

# Your Wooden Jesus

by E.A. Johnston

---

*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding salvation and the difference between a wooden Jesus and the real Christ, highlighting the need for repentance, holiness, and a daily walk with God.*

**Duration:** 35:29

**Topics:** "False Gospel"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher criticizes the modern approach to evangelism, particularly the use of manipulative tactics to elicit donations. He emphasizes that true salvation comes from the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, not from human efforts or gimmicks. The preacher highlights the story of the Philippian Jailer in Acts chapter 16 as an example of genuine conversion through the intervention of God. He warns against the tendency to delay or manipulate salvation, stressing the importance of placing our lives in the hands of God rather than trying to control Him.

---

## Transcript

I heard Manly Beasley tell this story. He said that you could stand on a cliff in Mexico and gaze down at a certain village of Mexican workers. These people work down in the riverbed in their corn patch, and there they grow their corn.

And when the corn is ready to harvest, they shuck it, and after it dries out, they'll take it and grind it into cornmeal and make tortillas. And they'll take these tortillas down to the open market, and there sell the tortillas for a few pesos and put them away. They'll come back out to their houses, and there they'll live off of lizards.

They'll go out among the rocks and catch these huge long lizards and delete those lizards and save that money for a special day. A special day when they will start a pilgrimage to a wooden statue of Jesus up in the mountains. The terrain to that statue is so bad that most of the people will have to crawl on their hands and knees a couple of miles, and by the time they get to that statue, they are bleeding all over.

Standing beside the statue is a priest, and that priest is saying, now, you love God, give to Him, because you show your love to God by giving. And those people will reach into their little bags and purses and pull out those pesos stained with their own blood and drop that money in a slit in the top of the head of that wooden Jesus. Then the priest gives a prayer, and when he is finished, the priest will yell at them, you have not given enough.

Look, Jesus is sad. He is crying. And all that time, there'll be another priest hidden in that hollow statue, and with a little hand pump, he will pump water to where it comes out of human-made tear ducts, and that statue is crying.

And there those people will reach into their bags and give every last peso to that dead wooden Jesus. Then those people will crawl down that mountain and go back to eating lizards and growing their corn to make tortillas to get more pesos to give and sacrifice to a dead God that cannot move or hear, but they are quite content with their wooden Jesus. Now, we say that's a very sad story to serve a dead wooden Jesus, but I submit to you, many are doing the same today.

We in North America have taken out our pocket knives and have carved out for ourselves a little wooden Jesus to suit us, and we carry him around in our back pocket and take him out when we need him. We take him out and shake him like a African fetish to bless us, then we put him back into our hip pocket to keep him there. And that is what's happened to evangelism in our day.

Today, in this land, we have shrunken God down to our size or smaller, and we have denied the supernatural working of the Holy Ghost in salvation. And our greatest crime is that we have taken God and put him into the hands of men rather than placing men in the hands of God. Listen to me, your wooden Jesus won't save nobody, not even you.

Preachers today will butcher a passage of scripture like I heard a famous preacher do with Acts chapter 16 and the story of the salvation of the Philippian jailer. It is the text where Paul and Silas are in prison for their faith, and the text says, and at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them. And this big famous preacher said that the reason the Philippian jailer got saved was because he was impressed with their testimony, that there they were in jail and in chains, and they are singing and praising God, and that impressed the jailer so much he approached them and asked, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Well, that's all well and good for that big preacher to say that.

It makes a nice little story, but it's not true, and that's the problem with evangelism in our day. I submit to you that the jailer did not get saved because he was impressed with Paul and Silas's testimony. I say he got saved because the God of all creation made a great earthquake that shook the foundations of that prison, and God by his Holy Spirit shook the foundations of that wicked jailer's heart and showed him what a rebel he really was before a holy God.

That jailer did not casually walk up to Paul and Silas and pleasantly ask, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? No, Sir, the text says that he came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas and brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they didn't say, believe on Jesus Christ. They said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house. The trouble with us today, folks, is that few in the churches today know what biblical salvation is because we've been fed a counterfeit and we've swallowed hook, line, and sinker and we're sunk.

