

THE SALVATION OF SOULS III Peter 1:9

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[0 : 00] This morning we're in the book of 1 Peter, and we'll be looking at chapter 1 in 1 Peter, verses 3-9.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His great mercy, has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now, for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold, which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And though you have not seen Him, you love Him. And though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

The salvation of your souls. I'm going to ask you to do something this morning, a little bit above and beyond the call of duty, mentally, intellectually, and it is this.

[3 : 02] Ever since we have been teaching here for over the past 35 years, I have always greatly appreciated the attentiveness and the concentration that you always seem to give me.

And believe me, the speaker can tell when you are with him and when you are not. And I cannot tell you how much I enjoy that and appreciate it. And this morning, I'm going to ask you to crank it up a couple notches.

And do make an extra effort at giving me, if you will, your undivided attention. I know that's asking a lot. In a day and age when the experts tell us that the attention span of the average adult, average adult today, is between seven and eight minutes.

And you can thank television for that, because it has conditioned us to tune out everything we start hearing after about seven or eight minutes. And if you look at the logs of most of these TV programs, you'll see that's about the length of programming they give you until the commercials come on.

And that's when you're used to tuning out. So I'm asking you to make an extra special effort and not do that this morning, due to the critical nature of the subject matter.

[4 : 21] And I can well appreciate somebody saying, well, Marge, you feel that way about everything you teach, that it's a critical nature. That's true. If I didn't, why would I be teaching it?

The only thing I am supposed to teach is that which is of a critical nature. Otherwise, don't bother you with it. So this is of a critical nature. And this current series on the salvation of souls probably seems very elemental and overly simple for a congregation that has had as much teaching as you have had since 1970.

But I engage this without apology for two reasons. Number one, the connection that occurs between God and man is extremely simple and extremely profound.

We want to investigate as best we can what are the dynamics and the mechanics that take place. How does this great transaction actually take place?

Whereby God and man connect. And secondly, the cultural shift in our current society requires it.

[5 : 44] I say that because many people in today's society simply do not regard spiritual issues as they once did, particularly as in past generations.

Today, religious pluralism equalizes all belief systems so that spiritual truth is purely subjective, not objective.

That means, in our culture today, many think that whatever one believes is based solely on one's personal taste or preference, not on any overarching authority that is objectively true for everyone because no such authority exists.

That's the mantra in today's culture. They would say that it is true the Bible contributes to people's belief systems, but so do all other religious writings so that none of them alone can claim any objective authority.

This did not used to be the case. I take you back, I take you way back to my old army barracks in Fort Richardson, Alaska, a few miles from Anchorage.

[7 : 17] Date, 1954. A bunch of us in our corner of the barracks got together on those unbelievably frigid nights in Alaska, especially near the end of the month when most of us were broke and couldn't go into town anyway, bored out of our skulls.

And to show you how bored we were, there were a few nights that we got out our little Gideon New Testaments. Everyone got one when we were in boot camp.

Basic training. Little pocket New Testament. And we would sit around on our bunks, six, eight, maybe ten of us, however many guys wanted to get in the conversation.

And we were a combination of probably Baptists and Methodists and nothing, and Jewish, generic, and generic whatever, and just totally confused, which is what most of us were.

And we would read portions of Scripture from those little New Testaments. And of course, we were utterly fascinated with the book of Revelation because that talks about prophecy and things to come, and some pretty hairy, scary stuff back there in Revelation.

[8 : 46] I mean, it's not to light your fire for sure. We would sit around and discuss those things as we pooled our ignorance. And there wasn't a one of us who had any idea what we were talking about, but everybody would chime in with their opinion about this or that.

And we would read these passages about the beast with seven heads and ten horns and all of the bloodshed and pestilence and the four horsemen of the apocalypse and all of the stuff that was coming.

And as I said, there wasn't a one of us who actually understood what the text said. But do you know something? There wasn't a one among us who did not believe that that was the Word of God.

