon the cross. What do you think? You're holding up your little report card of how many wafers you took and how many times you went to communion and how many times you went to Sunday school. What does that mean in the face of a God who poured out His

wrath upon His Son upon the cross? Don't insult God by throwing your little cheap trinkets in His face when He purchased sinners at the price of the blood of His own Son.

Don't try to impress God with your trinkets. The way Jesus Christ saved sinners is by calling them to repentance, not making them into Pharisees, not making them into intellectual adherents who will subscribe to the tenets of the Christian faith intellectually. No.

And not by causing them to just go through a ritual of decision. Raise a hand, pray a prayer, I'm alright forever. My friend, more people are going to hell out of decision rooms than probably any other place other than bar rooms and whorehouses.

They go straight to hell out of decision rooms where they pray a little prayer that they parrot, that someone puts in their mouth, and then they get absolution. You prayed the prayer? Yes. You were sincere? Or somebody will say, no, I was faking it.

Of course they're going to say I'm sincere. Then they pat them on the back and say, well, now if you meant it, you're saved. Don't ever doubt it.

You're fixed up. And they don't know a thing about repentance. They don't know a thing about this medicine that Jesus gives to sick sinners.

What is this thing to which Jesus calls men? And in calling them to it, saves them. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Well, the best uninspired definition of repentance I've ever come across is in the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

What is repentance unto life? The answer is this. Repentance unto life is a saving grace whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin and apprehension is the old English word we would say a laying hold of the mercy of God in Christ does with grief and hatred of his sin turned from it unto God with a full purpose of an endeavor after new obedience. You see, repentance has several vital elements.

Vital element number one, it is never experienced except you have a true sense of your sin. That's why this signpost says, Only those who know and feel themselves to be sinners will ever be saved by Jesus Christ because only sinners know and feel the need to repent, to have a change of mind and attitude and affections and will with regard to their sins and with regard to the Savior. Repentance unto life is a saving grace whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin has the first element of true repentance but secondly, an apprehension, a laying hold of the mercy of God in Christ.

In other words, there's no true repentance if you only see God as a God of wrath and of judgment, a God of holiness and righteousness who will punish every sin. If that's all you know of God, you'll run from Him and cry as they will cry in the day of judgment for the rocks and the mountains to fall upon you and to hide you from the face of Him that sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. God in pure justice outside of Christ and His mercy is a frightening reality.

The Bible says our God is a consuming fire. It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Ah, but when I see that that living God who is a consuming fire so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, and I see that in the Lord Jesus a full atonement has been made for the sins of all and any who will come unto God through Christ that when Christ cried out upon the cross, It is finished! He meant that shout of triumph.

All that God's justice can ever demand of the sins of anyone who will believe upon Christ was fully met in the death of the Son of God. There's not the slightest evil thought. There is not the first twinge of an envious, dishonest, lustful thought the penalty of which was not fully paid by Jesus Christ upon the cross.

And in true repentance there is not only that sight and sense of our sin but the hope of mercy in a crucified, risen Savior. And in that hope of mercy how do I now treat my sin? Listen to the definition. He does with grief and hatred of it turn from it unto God.

Turns from His sin unto God. That's a vital element of repentance. Acts 20-21 falls as I preach repentance towards God.

Isaiah the prophet said, Seek ye the Lord while ye may be found. Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake His way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord.

For He will have mercy upon him and to our God. For He will abundantly pardon him. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 1-9, they themselves report of us, what entering in we had unto you, how you turned unto God from your idols to serve the living and the true God and to wait for His Son out of the heavens.

Dear people, repentance involves not only owning my sinnerhood and seeking to cast myself upon the only Savior of sinners, but it involves turning from my sin, turning from the disposition to be my own God and do my own thing and run my life by my own standards, live by my own rules. I turn from my sin with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience from henceforth. My heart's desire will be to serve the God who made me, the God who could have cut me off in my sins and cast me into hell, but spared me until He brought the message of life and salvation to me and inclined my heart to embrace that message.

What can I do in the face of such mercy but say, Dear Lord, I give myself away. Tis all that I can do. I want to speak a word especially to you dear young people, some of you that I have to call young men and women now.

It seems that just a few months ago, though it's been years, when you were part of the crowd that lined up and had to get your smooch and jumped up and straddled me and hugged me, and it seems all too quickly you've become young men, young women. I want to speak to you especially at this point. You know what will be one of the surest indications amidst all your struggles, saying, How much do I know and believe because Mom and Dad have told me? What's my faith? What's just like the clothes in my closet? They're there.

What's really mine? You go through that struggle, don't you? Don't you kids? Don't you? Sure you do. And if you haven't, you will. Here's one of the most helpful tests.

Listen to me now. Ask yourself this question. Cut through all of the matters of when was I saved or am I saved or am I not? Cut through all of that and ask yourself this question.

Do I see in God, revealed in Christ through the Bible, a being who is infinitely worthy of my undivided love, of my unrivaled allegiance, and is it my deepest purpose of heart to serve Him all the days of my life according to His will as revealed in the Bible? Kids, if you can say that, you're saved. If you can say that, you're saved. Because the Scripture says the carnal mind is enmity against God.

It is not subject to the law of God. Neither indeed can it be. And in your unsaved state, the more you learn of God, the more you really get irritated with what you know of God because you find He wants to stick His

nose into every aspect of your business.

It was bad enough when you were small and mom and dad told you God didn't want you to tell lies and didn't want you to kick your sister and poke your brother in the eye and God didn't want you to cheat at school. Then you began to get older and began to feel your hormones and your hormones stirring throughout all of your humanity. And then they began to tell you you didn't have the right to use your sexual appetites as you chose.