We preachers today have committed two crimes against people, and crime number one is we don't tell them the truth about what salvation is. We tell them that they can take Jesus as their savior and go to heaven without taking him as their Lord, that they can get saved and still stay in their rotten sins and still go to heaven. We don't tell them the truth about the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible.

Instead, we hand them a little wooden Jesus and say, now go sacrifice to him. He won't have any demands over you. You can carry that little wooden Jesus around with you and do as you please with your

life.

You can hug your sins. You can spend all your time on entertaining yourself and indulging yourself. You can hoard your money for a special day when you can retire to enjoy it for yourself because you worked hard for it and you deserve to get all you want out of life while you're here.

And if you get sick or if you get in trouble, we'll just take out your little wooden Jesus that you carved out for yourself and rub them and shake them and he will do wonders for you. And the second great crime we preachers have committed against the people of this generation is that we tell them that salvation is in their hands and they can take Jesus now or later because he is standing outside the door of your heart waiting to come in. And our response to that is, well, I think I'll wait and take Jesus later when I'm ready.

I want to do a little living first before I make that kind of commitment. And we're like Felix who told Paul, go thy way for this time when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. And we put salvation off until we are ready to have it because it is entirely in our hands to do with it what we choose.

If Jesus is patiently waiting at the door of our heart for us to let him in, then he'll still be there another day. We can decide what to do with him then. And that summarizes the gospel of our day.

God is in our hands and it's up to us to decide what to do with him. We can choose Jesus today or next year. It makes no difference for salvation is there for us to decide when to take it when we are good and ready.

The pulpits of America today tell us that we are sinners because we sin and we don't need to repent to be saved because we're not as bad as some others are. We're good little people who just need a savior and nothing more. But that's not so.

We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we're big sinners. And when we are asked, when we got converted, we can tell all about how 30 years ago we made a decision for Christ and our salvation is resting on that experience in the past, even if it does not affect our living today.

But I submit to you that if you are resting on a past experience instead of a present relationship, you are damned and on your way to hell. True salvation is this. It's a daily walk with God, a daily relationship, a daily repentance, a daily striving for holiness.

For without holiness, no one will see God. Salvation is a living union with the risen Lord where you hear his voice for his sheep hear his voice. Don't rest your salvation on a past experience.

Listen, Satan can give you an experience. He can send shivers down your spine and make you think it's heaven in you when it's really hell for you. We have traded in the Christ of the gospel with all his claims and demands for a friendly little wooden Jesus that suits us.

Your wooden Jesus won't save nobody. Now that's the end of my introduction. Now to the heart of today's message, which is what a full presentation of the gospel accomplishes.

The gospel presentation should answer the following four questions. Why? Who? What? And how? Why? Why you need a savior? Who? Who Christ really is? What? What his demands and claims are? How? How you can come to Christ savingly? Well, let's begin with the first question that the gospel should answer. Why? Why you need a savior? More often than not today when we present the gospel to a lost

person, we omit the most important reason why they should receive Christ as their savior.

We fail to tell them why they need a savior before we offer them the savior. The vast majority of people don't want Jesus because they feel no need of him. They are just fine without him.

But if we take the time to present the gospel in all its truths, then we can allow the gospel to answer the question why. Why they need a savior? Let me ask you right now. Why do you need a savior? Mold that over in your mind.

Your answer may fall short of what I'm about to tell you. You need a savior because you are ruined and you are a rebel against a holy God. You drink iniquity like it's water.

Because of the fall of Adam, you have a rude nature that is inclined to sin and is in rebellion to a holy God. Listen, friend, if you'd been in the Garden of Eden, you would have reached up there and tried to snatch God off the throne and sit there yourself because that's the kind of people we are. The Bible says we are dead and trespasses and sin and that we are under the condemnation of a holy God because of our sin condition.

And this puts all men outside of Christ in a perilous position. It is dangerous to be outside of Christ because your life is a vapor that appears for a little while and there is no promise of tomorrow. You can suddenly die without notice.

And if you die in your sins, you will go to a place of eternal punishment called hell. Jesus said hell was a place of outer darkness where the worm dieth not and that there be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Listen, friends, weeping speaks of great loss and regret and gnashing of teeth speaks of anger over opportunities lost and rejecting the Christ of the gospel while he was offered to you.