Nobody questioned that. Nobody said, oh, I don't know. I don't get so excited about the Bible. I don't know what makes it so special. After all, there are a lot of other religious writings too. Nobody said, oh, the Bible was just written by a bunch of old fogey men who lived a long time ago and wore long bathrobes and grew beards and wrote about life as they slept.

Nobody said that. To a man. To a man. The authority of the Scriptures never questioned.

[10 : 08] It was accepted. I mean, everybody knew that was God's Word. That was holy. That was special. We didn't know what it said. We didn't know what it meant.

But there wasn't any doubt about who it was from. Those days are gone. Those days are gone. You need to understand that.

I'm going to make a statement now that is going to seem really, really far off the wall. It's going to seem probably old fogey-ish, vindictive, extreme, a few other things.

Do you know what one of the major contributors of this has been as to why that belief is not commonly held anymore? And I'm not saying it's this alone. I'm not saying it's this alone, but I'm saying this is a huge contributor to it.

Now, brace yourself for my answer because you're not going to believe that I'm saying this. But I'm saying it. And I know my son won't believe it if he hears this tape because he is a great fan. The Beatles.

[11 : 19] What? Yeah. The Fab Five. The Beatles. Good grief, Marv. What are you blaming on the Beatles? I am saying that the Beatles, whether they knew it or not, and they probably didn't, whether they intended it or not, and they probably didn't intend it, but they were largely responsible for an invasion of Eastern mysticism coming into the Western world that brought with it Hindu mysticism yoga and all the rest of it through the Maharishi yogi.

Now, this was not their plan. They did not contrive this. To them, this was simply a fascinating thing. It was just something different that they were not familiar with.

And I know, I know there's some nice things came out of the Beatles music. Some wretched things came out of it, but some nice things came out of it.

And so far as the influence, the giftedness, the popularity, and all the rest of it, I think that is unquestioned. I don't have any doubt about that. I don't think you do either. No, it isn't my particular type of music, although I do like some of the things that they did.

And they were, some of them were nice, no doubt about it. But slowly, this Eastern mysticism and the relativism that accompanied it began coming in to the country and it became a very popular thing and people were picking up on it.

[12 : 56] And a new kind of interest and credence was given to Eastern mysticism that has then since led to New Ageism and it is all part of the same package and the net effect is it has set aside, effectively set aside in the thinking and minds of many people the authority of the Old and New Testament, the authority of the Scriptures.

There is a competitor on the scene now and it has absolutely overpowered Western culture.

in a very dramatic fashion. Where does this put Christianity and the salvation of souls?

Well, it puts it in the mix. But it is just one ingredient in the mix. And some would say that perhaps we as Christians are simply perturbed and offended that our belief system of Christianity is no longer regarded the one and only true religion.

That now we must give place to other competing religious views. That now Christians must move over and make room for others who espouse equally valid views.

[14 : 33] And we don't like the competition. are all about is that what our objections to religious pluralism are all about? Just that we have to share the limelight now with others who claim to be equally authoritative and we resent the new kids on the block because we had always had the center spotlight before and now these come in and erode our influence.

And what I am saying about the Beatles and mysticism and all the rest is just sour grapes. No, that is not at all what our objections to religious pluralism are about.

And I reject it on the basis of two reasons or two premises. Number one, the revelation of scripture repudiates religious pluralism throughout the Old and New Testament.

The Bible does yet remain the sole authority for revelation, for faith, and for practice.

And as you examine the Old Testament, it becomes very, very clear that there were the people of God and there were the pagan or the heathen. It was them and us.

[16 : 02] And if you were an us, you were an Israelite who was in a covenant relationship with the only God who existed, who was the God of Israel. And if you were Babylonian, Chaldean, Phoenician, Philistine, or whatever, you were of the them.

And there was a clear line of demarcation. There were the people of God and there were the people who were not of God. And no one that I'm aware of on the Israeli side said, now wait a minute.

These people, these Philistines who lived down in the area of Gaza where Goliath was from, Gath, Ashkelon, and Ashdod, and those places.

So, they worship a god they call Dagon. Dagon is the fish god. They just give him the name Dagon. Dagon, you give your god the name Jehovah.

