

How God Saves Sinners – Part 1

Romans 3:20-31

Pastor John Miller

Now I'm going to read from verse 20 to verse 31, but we're going to take two weeks to go through this passage. Tonight we are only going to get down to the first part of verse 24. I want you to see this opening section beginning in verse 20 of chapter 3. Would you please follow me in your Bible. Paul says, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight..." that is, God's sight, "...for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness..." or a righteousness, "...of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference..." this "no difference" is there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile. We are all under sin. So he says in verse 23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. 27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. 28 Therefore we conclude..." this is Paul's conclusion, "...that a man is justified..." that is, declared righteous before God, "...by faith without the deeds of the law." Now Paul says, "29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: 30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. 31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

We have learned that all human beings, every race, every rank, every creed, every culture, Jews, Gentiles, the immoral, the moral, the religious, the irreligious, are without any exception sinful and guilty and inexcusable and stand speechless before the judgment bar of God. Paul has described this terrible human predicament and condition. It began in chapter 1:18 and ran through to chapter 3:19. We spent several weeks looking at the subject of Condemnation - The Wrath of God Revealed, we're all under condemnation and guilty before God. This section left no ray of hope, no flicker of hope, no prospect of rescue, but now we come to chapter three and find not only is every mouth stopped and all the world is guilty before God, but we find now that God takes guilty, sinful condemned man and He will give to man a righteousness that is acceptable to Him. It's the righteousness of God which is given to us through faith in Jesus Christ. When you come to verse 19, (I want to back up one verse to get a running start on our text of chapter 3) he says, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." I don't know about you, but these last several weeks are a challenge to hear we are guilty sinners. The pagan is condemned. The moral man is condemned. The Jew is condemned. We are all guilty before God, and we all stand before God. Every mouth has been stopped, and all the world is guilty before God.

At this point, from a human perspective, you might say, "God has a dilemma." How does God have a dilemma? Well, God loves us. God loves us, and God wants us to spend eternity in heaven with Him, but God is holy and God is righteous. Our sin separates us from God, so the so-called dilemma is: How can a holy, righteous God who loves us bring us into a relationship with Himself. How does God just bring us back to Him? You might say, "Well, all He does is just have to take everyone to heaven. There is no hell. There is no condemnation. Everyone gets to go to heaven." Not only does God love us, not only is God holy, but God is righteous and just, and He cannot violate His own nature and character. So, God has a dilemma. How can I forgive sinful man and maintain My righteousness and My justice consistent with My holiness? Now, I can actually answer that question in one word (I'm getting ahead of myself but I can't resist). That one word is the cross—two words I guess, "the cross." I'll figure this out. The cross of Christ, that's how God can forgive guilty sinners.

We're going to plumb into the depth of the cross. We aren't going to just say, "Well, Jesus forgives us." We're going to talk about some deep and very important subjects. We're going to talk about justification. We're going to talk about propitiation. We're going to talk about redemption. I think it's about time that Christians learned these words, which are in the Bible, and if they're in the Bible we need to know what they mean. Amen? We need to know how they apply to us, so we're going to go into depth in learning how God, through the cross, saves guilty sinners. The answer to the question: How does God save sinners? I asked Aaron to put the outline up on the screen real quickly. I passed this out, many of you have it as a book marker in your Bible, but we move to the second section: Salvation-The Righteousness of God Revealed. The first section was: The Wrath of God Revealed, now we have The Righteousness of God Revealed. The question asked is: How does God save sinners? The Answer: In Christ Jesus (8:1). I want to turn there with you for just a second, but we're going to look at Justification (we start that tonight)-declared righteous in Christ, Sanctification-made holy in Christ, and Preservation-kept securely in Christ. It's important to keep the big picture as we move through this book so you can understand, in context, what we're looking at. Turn with me to chapter 8 of Romans (we'll get there in several weeks), verse 1. Paul says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Period. I say period because that's where that verse stops. It doesn't say, "...who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." That doesn't appear until you get down to verse 4. Verse 1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Go back with me to chapter 3:20.