You need a savior because without him, you are exposed to the utter severity of God's holy law. And that means you have to be perfect to survive against his holy law. And you are not perfect.

And as God holds up his perfect law against your wicked heart and sinful nature, you will fail the test and be sent to hell unless you can claim the merits of Christ and his blood for forgiveness of sins and his righteousness in you to make you justified in the sight of a holy God. That is your only means of escape from hell's fire. People need a savior.

Without him, they go to hell. And the good news is there is a savior, amen? But be careful and be sure that you're trusting him and not a verse to save you. Few are saved by believing John 3.16, but you can be saved by believing on the person of John 3.16. Hear me now.

People need to be told why they need a savior before a savior is pressed upon them. If we don't tell people why they need a savior, they'll feel no need of him or casually take him, but not take him savingly. If we could just be honest enough with people and hold them up against God's severe law and warn them of the danger of facing a holy God on their own merits and how that holy law will kill them, then and only then can they be brought to see their need.

A person has no need of a doctor unless they learn of their sickness. If a man is shown the results of a blood test that he has a fatal disease and the doctor has a remedy or a treatment that will cure him, you better believe that man will be desperate enough to take that remedy so he can be saved from death. But today's evangelism offers the remedy of Jesus Christ before we show the patient why he needs him.

But if you show a sinner his lost and ruined condition and allow the Holy Spirit to work conviction in his heart, then he will see what he looks like beside a holy God and he will be like the prophet Isaiah and fall at his feet and say, I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips. You know the great British evangelist George Whitfield used to say that a sinner must be first brought to Mount Sinai before he can be brought to Mount Zion, and that's true.

So the first question that the gospel should answer is why? Why you need a savior? The next question the gospel should answer is who? Who Christ really is? Who is he? Is he a wooden Jesus that you have carved out for yourself, a little Jesus that'll be at your beck and call, but who won't bother you or put any demands on you? In the gospel presentation, we need to show them the Christ of the gospel, and the Christ of the gospel is a living Lord who sits on a throne and he got there by way of a bloody cross. Have you ever thought about what separates Christianity from other religions? Listen, Buddha lived, died, and was buried. Confucius lived, died, and was buried.

Muhammad lived, died, and was buried. Jesus lived, died, and was buried, but he rose again. We serve a risen Lord who reigns in glory.

All authority has been placed in his hands. Listen to what it says in John's gospel, as thou hast given him power over all flesh that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. He's not some little Jesus standing outside the door of your heart with his hat in his hand waiting for you to make a decision whether you will let him in or leave him out in the cold.

No sir, he's on a throne and your job is one thing and that is to repent and bow to him, but many refuse to acknowledge him as Lord and say with the Jews we will not have this man rule over us, and instead we have taken out a block of wood and our pocket knives and have cut Jesus and divided him into two halves, Savior and Lord, and we are more than willing to take the one Savior, but we are unwilling to surrender to him as Lord. See, we can still sit on the throne of our lives and rule there and believe we're going to heaven while we continue to live in our sins, and if we get in a jam we can just reach into our back pocket and take out our little wooden Jesus and shake him and ask him to bless us and help us, but listen friends, biblical salvation is this, it is dethroning ourselves and enthroning another. A sincere convert who is truly born again does two things when he's saved.

He wholeheartedly believes on him and wholly gives up himself to him who sits on a heavenly throne, and that brings us to the third question which the gospel should answer, and that is what, what his claims and demands are on a follower of his. Jesus demands repentance. He says unless you repent you shall likewise perish.

Now you can buck that, fight that, and ignore that, and go to hell, or you can repent, be saved, but he demands repentance. All you can do is bow to him, sinner, and repent, repent, repent. The Christ of the Bible told people to go and sin no more.

The Christ of the Bible speaks of his claims on a person's life who becomes his follower. Listen, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me, for whosoever shall save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. The Jesus of the Bible speaks of the demands of discipleship in following a crucified Savior, but your little wooden Jesus has no demands on you.