They're all saying, everybody's worshiping the same god. They just call him by different names. Nonsense. You would not have found a Jew who believed that for a moment. The same with Timosh, the god of the Moabites, who actually prescribed the offering of the children as a sacrifice in the fire to the god Molech.

[17 : 29] no self-respecting Israelite would say, actually, there is no difference between us and them. They are worshiping in accordance with their dictates of their conscience, and their religion and their belief is just as valid as ours.

We don't have a right to be so narrow-minded and insist that Jehovah is the only true god. you would never have found a true Israelite who would have said that or believed that for a moment.

They believed there was such a thing as absolute truth, and this absolute truth was revealed from an absolute deity, the god of heaven, and that he is the only truth. Hear, O Israel, the lord our god is one lord, and thou shalt love the lord your god with all your heart and mind and soul.

Anyone who has given any amount of time in the study of the scriptures in the Old and New Testament will see that this line of demarcation is very, very clear.

There is the Jew, the Gentile, the church of God, there are those who are within and those who are without. The lines are very clearly drawn in both testaments. And then secondly, religious pluralism, which sounds really good.

[19 : 04] It sounds charitable. It sounds accommodating. It sounds friendly. Religious pluralism.

All faiths and beliefs are the same. They're all on the same plane. Each one has equal validity to the others and there is none that stands out as the sole source of truth.

Doesn't that sound good? Sure it does. It's a complete lie, but it sounds good. And I'll tell you what, in the average audience in the western world, it will sure preach a lot better than what I am saying.

But religious pluralism is philosophically indefensible. The so-called validity of religious pluralism is based, of course, upon the denial of absolutes and the embracing of relativism.

But, now hear me, this is important, to insist that there are no absolutes is a self-defeating statement that is philosophically and logically impossible and indefensible.

[20 : 21] Because the moment you make an authoritative statement like there are no absolutes, are you making that as an absolute statement? It's a self-defeating statement to say there are no absolutes, and to pronounce that as an absolute, you've just violated your premise.

Or are you saying there are no absolutes, with the exception of my saying that there are no absolutes? That's an exception to the rule, which is philosophically and logically indefensible and impossible.

If you are making an exception that there are no absolutes, except that there are no absolutes, well, you can see where that kind of thinking will lead you, and they will lead you away to a padded cell someplace where you can't hurt yourself or anyone else.

Everything is relative. No! Well, then everything is absolute. No! Some things are relative.

Yes! Some things are absolute. Yes! There are both. You cannot live a responsible life without dealing with that issue.

[21 : 44] Now, what does all this have to do with the salvation of souls? Where are we going with this? What's the connection? It has everything to do with it. Let me explain. If there is no absolute truth regarding salvation, that is, this is the way, this is the only way, this is the truth and the life, and it is wrapped up in this personality, this incarnation of God called Jesus Christ.

If this does not exist as an absolute, then the study of the salvation of souls is a study in futility.

it is much ado about nothing. Frankly, it's just a waste of time. And herein lies the rub. Here's what we're getting to.

The moment you insist on absolutes, then you realize that it is tied to political correctness.

Now, don't lose sight of this. this is very, very important. These concepts are married. All truth is relative and all religions are equal.

[23 : 22] And political correctness says that we do not have the right or the prerogative to say or even infer that any faith or belief apart from biblical Christianity set forth in the scriptures is wrong.

You can't say that. How dare you? You can't tell people that they're wrong. People don't like that.

They don't appreciate being told that they're wrong. do you? About anything. I don't. I don't enjoy it.

When you hear that you are wrong about something, you know what it makes you feel like? It makes you feel like, at least in that area, in that instance, you're incompetent. You're out of the know.

Or you're less than plugged in. It indicates a deficiency on your part. God's love. And it is much more politically correct to simply say, ha ha ha, you're okay, I'm okay.

[24 : 36] Let's just go through life arm in arm, ignoring one another's differences, embracing all of our diversities, because in actuality, everything leads to God anyway.

And the only thing that is wrong is when some know-it-all comes along and says that somebody else is wrong.

And of course, that would be me and others like me. Here's the problem.

salvation of souls requires the lostness of souls.

