

A Living or a Dying Life

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Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[0 : 00] through books of the Bible. So the book that I finished most recently was in the Old Testament. It was the book of Jonah. So we'll start at verse one, chapter one, and work all the way through however many sermons that that takes. Before that, we did first Peter in the New Testament.

And we will get to another book of the Bible here soon, possibly even next Sunday. We'll see how it goes this week. I know which book and I've been preparing for it. Today, however, I want to take a little bit of a diversion from that normal routine and talk to you about what is the red hot center, the absolute heart and soul of who we are as a church and a people of God and what Christianity is all about. So that if we miss what I say today, we miss who God is, who Jesus is, and what living the Christian life is all about. We miss that today. That's what's going to be forfeit. So it's life or death. And that's what I want to talk to you about. It's a little bit of a heavy topic, I admit, but it's the truth about how we are to approach God. I want to let you know right at the front end, I'll be using a number of different scripture passages to put the point across and to show you that it's not thus saith Jeff, which doesn't matter at all. It's thus saith Jesus. And that's what we want to center in on. So the title of my message for this morning is a living or a dying life.

A living or a dying life. What does that mean? Well, let me talk about that. Let me give you a number of things in the way of an introduction that kind of set the stage for what I want to say to you. Life, now think about this with me. Life is the strongest evidence we have of a creator. death is the strongest evidence of sin. Lots and lots of people in the world don't believe in sin, don't want to talk about sin. There are churches and pastors who don't want to talk about sin because sin offends. Sin runs people away from the church, not makes them want to come back and be a part of what the church is. But folks, death is the strongest evidence of sin. Now think about it with me. What does that mean for you, given the reality that one day you will die? What does that say about you? If death is the strongest evidence of sin, then what does the fact that you will die one day mean about you? That's right. That's right. Now the question that I want to ask you as a friend and a pastor and a fellow sinner is this. What are you doing about that problem in your life? What are you doing about your sin?

[3 : 34] Everything and everyone dying owes that death to the evil of sin. Everything and everyone living owes that life to the goodness of God. The matters of both living and dying then are spiritual in nature.

We live because God is life and gives life. And we die because of what separates us from God. When God originally made the heaven and the earth and created mankind to be on the earth, there was no death. Animals didn't die. Plants didn't die. People didn't die.

Sin brought death into the world. Our relationship to God is the most important thing about us. Our relationship to God determines how we live, why we live, and what we live for and die for.

That's why we can say that all of life is spiritual in nature because all of life has to do with living in Latin terms. In Latin terms, theologians throughout the centuries have referred to that as *coram Deo*.

[5 : 07] It means to live in the presence of God or before the face of God. All people live before or in the presence of the God who made them and made all of this.

We can't escape that. This is his world, not ours. Now, because life and death are such extensive topics, we need to narrow the focus a bit.

And to begin to do that, I want to tell you about a true incident in the life of one Charles Proteus Steinmetz.

Now, a couple of you have heard me use this illustration years and years ago, but most of you probably have never heard of Charles Proteus Steinmetz. Let me see the show of hands. How many of you have heard of this guy? Right. There's not a hand going up, which means they didn't remember the illustration from years ago because I know they're... That's okay. You don't have to remember the illustrations.

[6 : 07] Just remember the point that they make. All right. Nevertheless, let me tell you, Steinmetz was a brilliant electrical engineer.

He was an absolute giant among giants in terms of scientific thinkers during the early part of the 1900s. You'll recognize his friends, Albert Einstein and Thomas Edison, were his friends and contemporaries.

That's the circle he ran in. He was world-renowned for his work in the field of electrical current. Now, electrical current in that time was in its infancy.

Life magazine published a story about an encounter Steinmetz had with the great inventor and industrialist Henry Ford. Now, Henry Ford, in his own right, was a giant among giants.

He was one of the richest and most powerful men in the world at this particular time. Ford's electrical engineers couldn't solve a serious problem that they were having with a gigantic generator.

[7 : 17] It had basically shut the plant down. So they called Steinmetz on the chance that he might be able to conjure up some kind of answer for them, though they were very doubtful. They were also desperate.

Their skepticism and desperation multiplied when, upon arriving at the plant, Steinmetz immediately rejected all the assistance of Ford's highest and brightest engineers, and he asked for a notepad, a pencil, and a cot.