You don't have to endure hardship like a soldier, like Paul says. You don't want to take up a cross, much less get up on one, and mortify your sins, and pursue holiness, because when you are on the throne of your life, you can keep your little wooden Jesus in your hip pocket or in your purse, and take him out when it is convenient for you to bless you when you want a blessing, and ask for help when you need help. But other than that, your little wooden Jesus just better stay in your back pocket so he doesn't bother your plans for your life which you have whittled out for yourself without surrendering to the claims of Christ on your life.

And today the pulpits of this land call that salvation, and our crime is we've taken God and placed him in the hands of men rather than placing men in the hands of God. Hear me now, we must preach all the claims of Christ in the gospel. You cannot take Jesus savingly and ignore his command to take up your cross daily and follow him.

The heart of the gospel is that you be made exactly like the Lord. We see in 2 Corinthians how Paul speaks of this, but we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. If you are a Christian, then inward holiness is your main pursuit.

Listen to me, you want to be Christ-like. The Christian lives with a different purpose from the rest of the world. Paul tells us, and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.

We are told that as believers we are temples of the living God. A sinner needs to be confronted with the full gospel, complete with all the claims and demands of Christ on the sinner. We are to be overcomers, overcoming the world in sin and keeping the commandments of God in our daily lives.

But some argue with that and say we are saved by grace and not by law, the laws done away with. We agree with you that we're not saved by the law, but once you're saved you must keep God's law and obey his commandments in your daily living. Today we have the most lawless bunch of church members who do not want to agree with the word of God, which clearly says by this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep his commandments.

For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world? But he that believeth that Jesus is a son of God.

But that kind of teaching puts a cramp on our lifestyle. We don't like it. We'd have to give up our candy bar or favorite tv show.

We'd rather hug our sins and live our lives unto ourselves and carve out a little Jesus to suit us. But listen to me, you're you're what Jesus won't save nobody, not even you. The gospel speaks of the demands of discipleship and following a crucified savior.

The self-life has a cross in it. Galatians 2 20 explains that we are to live crucified lives. Listen, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me and the life which I live now live in the flesh.

I live by the faith of the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. This is salvation and you better put down your little wooden Jesus and listen to what true salvation means. It means you are dead to sin.

You are in a vital union with the risen living Lord. Listen to Colossians chapter 3 verses 1 through 3. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth, for ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ and God.

The translation on that is simply this. As a born-again believer, you've been bought with a price. Your life is not your own.

Your money is not your own. Your time is not your own. Your body is not your own.

Christ must become a complete master. You no longer have any rights. You are a bond slave to Christ.

Jesus said, take up your cross and follow me. Have you done it? Are you in rebellion of that command? If you are, you're not saved, so you better put down your idol and come clean with God. Beg him for mercy because salvation's in his hands.

And this leads us to point number four, whereby the gospel answers the question of how, how a person comes to Christ savingly. You see, friends, the old Puritans knew what salvation was. They spoke of two words that prepared the sinner's heart for salvation.

These two words were conviction and compunction, and both spoke of the work of the Holy Ghost in a sinner who was seeking the Lord. The Bible speaks of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. And when he has come, he will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.

But today's evangelism doesn't need the Holy Ghost to convict and woo men. But these old time preachers knew better. They spoke also of the Holy Ghost's work of compunction upon the sinner's heart, whereby a work of humiliation was done in the heart, bringing brokenness over sin and contriteness before a just and holy God.

The word of God speaks of this in Isaiah 66 too. But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. Now that's exactly what happened to the Philippian jailer when he fell down at the feet of Paul and Silas, trembling before them, because the work God had performed in his heart.

Did you hear that? God performed a work in his heart of conviction and compunction to prepare his heart for saving faith. Oh, friends, we must not be ignorant in how a person comes to Christ savingly. We can go about it in the wrong way, like young Charles Spurgeon did when he was 16 years old.

Listen to this story that he wrote in his own autobiography. Young Spurgeon went all over London seeking out the best known preachers of his day in the hopes of learning how to come to Christ. But he searched in vain.

No one could help him. He said of these preachers, these good men all preach truth suited to many in their congregations who were spiritually minded people. But what I wanted to know was how can I get my sins forgiven? And they never told me that.