And let me say this very clearly. If you are lost, you are wrong. Understand the connection? If you are spiritually lost and disconnected from the God who made you, you are in the wrong.

[25 : 51] You are dwelling in a state of wrongfulness. Even if you don't know it, you are. Now, how popular is that to contemplate?

Do you realize that's actually what we have to end up telling people? repent? And that brings us to the word that this is all about.

The word that we are considering, exploring, examining, incredibly important concept. It is repent.

Repent. How long has it been since you have told anybody that they need to repent? repent? Seriously, ask yourself the question, how long has it been since you told anybody that they needed to repent?

Yeah, I thought so. That's about as long as it's been for me. What's wrong with that? Everything.

[26 : 54] You can't go around telling people that they need to repent. It won't take kindly to that. So, we try to find other more congenial diplomatic ways of saying it.

But that's the bottom line. You need to change your mind. And the only reason anybody needs to change their mind about anything is because they've discovered that they're wrong. So, you need to change your mind.

That's what repent means. We looked at the word on the overhead, metanoia. It means to change the mind. And it doesn't necessarily have any connection with spiritual things at all, but that's the way it is usually used.

I dare say today, nobody would use the word repent except in a religious connection. But it wasn't always so because the word just means change your mind.

It doesn't have any salvation or religious or spiritual connections at all as such. It just means change your mind. Let me give you an example. Here's a man who goes downtown to a new car dealership and he's thinking seriously.

[28 : 05] He's looked over his bank account and his savings account and his checking account and his income and he comes to the conclusion, you know what? I really think I can afford a new car. Never had a brand new car in my life and I like some of these models that have come out and I'm going to go down to the dealership.

I really think I can swing it. I think I can afford a brand new car. I can just imagine driving that baby off the showroom floor. And he goes downtown and he walks in the dealership and there, beautiful shiny cars on display and he walks up and looks at the sticker.

he swallows hard. He said, good grief, I didn't pay this much for my first house.

Discouraged, he turns and starts to walk away. Salesman grabs him and says, sir, thank you for coming in today. Can I help you? Can I interest you?

Would you like to have a test drive for one of these little babies? And you say, well, I was thinking that I might buy a new car, but you know what? I looked at that sticker and I repented.

[29 : 20] Now, he's not going to tell salesman that. What's he going to say? He's going to say, I changed my mind. I guess I can't afford it after all. what caused him to change his mind?

One word. Give it to me. Information. What was the information? He looked at the numbers on the sticker and it was information. And he changed his position.

He said, I no longer believe that. You know what? I crunched the numbers. I looked at my accounts. But when I saw the price on that sticker, I realized I was wrong.

Now, listen, that has nothing to do with anything spiritual. It has nothing to do with salvation. All it means is a simple change of mind. That's what repentance is in the Bible.

It means to change your mind. And the only rationale for anybody changing their mind about anything is the discovering that what they believe up to this time they're ready to change their mind has been wrong.

[30 : 29] All of life consists of repenting about one thing after another. About your mate, about yourself, about your health, about your doctor, about your lawyer, about all kinds of things you go through life changing your mind about and you never associate it with repentance.

But you should because that's exactly what it is. And let me say this, you will never as a human being outlive or outgrow your need for repentance.

I'm using this word in its classical sense and meaning. You can never outgrow your need for repentance unless you come to the place of where you have nothing but pure truth, whole truth, nothing but truth in your life, in your system, in your philosophy, in your belief, so that you aren't wrong ever about anything.

Well, when is that going to happen? It's part of our humanness. Just get used to it. Nothing wrong with that.

We are all ignorant just about different things. We're always learning. We're always discovering things that we thought were true that aren't true.

[31 : 44] A whole bunch of people thought Bernie Madoff is a financial genius. If you've got a couple of million dollars, give it to him. He'll get you a better return than anybody.

And how many people today say, you know what? I was wrong. Bernie Madoff was a crook. I trusted him.

I was sincere. I gave him my hard-earned money. he's a scam artist. So, you repent.