That's it. Steinmetz listened to the generator and walked around and scribbled computations on his little notepad for two straight days and two straight nights.

On the second night, he asked for a ladder. He climbed up that giant generator to the very top, and he made just a little chalk mark, a little X, on its side.

Then he told Ford's very skeptical engineers, remove the plate at that mark and replace 16 windings from the field coil, which sounded way too simple to be real.

[8 : 33] Well, they did it, and the generator performed to perfection. Well, that's all good. That's all good. Henry Ford, of course, was thrilled.

Plants up and running again, he's making money. Until he got an invoice in the amount. Now remember, this is the turn of the century in the 1900s for \$10,000.

In today's money, that's about \$300,000 in buying power for two days and two nights' work. Ford acknowledged that Steinmetz's labors for those two days had been a success, and he was thrilled, but naturally, he balked at the price tag.

So what did Ford do? He did what all good businessmen would do. He asked for an itemized bill. I want to see it written out. What charges? Steinmetz responded personally to Ford's request with a handwritten itemized bill.

First item. Making chalk mark on generator. \$1. Knowing where to make mark. \$9,999.

[9 : 49] Mr. Ford paid the bill. Now when it comes to how you live your life and how you face your death, how important is it to put the chalk mark in the right spot?

You say, what do you mean, Jeff? Well, if you had a disease, would you want to receive an accurate diagnosis followed by a proper and appropriate cure?

Sure. You wouldn't want to waste your time going to the doctor or going to a hospital or a specialist only to hear him say whacked out stuff or even make a good diagnosis and then, you know, give you the wrong treatment.

That doesn't work out. Think of this, my friends, when it comes to your soul, which the Bible tells us is the only thing that's going to survive death here.

Every human being's soul will be reanimated or given life and have to go and give an account to God for the way you lived on this planet. Everybody gets eternal life.

[10 : 58] Everybody. The issue isn't eternal life. The issue is where you'll spend eternal life. There are two choices, heaven or hell. And what stands between those two is this.

This. An empty cross and the reason that it's empty. Do you see that there's no one hanging on this cross? There's a reason for that. And that's the heartbeat of Christianity.

That's what we want to talk about. When it comes to your soul. When it comes to your eternal destiny. Your need to be forgiven for those sins we talked about by your creator. When it concerns your spiritual life and death. When it comes to whether you are alive to God or dead to God. From his perspective.

Does God see me as someone who is alive to him or dead to him? Depart from me. I never knew you. You don't want to hear that. At the last judgment.

[12:07] When it comes to why you sin. And what you are to do about it. Isn't it vital to mark the root of the problem?

This is not something that you put band-aids on. This is something that you need the deepest most serious surgery for. You better be careful who you give the scalpel to.

Apart from the wisdom and grace of God. We will always put the mark. In the wrong place. Every time. That's our nature.

In other words. We will misdiagnose the underlying issue. Of all of our problems as people on this earth. And the major problem that each of us have.

Is a sin sick soul. Fortunately God has made a remedy. For what is the root issue in our lives. But before we get there.

[13:16] Let's take me as an example. You see if you. If you give me the chalk. And you say to me. Jeff put the mark. Where you believe the problem is.

Well here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to put a great big X. Right on you. You're the problem. Everybody else.

Is the problem. So I just. Walk around with a big old piece of chalk. And everybody I see. I just put an X on them. I'm not the problem. You're the problem.

I couldn't be the problem. The problem is always outside of me. And so. Even if I were to. Admit that. You know. I.

Somewhat at fault. And you see that. How hard that is for me to even say. I'm a little bit at fault. I'm going to put a bigger X on you. And then I'll put a little bitty X on me.

[14:19] The problem is always outside of me. Here's how we express it. We say things like this. My problem in life is alcohol. That misses the mark.

You may have. A bad relationship with alcohol. So that alcohol is serving to exacerbate. Or increase.

Or make worse. The root issue. That alcohol is a part of. In your life. But your problem isn't alcohol. We say things like this.

It's alcohol. And if I could just stop drinking. Well. I think stopping. Getting drunk. And. Getting to where you can't think straight. Is a good idea. But that doesn't hit the root of the issue.

My problem is my past. If I could just get over the things. That I've done. I can't forgive myself. I can't forget.

