

Grace for the Guilty

Sunday, November 10th, 1985

Matthew 9:10-13

“And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

I am going to be speaking today from the Book of Matthew. If you wish to take notes or follow along as I read the Scriptures, then turn in your Bible to the 9th chapter of Matthew. Today’s message is on this subject: “GRACE FOR THE GUILTY.”

It says in Matthew 9:10, *“And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees, (the religious leaders saw it), they said to His disciples; why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?”*

But, when Jesus heard that (or knew what they said), He said unto these religious Pharisees; *“They that be whole, (they that are well), need not a physician but they that are sick; go ye and learn what that means.”* People that are well do not need a doctor; sick people need a doctor.

“I will have mercy and not sacrifice for I am not come to call the righteous, (the moral, the good), to repentance, but I have come to call sinners to repentance.”

Here is a question for you. When does a person take his first steps toward salvation? When does a man take his first step toward eternal life and toward Heaven? Is it when he begins to have an interest in religion or is it when he begins to believe the Bible? Is it when he attends church or when he “accepts Jesus Christ,” as they say today?

I say, none of these; a man takes his first step toward salvation and a man moves toward a saving interest in Jesus Christ when that man or woman understands that he is a sinner and needs a Saviour. That is what our Lord is saying here.

A person takes the first step (the first motions toward eternal life), towards salvation, toward a saving-interest in Christ or eternal life, when that person sincerely, genuinely, and of a truth, comes to realize and understand to some extent that he is a sinner, he realizes that he has sinned against God and he desperately needs a Saviour.

That is what Christ is saying, "Sick people need doctors; well people need not a physician." A person that is sick needs a physician; therefore, he goes to a physician. When does a person move toward a physician? He moves toward a physician when he finds out that he is sick. That is when he starts looking through the Yellow Pages or looking up a doctor, it is when he is actually sick.

Sinners need a Saviour and lost people need a Redeemer. Guilty people need grace and therefore, when a person finds out that he is lost, that he is guilty and is a sinner, then he comes to Christ to find salvation. "*The well have no need of a physician*" the righteous, the moral and the good, have no need of a Saviour.

Let me illustrate this for you. Our Lord Jesus Christ came down from the mountain. There were multitudes of people about. When He came down from the mountain, the Scripture says, "*A leper, (a person with that dreaded disease, called leprosy), ran to meet Him.*"

This man who had leprosy fell down at the feet of Christ and worshipped Him and said unto Him; "*Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.*" Jesus Christ put His hand on that leper and said, "*I will, be thou clean.*" From that moment he was cleansed completely of his leprosy.

Here is another illustration. The Master walked down the street among a multitude of people. They were joshing, pushing, and shoving a woman who had been sick for 12 years with an issue of blood. She came behind Him and reached out and touched the hem of His garment. She said, "*If I could but touch the hem of His garment, I know that I will be whole.*"

For 12 years she had been sick and for 12 years she had tried all kinds of healings, doctors, advice and suggestions from other people. She was still no better but only grew worse. When she reached out and touched Christ, the Scripture says; "*She was made whole immediately.*"

Our Lord said, "*Somebody touched me.*" The disciples said, "Lord; all of these people have been pushing, shoving and touching you. Why do you say that someone has touched you?" He said, "*I perceive that power is gone out of me; someone touched me.*" He called for the woman and she told Him all. Christ said, "*Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole.*"

I've got one other illustration, and then I'm going to ask you a question: Just like the leper, when our Lord came down from the mountain, the leper ran, fell down at His feet and worshipped Him. The leper said, "*Lord, if you will you can make me clean.*"

Just like the woman with the issue of blood who had been sick (terribly sick) for 12 years. She said, "*If I can just get to Him and touch the hem of His garment, I will be made whole.*"

Our Lord was walking through the city of Jericho and there was a great multitude of people about Him. There was a man who was blind, a son of Timaeus. Bartimaeus was at the wayside begging. He was sitting there in his filth, darkness and unhappiness.