They had to be reined in and harnessed and kept for God. And you said, what is this? And brought up with a God that tells me I can't do what the other kids do and I can't be where the other kids are. And now I'm told I can't brag about making it for the first time.

I can't brag about being deflowered and get together with the gals in the locker room and talk about how the guys made it with them. And down underneath you resent such a God. That's a mark you're as lost as the devil.

You can give the Bible, books of the Bible, Genesis to Revelation, forward and backward, quote a thousand verses. But when you hate the law of God, when it touches you in your sexual appetites, touches you in your social relationships, touches you in your relationship to mom and dad, you're lost as the devil. I don't care how much you know and what you profess.

But if you can honestly say, kids, I love the God I've come to know. At my mom and dad's feet and in this church and in my Sunday school class, I see that God is worthy of a thousand energies more than I have to give Him. I see Him worthy if I had a thousand hands to serve Him and a thousand teeth to serve Him and a thousand hearts to love Him.

I see Him as worthy of all of that in the light of what He's done in sending His Son to die for a hell-deserving sinner like me. Young person, if that is the honest disposition of your heart to God, you're a Christian. You're a Christian.

You've come to repentance. Jesus has given you the medicine and you've taken it. You say, but I don't know when I took it.

Who cares? Who cares? He's called you to repentance. And the medicine has worked. I tell you, I go to bed one night with a fever and a sore throat, take some antibiotic and wake up the next morning and feel good.

I'm not going to say I won't believe I'm feeling good unless I know at the precise hour the antibiotics kicked in and killed the little bad guys in my system and the good guys are in. I just know I feel better. Say, thank You, Lord, for blessing the medicine.

Whether it kicked in at 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock, 11, I could care less. Sore throat's gone, feel good. That's all that matters.

Dear young people, children, do you see what I'm saying to you? This is one of the great stumbling blocks that kids brought up as you are. But can you say that the God Mom and Dad served, the God of the Bible, is the God you love and you want to serve Him with all your heart? There is, you see, what the old catechism describes the full purpose of an endeavor after new obedience. Christ has called you to repentance.

And if He's called you, that disposition will not fade away, that disposition you won't relinquish for the face and for the body of a young woman that catches your fancy or a young man that is not godly, that is not a Christian, that you cannot court his or her interest with the approval of spiritually minded parents and elders and Christian friends. No, no, no! You will not sell your Savior for the form of a woman or the face of a young man. And when career opportunities come, you won't sell your Savior for big bucks so you can drive big cars and have a big house and a big name and strut around like a big shot.

You'll say, for me to live is Christ and nothing is worth selling my Savior for. That's the attitude of your heart. You're a Christian.

You're a Christian. You're a Christian! Christ has saved you by calling you to repentance. Well, we've looked at this very simple signpost to the celestial city etched in the very words of Jesus, I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

And in that signpost, three simple assertions, only those who feel and know themselves to be sinners will ever be saved by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ Himself and Jesus Christ alone can save sinners. Jesus Christ saved sinners by calling them to repentance.

Dear people, I have labored with every measure of strength and grace God has given me to preach with all my heart, to preach simply, to preach plainly, to preach with illustrations and applications that scratch where you itch. And yet I'm reluctant to close the service. You know why? Because I fear, as has happened so many other times, there'll be more than a handful who go out and say, so what's new? I haven't told you anything new.

It's been simple, basic gospel preaching. But my friend, if that does not become to you the power of God to salvation, it would be better that you've never been born. And if you're ready to go out now and say, so what's new? God have mercy on you.

And know that while you go out to try to drive out of your mind what you heard tonight, not a few of us, before we pillow our heads, will pray that you won't be able to sleep until what you've heard takes hold of your heart. And for those of us who by the grace of God could face those three assertions on this simple signpost, what a wonderful thing to be a Christian. Isn't it a wonderful thing to be a Christian? Let the world pity us for this is a bunch of weak-headed, weak-willed people who've got to lean on a book and who've got to lean on a Savior who aren't self-sufficient and self-important.

Let them pity us. Someday their mouths will open with wonder when the Lord Jesus bursts through the skies and the Scripture says an amazing statement. My wife and I were discussing it last week.

He comes to be glorified in His saints. Think of it. He's going to be glorified in me.

For me to be glorified in Him, I can understand. But for Him to be glorified in me? Yes. When He's done with me, angels are going to go, Look what God did for Albert N. Martin.

Look what God did for Vincent Bach. Look what God did. Look at them.

Look what God did. And God will be glorified in His saints. Oh, dear sinner friend, don't pity us.

Pity your poor, impoverished state. And give yourself no rest till in Christ you have what is ours in Him. Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank You for Your holy Word. We thank You for Your holy Gospel. We thank You for Your holy Son.

We thank You for Your holy Spirit. We thank You for Your holy Word. And we pray that the Word and the Spirit would so work through the Word that Your Son would by the mighty working of Your own power come to sinners this night, effectually calling them to repentance.

We pray especially for our dear young people, children and grandchildren, some of whom are deeply distressed about whether or not they are ready to die, whether they would enter the celestial city. Lord, use the preaching tonight to help them. Where they ought to be encouraged, may they be encouraged.

Where they ought to be convicted, Lord, convict them and give them no rest until they cry out like blind Bartimaeus, Son of David, have mercy upon me. Bless the preaching of Your Word to refresh the hearts of Your saints and to draw sinners to Yourself. We commit Your Word to Your care and to the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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