[15:20] Or you may say this. I can't get past. The things that others. Have done to me. That are holding me back. That's not to make little. Of the harm that we do to others.

And that others do to us. It's not to belittle that at all. But that's not the root problem. That is not the issue. Do you see how we're still.

Looking outside. And blaming outside. My problems where I live. If I could just live in a different place. If I could just be in a different situation.

If I could just change up. What's been going on. If I could just get a fresh start. My problem is poverty. My problem is anything and everything.

Outside of myself. The list is endless. Folks we are so wrapped up in ourselves. That even if we do try. And define the problem. In terms of ourselves.

[16:15] To some degree. We often get it wrong. And we get it wrong. With disastrous. Disastrous results. If you look with me. At the book of Proverbs.

Just to get us started. Proverbs 14. 12. Now again.

I admit to you. This is unusual for our people. Who come here to grace. They're used to me.

Jumping right into a book. And moving verse by verse. And we're going to kind of be all over the map. But hang in there.

Proverbs 14. Verse 12. There is a way which seems right to a man. But its end is the way of death. That's us. There are lots and lots of ways in our life. That we think are the right ways. Or the good ways. Or the best ways. And those are the times that we're most likely.

[17:11] Making those decisions. Out of selfishness. Greed. Pride. Lust. It's all about the deceitfulness of sin. Sin is a very.

Very. Powerful force. And sins. Core. Is that of deception. That's what sin wants to do to you. Is cloud over your judgment. You saw that in Isaiah earlier. When I was reading from that. Book. In chapter 44. They have had their eyes smeared over.

And their hearts smeared over. With the deception of their own sin. So there's a way that can seem right to a person. And what they think is right. Is actually the path of death.

In the eyes of almighty God. Then. If you can find Jeremiah. Jeremiah chapter 17. This is very instructive. This is why I'm having you turn there with me.

[18:08] If you can look in the front of your Bible. And find where Jeremiah is. There in the contents. What page. That's fine to do that. Jeremiah chapter 17.

Beginning in verse 5. And remember what we're dealing with here. Is the idea. That even. Even when. I want to try. And define the problem. To some degree.

In terms of my own wrong. Or my own guilt. Or my own issue. I can't get past the fact. That I'm prejudiced. And biased. I lack objectivity.

In order to do that. About the most important thing. About me. And that's my relationship to God. And how God views me. So this passage. Might help give us a little more insight.

Into that issue. In Jeremiah 17. Beginning in verse 5. Thus says the Lord. Cursed. Is the man. Who trusts. In.

[19:03] Mankind. Mankind. So that means. Cursed is the person. Who trusts in himself. Because you're part of mankind. Aren't you? You're a human. Cursed is the man.

Who trusts in mankind. Or in himself. And makes flesh. His strength. People. His own ability. And whose heart. Turns away from the Lord.

There's the issue. For he will be like a bush. A thorn bush. In the desert. And will not see.

When prosperity comes. But will live in stony wastes. In the wilderness. A land of salt. Without inhabitant. Blessed. Is the man.

Who trusts. Not in mankind. Not in himself. But in the Lord. And whose trust. Is the Lord. For he will be like a tree.

[19:56] Planted by the water. Where have we heard that before? Psalm 1. That extends its roots. By a stream. And will not fear. When the heat comes. That is life.

In a fallen world. The heat. Is living life. In a world. Full of sinners. And I'm one of them. I'm part of the problem. I bring sin.

To that mix too. But its leaves. Will be green. And it will not be anxious. In a year of drought. Nor cease to yield fruit. You see. That's a person.

Who has put the roots. Of their life. Their heart. Down into the goodness. Of God. And is trusting God. When the things of life.

Hit them. The matters of life. Hit them. When they lose loved ones. When they face job loss. When life ramps up. The pace.

[20:51] And the issues. That we all face. And have to make decisions of. It's saying people who have. Put their roots. Of their heart. Down into the goodness of God. Can weather those kinds of things. And he's not saying.

They can just barely get by. They can actually move through. These things with joy. And hope. And light. And life. So it's not about surviving.

It's about thriving. Thriving in the goodness of God. Not in my own strength. He just told us. Cursed is the person. Who puts their hope in themselves. So this is not a message.