He heard the commotion and said to someone about him, "*What's the noise; what's the commotion?*" They said, "*Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.*" He began to cry, sitting there in his darkness, sitting there in his inability. He cried, "*Jesus, Thy Son of David, have mercy on me.*"

The Scripture says, "*The Lord stood still; Jesus stood still and commanded him to come.*" He arose and threw away his blanket and ran toward the voice of the Master who called him. The Lord said, "*What do you want me to do for you?*" The man said, "*Lord that I may see.*"

The Lord Jesus touched him and he was made whole. Here is my question. The leper, the woman with the issue of blood and Bartimaeus, what do all of these people have in common? What is the one vital and central thing that they all have in common?

A person may have said that they had heard of Jesus Christ and heard of His power to heal and His power to give sight to the blind and make the lame to walk. That is a good point; they had heard of Christ. "*How shall they call on Him of whom they have not heard? How shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard?*"

Someone else may say that they all had one thing in common; they all came to Christ. The leper came to Christ, the woman came to Christ and Bartimaeus came to Christ. This is true. Our Lord said, "*Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden; I will give you rest.*"

Someone else may say that they recognized His power to heal. The woman said, "*If I can just touch the hem of His garment, I will be made whole.*" The leper said, "*Lord; if you will; if it is in Your will; You can make me whole.*" That is true; they all recognized His Sovereignty and power over all diseases and over all afflictions.

Someone else might say that they all believed on Him. To each of them Christ said; *“Thy faith hath made thee whole.”* That is true; they did believe. But, back of all of this, back to the very first point, the very first thing that is necessary, what did they have in common?

What was the most important factor in every case and what was the one thing that they had in common? The one great thing that led each of these people to seek the Lord Jesus Christ was that they had a need in Christ; they needed Christ. These people were helpless and hopeless without strength. They needed what only Christ Jesus the Lord could give them.

Do you see what I am saying? That is what brought the leper to Christ, his leprosy. That is what brought the woman to Christ, her sickness. That is what brought Bartimaeus to cry out, *“Jesus; Thy Son of David; have mercy upon me.”* He was blind and they all needed Christ.

What brings a man to the table for food? Hunger will bring him to the table. When you are not hungry you don't come to the table.

What brings a man to the well? Thirst will bring him to the well. What brings a man to the doctor? I'm not going to the doctor tomorrow, (the Lord willing), I'm not sick. There are some of you going to the doctor tomorrow because you are sick. What brings you to a doctor? Your illness brings you.

What brings a man to Christ? Sin brings a man to Christ. That is the reason people cry for mercy; they have a need for Christ. It says in Luke 9:11; *“He healed all that had need of healing.”* In Luke 19:10, the Scripture says; *“The Son of Man is come to seek and to save the lost.”* Christ came to save lost people. If you have never been lost, you have never been found.

He went in search of the *“lost sheep.”* In 1 Timothy 1:15, it says; *“This is a faithful saying; (it is a sure, true, saying) and is worthy of acceptance (by all men) that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the chief.”* He came to save whom? *“He came to save sinners of whom I am the chief.”*

I ask you this, where are the people today who are seeking the Lord? I know that there are a lot of people who are seeking better financial positions and bigger homes. They are seeking benefits and blessings.

Where are the people who are seeking the Lord? Where are the publicans today who are crying, *“God; be merciful to me the sinner?”* Where are the publicans who are standing afar off and crying, *“God, be merciful to me?”*

We have a lot of Pharisees down there by the alter praying thus with themselves saying, *“God, I thank thee that I’m not like other men; I tithe, fast and give alms to the poor. I’m not an adulterer; I’m not an extortioner; I’m not like that Publican.”*

“The publican went home justified.” The publican went home, saved, and the Pharisee perished. Where are the publicans? Where are the thieves today that cry, *“O Lord, remember me when you come into Your Kingdom?”*

We know that our Lord said to the thief, *“Today; shalt thou be with me in paradise.”* Where are the Canaanites who come to Christ and say, *“Lord; help me; have mercy upon me?”* Where are those who cry, *“Sirs; we would see Jesus.”*

I will tell you where they are; they are not there because they have no need. A genuine sinner is hard to find; did you know that? A genuine sinner is hard to find. Everyone is justifying themselves. Our Lord says in Luke 16:15; *“You are they which justify yourselves before men.”*

One of the old writers said:

*“A sinner, a real sinner, is a sacred thing
The Holy Ghost hath made him so.”*

Do you want to know why your children and young people have no interest in God, no interest in the Bible, and no interest in the Gospel? People have told me that their young people, their teenagers, the young married couples don’t have any interest in God. They don’t have any interest in the Bible or the Gospel.