I suspect that Bernie Madoff has since repented. How so? I think he repented, probably. I don't know the man's heart, but there's a good possibility that he repented the same way Judas did.

The Bible talks about Judas repenting. You know, I have fond memories of Her Majesty Barbara and Joe Pontus. Every now and then, those two gracious ladies would, in a good natured way, gang up on me with some harebrained theology.

[32 : 56] And I used to laugh at them. And they were of the opinion that Judas is going to be in heaven. I said, you've got to be kidding.

Jesus said, have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is diabolous, one of you is devil? Yes, but the text says, no matter what Marv says, the text says that Judas repented.

Then he went out and hung himself. But he repented. So, since he repented, he's going to be in heaven. Amen. We won't go there now, but that will be in our next message.

All right? We'll talk about Judas' repentance. But I think Bernie Madoff is repented like that. And what that means is, all the while he was doing this, all the while he was taking people's money, and this is a man who had tremendous credentials and a reputation financially.

I mean, everybody thought that Bernard Madoff was solid as a rock. he was even the chairman or the president of NASDAQ. Wall Street big shot.

[34 : 17] Huge reputation. Well known. All you had to do was drop the name Bernie Madoff anywhere in the financial community. Everybody knew it. Everybody heard it. What do you think Bernie Madoff was thinking all the time he was scamming people and taking their money and living like a king?

And he had an ingenious scheme going, this Ponzi scheme. It's just incredible the way it worked. And he's not the only one who did it. I mean, there are thousands before him, there will be thousands after him. But what do you think he repented of?

I'm sure one thing he repented of, and that is, all the while he was doing that, he really, really thought he was getting away with it.

This is the only reason anybody commits crimes. They do not do it because they expect to get caught. They do it because they expect not to get caught.

And do you know what? More often than not, they're right. That's why crime pays. Some people say crime doesn't pay. Oh, yes, it does.

[35 : 23] It pays very well. If you look at the odds, most people do get away with it. They do. Brie Madoff probably thought that he'd get away with it, but you know what? I would venture to say there as he sits in that prison cell right now as I am speaking, he has repented.

He has changed his mind. You know what? I was wrong. I didn't get away with it. And I know I didn't get away with it because if I got away with it, what am I doing here?

He's repented. His repentance is probably like that of Judas's and we'll look into that more in our next session. It is very, very important the distinction because the difference is between salvation or no salvation and we will look at that.

Morally being lost is morally being in a position of wrongfulness. which needs righteousness.

But before anyone can know that or pursue that or embrace that, they have to know they're wrong. That's what it means to repent.

[36 : 48] Know, understand, believe you are wrong. Key question that has been asked is, if what you now believe is not true, would you want to know it?

I can't tell you how much is writing on your answer to that question. If what you now believe is not true, would you want to know it?

because if you do know it and you come to learn that what you do not believe now is not true, you have an opportunity to change your mind, provided you receive the information that allows you to change your mind.

Folks, that's all the gospel of Jesus Christ is. It's information. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not committing, not adding their trespasses to them.

Incredible thing that happened in the incarnation and the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It provides people with a message to proclaim and it gives people something to think about so that they can reach a different conclusion and change their mind.

[38 : 24] Get on board with the program. And the program is Christ died for your sins and you need to embrace him as your savior's substitute, redeemed.

Human sin or moral failure that is contrary to everything God is about. That's what sin is.

Human sin or moral failure is contrary to everything that God is about. Man is in severe and dire need of a change that will bring him into compliance with what God is.

That is a position of righteousness. How does this come about? There again, it is the providing of information that leads to repentance.

Received just recently an article in Truth of Flame. I know many of you get this. Lee Hamokey prints it and publishes it.

[39 : 35] he has been here before and many of you remember Lee Hamokey. He is affectionately referred to as Cowboy Lee. By the way, he is going to be here this summer for two or three days with his vehicle parked out here and he will be doing some evangelism locally.

I want to share with you something that he said that I found both enlightening and amusing. Lee said, it is argued by some dispensationalists that national sin and its consequences and its means of eradication are applicable only to the nation of Israel because Israel was a church state based on a covenant with God.