About pulling yourself up. By your bootstraps. You try to live a life like that. You're going to fail miserably. And be miserable. We go on.

In verse 9. Now here's where it gets. Really. Hingey. Turning. Here's where everything moves. The heart. Is more deceitful than all else.

[21:55] And is desperately sick. Who can understand it? Now the question that's being asked there. Is answered this way. Not a single human being on the planet.

Not a single human being on the planet. Can understand the depth of the deceitfulness. And the sickness. Of their own heart. Not a person. That is the domain of almighty God.

Only God can see you. For who you truly truly are. And then reveal to you. Who you are. Now what matters is this folks. You say.

Well pastor. If you were to sit down with me. And get to know me. Would it make a lot of difference? What your assessment of me would be. Or as a pastor to people.

Am I supposed to be made. Primarily concerned with how you perceive me. Well of course that's a concern for me. Because I want you to perceive me as a lover of Jesus. But in the end.

[22 : 57] The only opinion that matters about you. That really matters. Is the one that God has of you. How does God see you as his creation? Where do you stand in your relationship with your maker?

That's what matters. Because when you die. And face God. I promise you. He's not going to say this. He's not going to look at you and say. Well what did Pastor Jeff think about you?

He's not going to do that. He's not going to say. Well what did your spouse think about you? They lived with you the longest. They knew you the best. He's not going to say that. God's not going to have to ask you anything.

Because he already knows. He sees it all. And he knows it all. Even the things you think are secret. Hebrews 4 chapter 12 tells us all of that.

We'll see if we can get there. The heart is more deceitful than all else. And is desperately sick. Who can understand it? Now notice verse 10. And we're done. I the Lord search the heart.

[24 : 05] I test the mind. Even to give to each man according to his ways. According to the results of his deeds.

So the Lord is telling us right there. I see everything. I see what you don't even see about yourself. That is. That's why here at Grace. When we offer biblical counseling.

The very last thing that we want to do. Is get you looking into yourself. What do you know? You can tell me certain things about yourself. And then you've got to stop.

Because you don't know the full score of your own heart. So what am I going to do? If I get into counseling with you. I'm going to use God's word. To help you search your heart.

And reveal to you what you don't even know. Why? Why would we do that? Because that's God's view. That's God's perspective. Now we're in the best position.

[25 : 00] To allow God. Having diagnosed your heart. To now deal with your heart. You see? That's why I'm off the hook. I don't have to come up with clever strategies.

About how to help you. I just take you to God's word. And put you before your creator. And say let's see what God says about this situation. Let's let God look into your heart.

And assess what's going on. And we'll move from there. You see? That's the beauty of truth. This is truth. And we can trust it. Amen?

The scripture is sufficient. To help us do that. In our lives. I test the mind. I search the heart. That is the goodness of God. Telling us the truth.

Now look folks. Some people will hear that truth. And they're terrified of it. Some people have even said to me. In so many words. No don't tell me. I don't want to know. I've actually had people do that with me.

[25 : 58] Don't tell me. Don't tell me. And they would rather live their lives. Not knowing the truth. Because they don't. They don't think they can face it. I don't want to know that about me. Whatever it is. I got enough.

But the truth is what sets us. Free. Free. And so we're all about the truth. Here's how we respond to life's issues.

We respond with things like this. Now listen to all the I's and me's in this. I just need more self-esteem. I just need to love me more.

I just need to learn to appreciate me more. I'm so hard on myself. Well we've already seen where that goes. There is a way which seems right to a man. But the end thereof is death. I need to.

I've heard this. I need to find myself. I don't know who I am. And I always think when I hear that. Because when you really find out who you are. It's not going to be pretty.

[26 : 55] It's not good news for you to find out who you really are. You say what in the world? Well think about it this way. What did it take for God to rescue us?

That's what it took. If you want to know how bad your problem is. Go and look hard into God's solution to your problem.

It cost God his own son to rescue you. That's how bad it is. That'll give you some insight into it. I just need more me time.

I need people to understand my special situation. I'm unique. I need people to understand my past.

I need people to respect my space. My rights. I need to love me more. And think more highly of myself. I owe it to myself.

[27 : 58] Or if I could only. Fill in the blank. If he would just stop. Fill in the blank. Or if she would only start.