These young people have no need. They are not sinners. *“The well have no need of a physician.”* It is hard to interest young people in insurance policies and things of that nature; they have no need.

Some people have asked me why their co-workers talk about religion, about church, about this preacher and that preacher and about what they say. They have no interest in Jesus Christ. They have no interest in the blood of Calvary. They have no interest in how men are saved. They have no need of Christ.

These people are not sinners, just ask them. Find a sinner, a genuine, unadulterated, self-confessed, undeserving, hell-deserving sinner. Do you know one? If you find one, you will have good news for him; you can tell him that Christ died for him because Christ died for sinners.

You probably wonder why people that are old and are on the verge of death and judgment in their 70's and 80's have no interest in the Gospel. They do not seek the Lord. They do not talk about salvation and the mercy of God. They live to eat another meal or to visit another person. These people have no need.

You probably wonder why preachers in churches go about their religious activities with their sales, socials, services, pot-lucks, choir practices and ball teams with very little mention of the Gospel. There is very little preaching of the Gospel.

The preacher will bring along a social message or a sermon about civic matters and political matters. They will not preach the Gospel, the cross or the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They won't preach about the work of the Holy Spirit, conviction, repentance toward God, faith in Christ, justification, redemption and regeneration.

Why don't they preach these things? These people have no need; they are all good people. The church is full of good people. If they find a sinner they are excluded. If they find a sinner they are disciplined. If they find a sinner they won't speak to him.

All of these people think that they are moral people, good people and they are all Christians. These people are not sinners, ask them. "*Christ came to save sinners.*" He said, "*I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.*"

Where is the fear of the Lord? Where are the tears of repentance in this day? Where is the hunger and thirst for Righteousness? Where is the cry, "*What must I do to be saved?*" Has anyone ever asked you that lately?

Where is the Gospel preached? I'm talking about the Gospel, not just people talking about it or raising money to preach it. Where are the preachers that are preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord? Show me where they are.

Our Lord answers our question; "*The well hath no need of a physician, but they that are sick. You go learn what that means,*" He said. "*I'm not come to call the righteous, the moral, the good, the religious; I am come to call sinners to repentance.*"

Can you find me a sinner? The Gospel is good news to the guilty. Grace is for the guilty; mercy is for the miserable. *“Christ died for the ungodly.”* Oh, we have heard of Jesus Christ by the hearing of the ear. That is what Job said, *“I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear.”*

We attend our church services and our religious services. Some of us attend pretty faithfully and pretty regularly. Some people even talk about His power to heal the body, His power to help them with their troubles, His power to cure that pain behind their ears or sinuses in their noses.

Some of us attend to meet our financial difficulties. We hear a lot of talk about that. Most people even call themselves Christians and say that there is going to be a “meeting in the air.”

There is one thing (and I want you to listen carefully), there is one thing that keeps the average religionist from genuine repentance toward God. Our Lord said, *“Except you repent you will perish.”*

There is one thing that keeps the average religionist from a true, saving, knowledge of Jesus Christ and *“he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life. He that believeth not on the Son of God shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on Him.”*

One thing keeps the average religionist from repentance and that one thing keeps him from a heart love for Jesus Christ. He is devoted to his denomination; he is devoted to his creed. One thing keeps him from a heart love for Jesus Christ which will affect all he does, all that he says and all that he thinks.

There is the one thing that keeps that man from a heart love for Jesus Christ and from a vital living union with Christ; even though he may be joined to a church, joined to a denomination, joined to a program or a moral principal.

There is one thing that keeps him from being joined to Christ and that is he has never seen himself as a sinner. He has never been broken before a Holy God and brought to depend upon Christ for mercy and grace.

If you have never been lost; you have never been found. You have no reason to be found. If you have never been dead in sin you have never passed from death unto life. John said, *“We have passed from death unto life.”*

If you have never been a sinner you have never been saved. If you have never been blind you have never had sight restored. If you have never been separated from God you have never been reconciled to God.