So how does God save guilty sinners? By taking us out of Adam and his condemnation and placing us in Jesus Christ, whom the Bible calls the last Adam. So we go from God's wrath to God's righteousness. Paul takes out a new brush and a new color and, against the black background of man's sin, he paints a new color of God's amazing grace. So, for the next several weeks we get to bask in the grace of God. I'm glad we're done with condemnation and we're moving into salvation. Amen? Aren't you glad the book doesn't stop there—every mouth stopped, everyone guilty before God, and there's no hope? No, there's hope in God. There's hope because of Jesus Christ.

The section we're moving into, let me quote a couple of other Bible scholars that I read that I

think point out the importance of this passage. Alva McClain, who has written an excellent commentary, The Gospel of God's Grace on the book of Romans. He says, "If you could have just six verses out of the Bible, all the rest taken away, I would select Romans 3:21-26. All of God's gospel is there and in a way that is not found anywhere else in the Word of God." Someone said, "If you misunderstand this passage, you run the risk of misunderstanding the entire Roman epistle." A great Bible teacher by the name of Donald Grey Barnhouse said these words about Romans. By the way, he preached through Romans in his own church over ten years on Sunday mornings. He said, "I'm convinced today that after these many years of Bible study that these verses are the most important in the Bible." It was Martin Luther, the Protestant reformer that called it, "The chief point and the very central place of the epistle of the whole Bible." This is a very important section, but tonight we're just going to get our feet wet. It's going to seem, when I give you these main points, very basic and very simple, but it's not simplistic. There are things in the Bible that are simple but not simplistic. Jesus died for our sins. That's very simple, but it contains the deep, deep mysteries of God. What I'm saying is simple but not simplistic. I want you to write them down, and I'm going to break this down for you tonight.

There are three ways God saves sinners. First, absolutely apart from the law of God, (I think it's going to appear on the screen. It's supposed to appear on the screen....maybe it's not going to appear on the screen. There it is.) verses 20-21. Paul says, "Therefore..." this is the conclusion, "...by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh..." that's no human being, no person, Jew or Gentile, so-called good or bad, "...be justified in his sight." The purpose of the law (end of verse 20), "...for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of God..." notice this phrase in verse 21, "...without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets." This point says basically, no one is saved, no one gets to heaven by good works. See what I mean when I said that it is very simply but not simplistic? Biblical Christianity is the only faith, so-called, or religion, so-called, or the Bible is the only book that teaches that man is not saved by his good works. All other religions in some way, some shape, some form teach there is something you do to get yourself to heaven; shave your head and sit in the lotus, put on a robe, get baptized, don't eat meat, eat meat, wear your underwear, whatever it might be. That's Mormonism. I'm not just making jokes about your underwear. You do, and you get to go to heaven. Christianity says, done! It is finished! All we do is receive it by faith, and that's a point we'll get to in just a moment, but it's not by our good works, it's not by our righteousness. No one can be justified by keeping the law, verse 20.

I'm just going to throw some little footnotes in here to make sure you're thinking about this, and I don't want to get deterred. I struggled today whether to even mention it, but there are all these religions that teach you basically have to do something. I think of Seventh Day Adventism. I'm thinking about that because they have such a strong emphasis on the law, on the Sabbath Day, on the Ten Commandments, and on keeping the law. I believe that there are individuals that are saved in Seventh Day Adventism, but they are saved in spite of it not because of it. Their teaching on salvation is not truly Biblical because they believe you are saved by something you do; your good works, your keeping the Sabbath, obeying laws and rules, not eating meat and not doing certain things. The Bible says that is not an issue, that we're saved by grace. So,

whether it be Roman Catholicism or Seventh Day Adventism or Mormonism, any other religion other than Biblical Christianity, they teach that you do something in some way, some shape, some form in order to be saved.