Fill in the blank. Then. Do you see what we're doing? We're still defining the issue outside aren't we? You know there could be truth in all of that.

To some degree. People do things that are wrong. People act sinfully toward us. People say mean things. People do mean things. People are inconsiderate. And unkind.

And not gentle. People are selfish. And prideful. And lustful. And greedy. And I'm one of those people. Are you? Are we in the same boat? Are we outside the boat looking at all the other sinners and going?

Tuh, tuh, tuh. Given the Bible's clear teaching about the lack of objectivity that you have about yourself.

[29 : 01] When it concerns your soul. How important is it that you put the chalk in the hands of the right person? Well it's vital folks.

What happens when we give God the chalk? He puts the mark on the very spot where we are least likely to put it.

And do you know where God makes his mark? I want to show you what the Bible says about where God makes his mark. So if you'll turn to Mark chapter 7.

The gospel of Mark. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The gospel of Mark is one of four books written in short, brief form.

Concise form about some of the activities of Jesus' life. While he was here on earth in his public ministry. And in Mark chapter 7.

[30 : 07] Jesus says some very, very important things. About where God puts the mark. About what's most wrong with us. We're going to begin as Jesus speaks to some people.

And we'll start in verse 17. When he had left the crowd. That is Jesus. When he had left the crowd and entered the house. Jesus' disciples questioned him about the parable that he had just given. And here's where we want to pick it up. And so Jesus began to explain to them. Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him?

That is corrupt him. Pollute him. Because it does not go into his heart. But into his stomach. And then it's eliminated.

Verse 20. And so Jesus was saying. That which proceeds out of the man. That is what defiles the man.

[31 : 14] Pollutes the man. Corrupts the man. The person. For from within. Out of the heart. Of men. Proceed the evil thoughts.

Fornications. Fornications. Thefts. Murders. Adulteries. Deeds of coveting. And wickedness. As well as deceit.

Sensuality. Envy. Slander. Pride. And fooling. All these evil things proceed from within. And defile the man.

Where does God put the chalk mark? He puts it right over your heart. Heart. Now your heart.

Spoken of here. Is not the organ pumping blood through your body. Your heart here.

Is representative of the core of your personhood. This is who you really are. When the Bible speaks of your heart in this way. It's speaking about who you really are. At the core of your humanity.

[32 : 16] And God knows your heart better than you do. Because he knows you and he made you. Now the question. As we read that. And realize. You mean Jeff.

All the wrong that I do. Whether it's a sin that I think is little. Or big. Or whatever. All the wrong that I do. That God calls sin.

Comes out of my personhood. Out of the core of who I am. Yes. According to the Bible. Now the question is.

Well. Why are we in this condition? Why are. Why. Why is everybody like this? Why is this the case with you? With me? And with each person?

Well. The Bible has an answer for that too. And again. You see me. Moving through certain passages of the scripture. To answer questions that people have. And we don't want to get this wrong.

[33 : 12] We don't want to guess about this. We don't want to pull from man's wisdom. To answer questions about your soul. And the eternal destiny of your soul. Has everything to do with the life that you live here.

And the deeds that you do here. In this earth. No one can earn God's salvation. You cannot earn it. If you think. Man. If I just do this good.

Or that good. Or if I give this much money. That ought to cover this many sins. That's not the way it works. You see. If that were the case. Then you and I could buy our salvation somehow.

And then. This never would have had to happen. God never would have had to send his son. If you and I could buy our way into heaven. You can't do that. You have to be rescued by a power greater than yourself.

And that power is Jesus love. Why are we in this condition? If you'll turn to the book of Romans. Romans. Well if nothing else. You're learning about books of the Bible.

[34 : 14] The book of Romans. And we'll be in chapter 3. The question on the table is. Why is humanity in the condition it's in? Another question we might ask at this point.

How does God see us as sinners? How does God view us? What is God's perspective. Of the issue and the wrong of our heart? And here it is.

Beginning in verse 10. As it is written. There is none righteous. Not even one. There is none who understands.

There is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become useless.

There is none who does good. There is not even one.

Their throat is an open grave. With their tongues they keep deceiving. And the poison of asps is under their lips. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood.

[35 : 15] Destruction and misery are in their paths. And the path of peace they have not known. There is. This is the issue as it sums up. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Now if you say. Boy this is a bummer of a message man. What bad news. I'm so depressed right now. Okay that's alright. The good news is coming. But before the good news can be really good.

