

# The Forgiveness of Sins

by Welcome Detweiler

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*The only way to be saved is through faith in Christ alone, not by relying on human merit or works.*

**Duration:** 8:40

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Romans 10:2-4, Romans 10:21, Ephesians 2:8-9, Hebrews 10:26

**Topics:** "Salvation By Grace", "Forgiveness Of Sins"

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## Description

In this sermon, a missionary in China shares a strange encounter with a man on a journey to a sacred spot in Tibet. The man believed that by performing specific maneuvers and traveling in a unique manner, he could gain favor with God and have his sins forgiven. However, the missionary explains to him the true message of God's saving grace through Jesus Christ. The man is astonished to learn that salvation is a gift of grace and not something that can be earned through works. He ultimately trusts in Christ as his Lord and Savior, abandoning his futile efforts to save himself. The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's terms of salvation and the folly of relying on our own efforts.

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## Transcript

A missionary in China tells a very strange but interesting story of an occasion when he saw a man in the distance who went through some strange manoeuvres. He seemed to stand erect for a moment, then without moving his feet he would fall to the ground with his face in the dust. This done, he would mark his length on the road and get up and stand at the point where his head had been, then down again and up again, always marking his exact length in the dust of the road.

As the missionary came near to the man, clothed in rags and covered with dirt, he asked him why he was travelling in such an unusual manner. The man paused to explain that he was on a journey through China to a sacred spot in Tibet, and that he was informed that if he made the trip in this manner that he would gain favour with God in the next life. How long have you been on this journey? asked the missionary.

For 22 years, was the reply. And do you hope to reach the sacred place in Tibet before you die? asked the missionary. I don't know, was the sad reply.

But if I do, I have been told that all my sins will be forgiven and I shall enter into eternal rest. As we hear such stories, and the foreign missionaries have plenty like stories to tell, our hearts are moved with compassion. Pity fills our hearts as we think of the torture that will engage such an ignorant man.

He wanted peace, forgiveness and rest in the life to come, but he thought it must be obtained by a laborious method of travel. He hoped that his efforts would be rewarded. He was willing to spend all his lifetime seeking to prepare for that which lay beyond.

His earnestness was surely commendable, but God will not save people because of their sincerity. Although the earnest man thought he was right, God could not save him in spite of all his efforts. Here in America, we may have a tendency to pity a superstitious Chinaman.

But I must remind you that many Americans are guilty of trying to gain God's favour by methods that are equally ridiculous as far as God is concerned. The poor, tired Chinaman heard of a means of salvation and he believed the report even though it entailed long, hard labour. He never stopped to question the authority of his teachers.

He merely took for granted that he was in the right way. Many Americans have listened to soft-spoken religious leaders who have offered theories of religion and without taking time out to turn to the Bible to see if the theory is backed up by the scriptures, gullible Americans have tried to work their way to heaven. I need not go to China to find a foolish man sincerely engaged in religious activity that will avail no more than that of the queer movements of the superstitious Chinese traveller.

In Romans chapter 10, the writer Paul is concerned about his people who were very religious. Paul cried to God for their salvation for he realized that sincere religious people who have not been born again are as certain of being in a lost eternity as are the irreligious. In verse 2 of Romans 10, we read these words.

For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. The Chinaman, like Paul's kinsman, was guilty of selecting his own idea of salvation and it seemed quite reasonable that a hard, long, weary journey would gain for him the remission of his sin.

But he was altogether ignorant of the clear Bible statements that salvation is by grace alone and not at all by human merit. The Hebrews of Paul's day made quite a different choice. They did not believe that a long journey to Tibet, falling on the ground every five or six feet, would provide salvation.

To them it seemed quite reasonable that an honest attempt to keep the Ten Commandments would offer them rest and forgiveness at the journey's end. But Paul says they are ignorant of God's plan of salvation and they have chosen a plan of their own, and now they expect God to bow down to their theories. The Pharisees, who tried to mirth heaven by trying to keep the Ten Commandments, were just as far removed from God's way of saving sinners as was the poor, deluded Chinaman.

But I must finish the story, for the missionaries saw an opportunity to offer to the poor, dusty traveler the story of God's saving grace through the person and atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, the weary pilgrim who greatly astonished when he heard before that he could be saved by grace alone. He was astonished when he heard that Christ loved him and died for his sins, and for a while he could not understand how God could offer forgiveness without the sinner making great sacrifices. But as the missionaries showed to him the Scriptures, how that Christ became the sinner's substitute and that forgiveness could be procured on God's terms only, he soon saw the folly of working for something that God was offering as a gift.

Right there by the roadside, he trusted Christ as his Lord and Savior, and never took another step in the direction of the idol of Tibet. For twenty-two long and hard years he was trying to save himself, but now he learned what all of us must learn, that God's terms are by grace and not by works, lest any man should boast. Practically all the people who give a testimony of how they were saved admit that their original conception of God's way of salvation was entirely wrong.

It was so in my case. I was taught that if you live a good, clean, moral Christian life, you are eligible for heaven, and it sounded so reasonable that I believed it for a number of years. But that theory will not stand the test of the Word of God, even though it sounds very reasonable.

If you are depending upon your good Christian living to fit you for heaven, you need to be stopped, for there is not one promise in the Bible that will offer you rest and happiness in eternity on the basis of living a good life. You need to hear the same message that the missionary told the Chinese traveler. Salvation is not obtained by works, it is obtained by grace, and by grace alone.

You may keep on working and sacrificing until your life's last hour, but you'll never get to heaven that way. You may be very sincere in all your efforts, and when you read Romans 10 verses 2 and 3, you will discover that your sincerity will not carry you through. It may be that you can match the Chinese traveler.

Perhaps you have tried to save yourself for 22 years. Remember, it is possible to be on the wrong road for that length of time. Paul was on the wrong road for a number of years, contented because he thought he was right, but God opened his eyes to see Christ as the only savior of sinners, and he saw the wisdom of turning his back on his cherished ideas and accepting Christ as his Lord and Savior.

Many others have discovered after many years that salvation is only through Christ. If there is any question in your mind regarding this important truth, search your Bible, and you will soon learn that the Bible presents just one way of salvation, always by grace, never by works, and always through Christ. Of course, after we are saved, we are enjoined to be interested in good works, and after we are saved, we do seek to live a Christian life, not in order to be saved, but in order to show our appreciation to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has saved us by his grace.

I trust that our little talk on Romans 10 verses 2 and 3 will be a help to you. May God bless you as you have listened.

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