Now, what does the word “justify” mean? It’s used in verses 20, 24, 26, 28 and again in verse 30. He says, “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified...,” we need to understand what this word means, “justified.” Now, the word is a legal or forensic term. It belongs to the court of law. It’s the opposite of condemnation. Both are pronouncements made by a judge. A judge can condemn someone by a pronouncement. He can send them to life imprisonment, send them to death, or he can also pronounce them guiltless and justified and free by a pronouncement, by proclamation. So, this is a forensic term. It’s a legal term. We’re in the courtroom, and we need to understand Biblically what is meant by this term, “justification.” In order to explain it, I’ve given you a definition. Again, it’s going to be up on the screen. I want you to see it. I put this definition to memory years ago. If you can write real fast, write it down because it is very important. “Justification is the act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous in Christ on the basis of the finished work of Christ on the cross.” You got that? Now, I want to point some things out. Justification is the act of God. No one can justify themselves. God justifies the sinner. God does it. It is a work that God does. That’s why we call it an act of God. I want you to note that it is an act. This is so very, very, very important. It’s not a process. It’s not a process. It’s an act. Instantaneously, the moment you believe in Jesus Christ, you don’t start the process of being justified, you are instantly declared righteous by God. That’s so very important. It’s a work that God does. It’s an act, not a process. Another very important word in this definition of justification is God declares, not makes, the believing sinner righteous. Now, that might freak some of you out, but it is very important for you to understand. God declares you to be righteous. He doesn’t make you righteous.

Did you ever notice when you first got saved you still had some problems? You say, “I’ve been saved for 30 years, and I still got problems!” “I’ve been saved a long time, and I’m still trying to work on things!” Justification is not a process. It’s so very important for you to understand. It’s not a process. It’s an act where God declares, and God doesn’t make you righteous. He declares you to be righteous. What is it based on? It’s based on your faith. It’s based on your believing, the believing sinner righteous. It’s based on your believing in Christ, and it’s on the basis of His finished work on the cross. The foundation of our justification is Christ’s death on the cross. It’s a work God does, He declares us doesn’t make us, and it’s because of our position in Christ. That’s why we read Romans 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation... in Christ.” This definition, as I said, is very important because you don’t want to confuse justification with sanctification. Justification is God declaring you righteous.

Sanctification is God making you righteous. Justification is an act of God, happens instantly where He declares you righteous. Sanctification is a process. It’s a life-long process. I’ll just kind of spill the beans real quick right now because I’m talking about it. I believe once you’re justified, you’re always going to be justified because this is what is called your standing or your position in Christ. A lot of Christians, when they don’t live that well or they fall or they make a mistake or they sin, they get it confused and think they lost their salvation or they have been

kicked out of heaven or are no longer a child of God. The moment you believe in Jesus Christ, God declares you righteous. That's your standing or your position. It never ever changes, Romans 8:1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." But my sanctification is a life-long process where God is making me holy into the image of Jesus Christ, and it will never be finished or complete until you go to heaven. You got that? No one will be perfect until they get into heaven and see Jesus face to face, but keep these two in their proper categories. God justifies me. I'm standing complete in Christ's righteousness, and then He begins a work of sanctifying me and making me more like Jesus Christ. What does He use to sanctify us? He uses trials, suffering, prayer, the Word of God, the Bible study on Wednesday nights on the book of Romans at Revival Christian Fellowship, as you learn, as you grow, as you yield, as you walk with the Lord. You're not sinless, but you should be sinning less and less and less and less until that final day when you see Jesus face to face. I don't know about you, but this thrills my heart! This absolutely thrills my heart! I am in Christ. I belong to Him. There is no condemnation, and God has actually declared me to be perfectly righteous and acceptable to Him.