You see, Spurgeon needed to have that question how answered. How could he come to Christ? The fourth question of the gospel answered the how. Well, he found out how one day while he was caught in a snowstorm in the town of Colchester, England, and he sought shelter in the first church he found, which

was a primitive Methodist chapel.

Once inside, he realized that the pastor of that small congregation was hindered by the storm, and another man was in the pulpit. A plain, uneducated cobbler was doing his best to present the gospel that morning. His text was from Isaiah 45, 22, Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.

Spurgeon said of that day that it was the preached word that saved me. And as young Spurgeon sat listening to that uneducated man present the gospel, God did work in his heart as he listened to the following sermon. Listen to what Spurgeon said of this time, and I quote, The text says, Look unto me.

Then the good man followed up his text in this way. Look unto me. I am sweating great drops of blood.

Look unto me. I am hanging on the cross. Look unto me.

I am dead and buried. Look unto me. I rise again.

Look unto me. I ascend to heaven. Look unto me.

I am sitting at the Father's right hand. Oh, poor sinner. Look unto me.

Look unto me. Then the man pointed to Spurgeon and shouted, Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look, look, look.

You have nothing to do but to look and live. Then the great Spurgeon realized the how of how to come to Christ. He said, I saw at once the way of salvation.

I was possessed with that one thought, like as when the brazen serpent was lifted up and the people only looked and were healed. So it was with me. I had been waiting to do 50 things.

But when I heard that word, Look, what a charming word it seemed to me. Oh, I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone.

The darkness had rolled away. And that moment I saw the sun and I could have risen that instant and sung with the most enthusiastic of them of the precious blood of Christ and the simple faith which looks alone to him. Oh, that somebody had told me this before.

Trust Christ and you shall be saved. And that is how Spurgeon, one of the greatest preachers who ever lived, found out the how and how to come to Christ. Listen, friends.

Salvation is not trusting in a verse or walking an aisle. Salvation is not believing a fact about the death of Christ, but believing on the Christ who died. There's life in a look, but we must look to him and him alone.

But we must be like Spurgeon and become seekers of God. You see, Spurgeon was hungry, weary and thirsty for Christ. He knew he needed to know the how, how to come to him for salvation.

That's what he needed to find out. Who are you looking to for salvation? Is it a little wooden Jesus that couldn't save a flea? A little God that you've carved out for your own satisfaction? A savior who will give you an insurance policy against hell, but won't interfere with your daily living? A little wooden Jesus that will comfortably sit beside you, beside the puppet of self as you sit on the throne of your life? But you have no excuse now because you have heard why you need a savior and who Christ really is and what his demands and claims are upon a sinner and how you can come to him savingly. You see, Spurgeon had

become a seeker.

He searched all over London to find out how to be saved, but to no avail until that uneducated cobbler led him to the Lord with the preached gospel of looking unto him, the only one who can save you or damn you, Christ the Lord. Spurgeon had become weary in his search. He was hungry for truth.

He was thirsty for Christ. And that, my friends, is what the gospel is. It is for the hungry, the weary, the thirsty.

Listen to these wonderful invitations of the gospel. Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat. Yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. And the Spirit and the bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is a thirst come, and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. There is life in a look, dear friends, life in a look. But look to the Christ of the Bible, a reigning, living Lord who sits on a throne and who got there by way of a bloody cross.

Look to Him, look to Him. The book of Hebrews has a promise to those who are seeking God. Listen, wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.

Jesus is the only way. There is a promise to you, my friend. If you are thirsty for Christ and salvation, He will not turn you away.

He has never turned away a sincere seeker who was hungry, weary, thirsty. Listen to what Jesus said in John's Gospel, chapter 6, verse 37. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will no wise cast out.

That thief on the cross was not turned away by Christ when he sought him? No, sir, Jesus told him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise. That thief looked to Jesus to save him, and he did. Charles Spurgeon looked to Jesus to save him, and he did.

Listen, friend, if you sincerely look to Jesus to save you, He will not turn you away. Ask God for the grace, repentance, and faith, and seek Him right now, right now. There is life in a look.

Come to Him. Come to the Jesus of the Bible. He will not turn you away.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/24/SID24329.mp3>  
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ea-johnston/your-wooden-jesus/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**