You've got to hear how bad it really is. Again I just plead with you. I plead with you as your friend and pastor. Please try to understand why it's important for us to preach sin from this pulpit.

And to talk about the dilemma and calamity. That you and I are in as people before our creator. We need rescuing. And it doesn't do you any good or me any good.

To stand up here and tell you things that just make you feel better. And let you leave this place only to face a God. Who will look at you one day and say depart from me. I never knew you. And I allowed you to stay in that state.

[36 : 16] Shame on me. That's not love. So I tell you about sin. And I call you to the person who can do something about it. That's what we're doing.

And I plead with you from the depth of my soul. Don't leave here today without this being settled in your soul. Because you don't know when God has designed your last breath.

Now that's not to scare you folks. It's to plead with you to act. Today is the day of God's salvation. At the heart of every problem in life is our own heart.

And so that's why we say it's a spiritual problem. If you look in the same book, Romans chapter 5. And look at what this one little clause in one verse says about our condition.

It's in verse 6. At the very end of the verse it says, Christ died for the ungodly.

[37 : 30] Do you notice that? Christ didn't die for a single good person. They don't exist. That's why. You say, man, you know, I've been thinking all this time that I was, you know, pretty good.

You know, I got my faults. But see, what matters is God's perspective on your life. And God's perspective on your life is, no, not one is righteous.

There are none who understand. There are none who seek for me. There are none good. There are none who have the fear. That's reverence. None who have a reverence for me.

We come out of the womb like that. Now, what do we do about it? Well, this verse says, Christ died for the ungodly.

This one phrase captures both the cause and the cure of our dilemma. The cause is our ungodliness. Now, what does that mean? We are unlike God because we are separated from God by our sins.

[38 : 35] And sin has ravaged our souls. So that we live in spiritual helplessness. We are helpless to help ourselves.

That's what that means. We have no idea where, from the illustration, to make the mark. We have no idea. We put the mark all over everywhere. We go through our lives trying to fill the hole and put the mark and do this and do that, only to find that that didn't work and that didn't work.

And now I'm worse off than I was. I'm more depressed. I'm more sad. I just don't get it. Even if we did, even if we did come to the place where we thought the mark might be on us, we wouldn't want to put the mark there.

We wouldn't want to do it. Our desires are corrupted by sin. So that we desire and even, listen to this, fight for what God forbids.

We actually pursue the things that rob us of life because of the deceitfulness of sin. And you say, man, we need help. Yes, that's what I'm trying to say.

[39 : 43] We're desperate. And many of us are so deceived that we don't even know we're desperate. So preachers need to tell people who are desperate the truth and call them to Christ.

Not to me, folks. Not to a religion. Not even to this church. You don't have to come back to this church. But you have to deal with Jesus.

You have to deal with Jesus. Now I want to share something with you. Back in the 1800s, a great and godly preacher offered some profound commentary about Romans 5, verse 6.

Christ died for the ungodly and about our spiritual condition. Here's what he said. In this verse, the human race is described as a sick man or a sick person whose disease is so far advanced that he is altogether without strength.

No power remains in his system to throw off his mortal malady. Nor does he desire to do so. He could not save himself from his disease if he would and would not if he could.

[40 : 51] I have no doubt that the apostle Paul had in his eye the description of the helpless infant given by the prophet Ezekiel.

It was an infant. That is, an infant newly born. An infant deserted by its mother before the necessary offices of tenderness had been performed. Things like he was left unwashed, unclothed, unfed.

A prey to certain death under the most painful circumstances. Forlorn, abandoned, helpless. Look back at that verse with me before I finish his quote. And look what it says in verse 6.

For while we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly. Now let me finish the quote.

Our race is like the nation of Israel. Its whole head is sick and its whole heart faint. Such unconverted men are you. Only there is this darker shade in your picture.

[41 : 54] That your condition is not only your calamity but your fault. In other diseases, men are grieved at their sickness. But this is the worst feature in your case.

That you love the evil which is destroying you. In addition to the pity which your case demands, no little blame must be measured out to you. You are without will for that which is good.

Your cannot means will not. Your inability is not physical but moral. Not that of the blind who cannot see for want of eyes, but of the willingly ignorant who refuse to look.