Again, I want to just do a little footnote, and I'm not here to bash other so-called religions, but I want you to be well educated. This is not what the Roman Catholic church teaches. The Roman Catholic church teaches that justification is a process, and that process starts with your Baptism, your Confirmation, your taking holy communion, the holy Eucharist, Penance, Extremeunction, Holy Orders, Matrimony—The Seven Sacraments of the Roman Catholic church. They believe that you are being justified as you repent, get baptized, communion, and you're living a good life. This is why in Roman Catholicism you never really know for sure if you've been good enough to go to heaven, so they have this safety net called Purgatory. "If I haven't been good enough, I'll get caught in Purgatory, and then a little while there I'll get purified and spring back up into heaven." This is not what the Bible teaches. This is the very essence of the Protestant Reformation. This is what caused the Catholic monk Martin Luther to say, "We're saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, and we're justified immediately apart from the law." It's not keeping the Seven Sacraments. It's not trying to be good enough to go to heaven. We are saved apart from the law; whether it be Jewish circumcision, Roman Catholicism, Seventh Day Adventism, the list can go on and on. I'm not trying to just pick out these groups to pick on them, but whatever it might be it's apart from the law. There is nothing we can do to save ourselves. God declares the believing sinner righteous based on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

You say, "Well, what's the purpose of the law? Why did God give the law?" Look at verse 20 again of chapter 3. The purpose of the law is to terrify us not to justify us. He says, "...by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified...", here's the purpose of the law at the end of verse 20, "...for by the law is the knowledge of sin." By the law is the knowledge of sin, but then I want you to notice in verse 21, "But now...", there's a "...righteousness..." apart from the law, "...the righteousness of God...", separate from the law and it's given to us by our faith in Jesus Christ. Now, notice in verse 21, "But now the righteousness..." or a righteousness, "...of God without the law is manifested." Back in chapter 1:17 he says, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith...The just shall live by faith." "But now the righteousness of

God...," is being revealed apart from the law and it is "...being witnessed (verse 21, chapter 3) by the law and the prophets." What does that mean? It means even in the Old Testament that the law and in the prophets, which is a phrase for the whole Old Testament, that it pictured and pointed to the idea that we are not saved by the law, but we're saved by the grace of God. So, the law was a type that pointed to the sacrificial systems which pointed to the cross and the death of Jesus Christ, and in the prophets, Isaiah 53:5, "...he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities...with his stripes we are healed." All through the Old Testament God prophesied the messiah, Jesus, would come and He would die for our sins. Then as we move into chapter 4, in a couple of weeks, we'll see that Abraham was saved apart from the law, and David was saved apart from the law by faith. So even in the Old Testament....sometimes people would say, "Well, people in the Old Testament were saved by the law." No they were not. God has always had only one way to save sinners, and that's by faith, by believing. The first way God saves sinners is clearly taught, that it's separate from the law, it's apart from the law, it's without the law, verses 20-21.

Here's the second point. How does God save sinners? Through faith in Jesus Christ, verses 22-23. Let's look at it together. "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto..." who? "...all and upon all them that..." what? "...believe: for there is no difference: 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Here Paul is clearly teaching that we are saved by faith. He mentions it in verse 22, in verse 25, and again in verse 26. Now, here I love the New Living Translation of verse 22. It says, "We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are." So, how are we saved? Without the deeds of the law or apart from the law or apart from keeping good works. How are we saved? By our faith, by our trust in Jesus Christ. It's very very very clear. The only way to be justified before God, the only way to have a righteousness of God is how? By faith. Some of you are looking at me like, "I don't know." That was a trick question. What's my point? You're saved by faith, right? You're saved by grace but it's through faith, Ephesians 2:8-9. You better know this or you're in big trouble. "For by grace are ye saved...not of works, lest any man should boast." It's very important for you to understand that faith is not a work. Faith does not merit. Faith does not earn. Faith does not deserve, so it's not the intensity of your faith. It's not the amount of your faith. It doesn't say, by super faith you shall be saved, by lots of faith you shall be saved, by great faith you shall be saved. Do you know why? Because it's the object of your faith that matters. When your little faith is in a great God, He will save you. When your little faith is in your good works, they cannot save. When your little faith is in your religion or your race or your creed or your code or your conduct, it cannot save. Faith is only as good as the object it is placed in. If I put my faith in money, what do I get? I get what money can do. Money can do some things, but I tell you what, it can't take me to heaven. So, if I put my faith in man, what do I get? Very little because man can't do much. If I put my faith in government, what do I get? Someone said, "An oxymoron, government intelligence." If I put my faith in religion, I get what my religion can do. If I put my faith in God, I get what God can do, and God can do anything! If I put my faith in Jesus Christ, I get what Jesus can do, and He is mighty to save! Amen? So the object of our faith is what is important, not the amount of our faith or the intensity of our faith.