A preacher friend of mine asked someone one time, "Are you a Christian?" He said, "O yes." He was wondering how long this man had been a Christian. He said, "I had always been a Christian." And my friend said, "That was too long."

"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me,
I once was lost, but now I'm found
I was blind but now I see."

Are those just words of a song or do they mean something? Every one sings it. It is suppose to be the most popular song today. You have never been found if you have never been lost. You have never had sight restored if you have never been blind.

Romans 5:6-10 says, "*When we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly. God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.*" These are not very complimentary terms are they? These are not even terms that we use today but those are the terms that God uses.

Christ died for whom, "*the ungodly?*" Christ died for sinners. "*If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.*" Whose enemies? I'm saying to you and I'm saying it desperately and earnestly in a pleading fashion; if a man never comes to the place where he is a sinner, like Paul says in Ephesians, "*without hope, without help, without strength and without God in this world,*" he has never received mercy.

If he has never been brought to that place and stripped of his righteousness, he has never been clothed in the beautiful righteousness of Christ, he has never received mercy. If he has never had his mouth stopped, shut up and become guilty before God, he has never been an object of God's grace. If he has never been miserable in his sin, he has never received mercy from the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ didn't die as an example, He died as a sin-offering. Christ didn't die as a martyr, He died as a Substitute, a sacrifice. If our sins were not deserving of hell then Christ wouldn't have suffered hell on that cross.

This is where a saving relationship with Christ begins; this is where it starts. We have by-passed it; we have made people Christians who have never been lost. We have pushed Jesus off on people who don't even need Him. That is the reason that they are not interested in the Scriptures, in prayer or in the Gospel.

These people think that they are good folks. When a man realizes that he is a sinner, a sinner in God's sight, and needs God's mercy, that is when he will look to Christ.

Let me give you several things:

First of all: We may as well realize it that it is true; we are sinners by identification. "*By one man sin entered this world and death by sin so death passed upon all men.*" We are sinners by identification; "*In Adam all die.*" The whole human race is a sinful race.

We are sinners by birth. David said, "*Behold; I was shapen in iniquity; in sin my mother conceived me. We are brought forth from the womb speaking lies.*" We are born with a principle, a nature of sin within us. It is in our veins like a disease, it is the disease that kills us. This nature of sin has killed us spiritually.

We are sinners not only by birth but by nature; "*Men love darkness rather than light.*" John wrote, "*This is the condemnation; light is come into this world but men love darkness rather than light.*" They love it and it is their nature; you know that. It is a lot easier to lie than to tell the truth, especially if it costs you something.

Men are not only sinners by nature but they are sinners by choice. Christ said, "*You will not come to me that you might have life.*" You have made your choice. Some people say, "I believe that everyone has a choice." Sure; everyone has made their choice. The Scripture says, "*You will not come to me (Christ) that you might have life.*"

Christ said, "*Let another come in his own name and him you will receive. I come in My Father's name and you will not come to me.*" That is our choice.

We are sinners by practice; "*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. If any man says that he has no sin, he is a liar and the truth is not in him. If he says he hath not sinned; he makes God a liar.*"

"*There is none good, no not one.*" There is no one good in the pulpit or in the pew. We are sinners in heart; that is where our rottenness is. Christ said, "*It is not what you put in your mouth that defiles you.*"

I know that all of these preachers are trying to get folks to quit smoking, drinking, playing cards and all of that. Let me tell you something; “those are just proofs of sin.” Sin is a nature. *“It is not what you put in your mouth that defiles you.”* The sin is not in the bottle, it is in the man. The sin is not in the box but it is in the man; that is where the sin is.

“The heart is deceitful above all things and is desperately wicked; who can know it?” That is our trouble, we have heart trouble. This trouble is not hand trouble, mouth trouble or liver trouble, it is heart trouble. The soul of man is *“desperately wicked.”*

Here is good news, good news for sinners. The Gospel is good news for sinners; it is not good news to anyone else. It becomes a routine or a ritual, formalism, ceremonialism or religion.

Here is good news for the guilty; Christ said, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”* Christ came to reconcile sinners unto God. Are you a sinner? There is a Saviour for sinners!