What Charles Spurgeon describes is our sin nature of rebellion against God. It is what God means in this verse by calling us helpless, weak, ungodly.

In verse 8 of Romans chapter 5, we are referred to as sinners. In that while we were yet sinners.

[43 : 00] In verse 10 of chapter 5, he goes even further and refers to us as God's enemies.

For while we were enemies of God. Those are strong terms, folks, from God's perspective about us living in sin without the forgiveness of Jesus Christ defining our lives.

Remember I said that this verse contained both the cause and the cure for our spiritual condition. And I want to talk about that. God is the great spiritual engineer who has diagnosed our problem perfectly.

All right, so I want to say this and I'm going to put it up here for you to follow along with me. Our very being is corrupt and the cause of this inner corruption is sin.

All of this is due to our sinful hearts or our sin nature because we are sinners. We act sinfully. Sin is what we do when we're not seeking our life satisfaction in relationship with God.

[44 : 13] So now we have the cure as well as the cause. What's the cure for being sinful at our very core, at the very center of our personhood? Well, since God is the great spiritual engineer of our hearts, since we know his diagnosis of our problem is sin, what is God's remedy?

God's remedy for our sin. Well, let's go back and read each of the verses from Romans 5 that I've mentioned in their entirety and you'll see the solution presented to you.

Start in Romans 5, verse 6. For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

If you look at verse 8. But God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, what happened? Christ died for us.

There it is again. Verse 9. Much more then, having now been justified by his blood, Jesus' blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Jesus.

[45 : 21] Verse 10. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

His life is the key. Folks, Christ died. So this is like a spiritual transplant.

You need a spiritual heart transplant because that is where God made his chalk mark on you. This is the deepest surgery you could ever endure, spiritually speaking.

You are spiritually dead to God because of your sins. Now here's what happened. Don't miss this. Jesus Christ took your sins on himself.

He died on the cross paying your sins. Not his. He never sinned. He was perfect. Sinless. That's why he could be the sacrifice for humanity.

[46 : 23] So Jesus took your sins, my sins, on himself and died on the cross paying for your sins to cure you from what had already spiritually killed you.

But death did not conquer Jesus. Death is our enemy. But death didn't conquer Jesus. Listen. God raised Jesus from the dead in victory over death.

His resurrection became the proof that God accepted Jesus' sacrifice for sins on your behalf. Say, Jeff, where's my guarantee that God accepted that what Jesus did for me was effective for all eternity?

The proof is the resurrection. God raised his son from the dead as the first of many who would follow, like you and like me, if you're also trusting Jesus Christ and him alone to forgive you for your sins.

That's the only ticket to heaven if you want to put it that way. It's Jesus. It's a person. It's not a plan. It's not an idea. It's not a philosophy.

[47 : 38] It's not a religion. It's a person. It's a person. And that person is Jesus Christ. Period. That is the way God has made for you to be forgiven for your sins and come into heaven.

In his resurrection life, what happens? Jesus transplants his perfect sinless life into you. More to the language of the Bible, let me say it this way.

Jesus died on the cross as a substitute for each sinner who trusts in him by faith to be their savior. So Jesus provides his substitutionary death to pay for your sins and his substitutionary sinless life to purchase righteousness for you.

That's why the Bible says Jesus is your righteousness. Righteousness means right standing with God. Jeff, how do I move from being a sinner and an enemy of God to being put right with God? So that I can stand before God and I'm in right standing with him. God looks at me and sees me as his son or his daughter, his child. What happens that that changes?

[48 : 50] Your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. What does that mean? It simply means something like this. You come to the place in your life where you realize you have never, ever come before the Lord, your maker, God almighty, and said to him, I'm wrong, I'm a sinner, and I need to come to you more than anyone else and ask for forgiveness for the sin that I live in.

I live for me. And I recognize that now like I never have before. I see my need. You've opened my eyes to see my need for your son. You've opened my eyes and shown me that he's the gift.

He's the gift of life. And I want to embrace him. I want to know him. I want to know you that way.

God, will you forgive me? Will you forgive me for my sins and make me your child?

Will you change my heart? Will you change my life? Will you teach me to walk with you and know you and love you and love the things that you love the most? Will you do that for me, God? I want to know you.