Let me just put another little footnote in here. I believe that when you put your faith in Jesus Christ you are justified. I don't believe that you are justified in order to have faith in Jesus Christ. This is what so-called reformed or Calvinistic theology teaches. They teach that faith comes before regeneration because you're dead in your sins you must be quickened or made alive or regenerated, which is the same point, you're justified in order to believe in Jesus Christ. Now, I believe that God grants us repentance, but I believe that we repent. The Bible says, "These are written..." the Gospel of John, "...that ye might believe...and that believing ye might have life through His name." So, I believe that it all comes together at the same time; that we see ourselves as sinners, we turn from our sin, we trust in Jesus Christ, and the moment we place our faith in Jesus Christ, God declares us to be justified or righteous before God. So, faith is the hand that reaches out and receives that gift of salvation. It's very important for you to understand, it's faith and faith alone.

Some people try to combine faith and works. The Jehovah's Witnesses do this. When they knock on your door, trust me they will knock on your door, and you say, "Well, I'm saved by grace through faith in Jesus." Guess where they'll turn in their Bibles? To the book of James, and the book of James says, "Don't you know that a man is justified by works?" You say, "Well, how do you reconcile that?" This is how you reconcile that. James is talking about justification before men, you see the way we live. Paul is talking about justification before God, who can see our hearts apart from our works. So, they aren't contradicting one another they are complimenting one another. James and Paul are not facing each other battling it out, works and faith. They are back to back fighting two different enemies. The enemy that James is dealing with are those that say, "I believe in God," but they don't live a sanctified life, and the people look at our lives. How do you know if someone is saved? By the way they live. How does God know if someone is saved? By looking at their heart. He sees their heart, and only God can see a heart. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone, but that salvation will produce works. It will not be alone. The faith that saves is not alone. It produces works, so don't get the two confused. The Jehovah's Witnesses do that to their sometimes complete destruction.

Jesus Christ is the object of our saving faith. It's faith in Jesus Christ not just a general faith in God. Listen to me very carefully. I've talked to a lot of people. I ask, "Have you trusted Jesus Christ? Are you a Christian? Are you saved?" They say, "Well, I believe in God. I believe in God." Have you heard people say that? "I believe in God. I'm going to be okay." "Are you a Christian?" "Well, I believe in God," or, this happens all the time, "I'm dating this person." "Are they a Christian?" "Well, they believe in God." "Are they a Christian?" "Well, you know, they believe in God." Guess what? Demons believe in God. You might be dating a demon. "Well, I think it's okay to marry them. They believe in God." Demons believe in God. Be careful. This is not just, "I believe in God." This is, "I have put my faith in Jesus Christ." That's what this is. It is apart from the law. It is through faith, and faith has as its object Jesus Christ; who died, was buried, and rose again from the dead. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism said, "I did trust Christ and Christ alone for my salvation." This is the righteousness that is (verse 22) "...unto all and upon all them that believe." Another word for faith is believing, it's trusting in Jesus Christ because all have sinned, all can believe. All can put their faith in Jesus Christ and be saved.

Someone said it like this, "Faith is the eye that looks to Him, the hand that receives from Him, the mouth that drinks of Him. Faith's only function is to receive what grace offers. So, you look to Him, you receive from Him, and you drink from Him. That's my question for tonight. Have you looked in faith to Jesus Christ to be saved or do you think you're going to go to heaven because you're a pretty good person, or you're going to go to heaven because you go to Revival Christian Fellowship or you're going to go to heaven because you were baptized or confirmed or you've done catechism or you go to confession...it's faith alone in Jesus Christ.

Let me give you my last point tonight. First of all we're saved apart from the law. Secondly, we're saved by faith in Christ, and thirdly, this is my last point, we're saved by grace. We're saved by grace. I want you to see it in verse 24, just the first part, and we'll pick it up next week, "Being justified freely by his..." what? "Being justified..." what does justified mean? Declared righteous. How are we declared righteous? "...by grace." The source of our justification is God and His grace. Now, as I pointed out earlier, only the Bible teaches that God saves sinners solely by His grace through faith. This is the only book, call it a religious book if you want, but it's the only book that teaches what we're learning in these verses right now. The book of Mormon doesn't teach that, the Pearl of Great Price doesn't teach that. No other holy books...the Koran doesn't teach that. No other holy book teaches that all have sinned and we can be saved apart from the law, we can be saved only by faith in Jesus Christ, and we are saved by the grace of God. In some way, shape, or form you have to work and deserve or merit your salvation, but the Bible teaches that it's by faith alone in Christ alone by the grace of God alone. Now, what is grace? Simply stated, grace is unmerited favor. It's undeserved on the part of the recipient. You don't earn it. You don't deserve it. You don't merit it. There is nothing in you or me that merits, earns or deserves grace. If you do anything to merit, then you completely annul grace, and we're going to learn that when we get into chapter 4. It's either all grace or all works. You either get to heaven by your own efforts or God saves you. There is nothing that you can do but just hold onto Jesus Christ. You cannot combine faith and works, or grace and works, and this is what so many try to do. Grace and works. "You're saved by grace, but you have to work for it and you have to keep working." I've talked to so many cultists on my doorstep, and when I say, "I'm saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ." "Oh yeah. We're saved by faith. We're saved by grace, but we have to work for it too." It's like, "Do you realize what you just said?" You can't say we're saved by grace but we have to work for it too because if you just work for it, it's no longer grace. It's either grace or it's works. You can't combine the two. It doesn't work that way, and, as I said, in a few weeks we're going to see that very clearly. It's His grace. You know, because it's God's grace it's amazing! Right? That's why John Newton wrote that song "Amazing Grace," how sweet the sound, that saved a what? Do you know that some churches are taking that word out of that song? It's too negative...who saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind but now I see. Those words will never grow old. Amazing grace. Isn't God's grace amazing! I was once lost. You were once lost. We were once lost. We were blind, we were naked, but God has clothed us and opened our eyes, He gave us the righteousness of Jesus Christ. God's grace is amazing. Salvation from beginning to end belongs to the initiative of God the Father. He drew salvation's plan. It was purchased by God the Son, and in time, when I trusted Jesus Christ, it was accomplished by God the Holy Spirit when He gave me new life and I was born again into the family of God.

Now, God's grace and mercy is God reaching down to us. God is love, and in His love God reaches down in grace and mercy. It's not just that there's this God of love in the heavens, but God is also a God of grace and mercy. He stoops down, He comes down to us, and I want you to notice in verse 24, he says, "Being justified freely by his grace..." notice the word "freely" in verse 24. That word "freely" literally means without a cause. It means without a cause. I don't know about you, but I am just in awe of the grace of God. I deserved to go to hell. I was speechless, guilty and condemned before the judgment bar of God, and justly so. God, in His love, came down in grace and mercy and rescued me in the person of Jesus Christ when He died on that cross and took my sins and paid for them in full. What's left for us to do? Is reach out in faith, believing and receive. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth..." or receives or puts faith, "...in him..." or trust Him, will never "...perish, but have..." what? "...everlasting life."

I don't know if you're here tonight and are unsaved. I don't know if you're here tonight and you don't know that you are a Christian, you don't know that if you died you'd go to heaven, but I'm going to give you an opportunity right now. I'm not going to dismiss you until I give you an opportunity to say, "Pastor John, I want this grace of God. I believe in God, but I haven't trusted Jesus Christ. I believe in God, but I haven't been born again. I try to live a good life, but that's not going to get me to heaven." Maybe God brought you here tonight to hear this very message, and before you leave here tonight your sins can be forgiven and you can be justified, declared righteous before God.