Something like that. What does your heart want to tell God based on what you've heard this morning? That's what you tell him. Because if God's working in your heart, he'll give you what to say and what to do.

[50 : 12] And it may not sound exactly like how I sounded when I came to know the Lord that way. Or when she did or he did. Folks, the beautiful reality is Jesus' sinless life in us is our right standing before a holy God.

It's said in a most beautiful way in a verse. And I'm going to show it to you. Look at this. He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf. That is, God made his own son to be sin on our behalf.

That's the part where God put all of our sins on his own son. Because those sins have to be punished. God can't look away from sin. He's not like that. He's a just God. But he's also merciful. So he put all those sins on his son and made his son the sin offering for you and for me. And then look what happened.

[51 : 15] So that we might become the righteousness of God in him. So Jesus becomes the person that changes our lives and gives us life and comes to live in us.

You say, Jeff, how does that work? I don't know. There's not a theologian on the planet that's ever been able to understand that transaction beyond what the scripture says. That's what God does.

Isn't it a miracle that the God of the universe can live in a human being?

But that's what happened with Jesus. And that's what happens with us now. Jesus comes to live in us and change our heart. Friends, as Jesus hung on the cross dying for our sins, God took the chalk mark that he made over our guilt-ridden, sin-filled hearts.

And he transferred our mark of sin to the broken and bleeding body of his own son. Now listen to what I'm saying here, please. God marked his own son for death that we might have life.

The cross of Jesus marks the spot of the root problem that plagues all of humanity. It is our sin separating us from God.

[52 : 29] So please hear this from me. God's symbol of hope is an empty cross. Amen? That's why I like being a preacher.

You know, everything I do, everything I move through, all that I do as a pastor is about getting to this moment. When whoever I'm talking to or dealing with or relating to, I can get to the place where I can say to them, God's symbol of hope is an empty cross.

He is risen. God's new mark that he makes is the life of Christ in your soul.

That's a new mark that will never leave you. And it factors out every other mark. In Romans chapter 6, I'm almost done.

In Romans chapter 6, verse 23, Just a few chapters over in chapter 10, That means forgiven for your sins.

[53 : 49] This is God's call to you for life.

His life freely given to you through the death of his son, Jesus. So folks, I can say it again before I share a quote with you and then I'm done.

Listen. Christianity is not calling you to a religion. It's not calling you to a denomination. It's not even calling you to a better life or a better idea or a happier you.

There are a lot of people who think they're happy, but they're not holy. And when they face the Lord, that happiness isn't going to, it's not going to work. It's not going to get them into heaven. It doesn't even work for them here because it's shallow.

Christianity is about a life-giving sacrifice of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, sent by God the Father in love. For God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son.

[55 : 11] Now let me share this quote with you and then we'll pray. Please don't miss the point here. The gospel of Jesus and his many precious blessings are not ultimately what makes the good news good.

That is the gospel of Jesus and his precious blessings. They are means of seeing and savoring the Savior himself. Forgiveness is good because it opens the way to enjoying God himself.

Justification is good because it wins access to the presence and pleasure of God himself. Eternal life is good because it becomes the everlasting enjoyment of Jesus himself.

All God's good gifts are loving to the degree that they lead us to God himself. This is the love of God.

Doing everything necessary, most painfully in the death of his Son, to enthrall us with what is most deeply and durably satisfying, namely, himself.

[56 : 20] Don't leave today without the greatest treasure you can know. Jesus himself. Let's pray together.

Our Father in heaven, we are grateful to you because you have given us leave even now, this moment today, to be a part of the testimony of Scripture to the greatness, the loveliness, the treasure, the beauty, the miracle of Jesus Christ living in us.

And while I said at the beginning, God, that there's no accident that all souls that are here today are here for your purpose and your reason, please help each person here today who's heard this message to do business with you and to take earnestly into their souls and into their heart the great measure that they need to take as they think about their relationship with you through your Son. Please help us, Almighty God, to run to the cross. Help us to run to the place where you've put the mark of what is most wrong with us, but also provided for us the cure, the hope, the healing, the love that we all need in our hearts.

Thank you for being God. Thank you for giving your Son. And thank you that you desire to love us well and to take us to yourself. In Jesus' name we pray and for his glory.

[57 : 58] Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, I hope for everyone.

Thank you.