They oppose the preaching of repentance for today because they say the message of repentance was sent only to this covenant nation and contend that only Israel needed to repent of their sins.

sins which included rejecting and crucifying their Messiah. Furthermore, they argue that the Gentiles and the church are excused because they were strangers from the covenants of promise and there is no need for repentance in God's dealing with them.

To this I say, balderdash. That's a good word. Balderdash. Ranks right up there with baloney.

[41 : 02] horse feathers and male bovine excrement. Such thinking is the cause of much lawlessness and antinomianism in the church, our grace movement, and rampant godlessness in our world.

I don't believe that dealing with sin can be ignored and tucked away in some convenient dispensational pigeonhole. Sin, whether personal or national has consequences and must be dealt with.

This doesn't have anything to do with any dispensation. It has everything to do with all dispensations because it affects all of humanity and all space and time.

Man has always, he is born to wrongness. that's why he needs to be born again. No exceptions. And no age or dispensation is without the need for repentance.

Now, there is no question that there is a huge emphasis of repentance given upon and to the nation of Israel. Because you've got the whole of the Old Testament and much of it is the need for repentance directed at God's covenant people.

[42 : 16] from the time they were called out of Egypt until the time they were carried away into Babylonian captivity. They were always in a needful mode of repentance all the time. And when you come into the New Testament, there is no exception.

Now, I want to give you just a couple of references and we must go to the book of Acts, chapter 17, and I want you to see how in vogue this repentance theme is, how critical it is for any and all dispensations.

This is one of the most powerful passages in all the New Testament. And Paul is delivering it on one of his missionary journeys and it is really something. He is at Athens on Mars Hill.

He is talking to a bunch of pagans. These are Greek philosophers, people with huge IQs and huge egos to match.

It is a very difficult thing for one who is gifted with great intelligence to have a humble ego.

[43 : 22] Paul said, knowledge tends to puff up. What that means is the more we learn and the more intellectual we become, the more learned and sophisticated we become, the greater our tendency for human pride and ego.

ego. I am just so impressed with how smart I am. And there is that tendency.

So, knowledge alone does puff up. I want you to look at Acts chapter 17 and let's begin with verse 28. This is a tremendous passage. passage. I just got to jump in here for time's sake and we cannot read all of it, but he's talking to the Athenian philosophers on Mars Hill.

And he says, beginning in verse 28, in him, that is, in this God, this Jehovah being, God of the universe, in him, we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, for we also are his offspring.

Being then the offspring of God, that is, by virtue of creation, we ought not to think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of men.

[44 : 40] And Paul is saying that because there in Athens, they had these idols and statuary all over the place with the names of different deities on them. And Paul is saying the God of heaven isn't made of gold, silver, or stone, as you have portrayed him.

And he goes on and says, therefore, verse 30, having overlooked the times of ignorance, that is, the times prior to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now, now, says Paul, as of the time I'm speaking to you here on Mars Hill, God is now declaring to men that all, everywhere, should repent.

Change their mind. Why? Because what they believe now is wrong, and it will separate you from God forever. And the reason that this repentance is so critical and so necessary is because there is a great assize that's coming.

There is a time of accountability. humility. There is a day of judgment that is in the offering, and as surely as God is God, every one of you is going to stand before that judge, no exception, because he has fixed a day.

He has set a day. He has predetermined a day. God has a special calendar. We don't have.

[46 : 30] And he's got it marked on his calendar. here. This is the day. He has fixed a day in which he will judge the world.

That isn't some kind of corporate mass of humanity. Who is it that makes up the world? Who is the world? And it says God so loved the world. I'm not talking about the globe.

He's talking about the living, breathing, human, homo sapiens that live on it. He judged the world in righteousness through a man whom he has appointed having furnished proof to all men by raising him from the dead.

When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer. Resurrection of the dead.

Can you believe this guy? Do you know what that is? Remember our little formula? Remember notitia, essentia, fiducia?

[47 : 47] Paul has given them notitia, hasn't he? Given them the basic information, put them on notice, who God is, what God is about, and now they have an opportunity for essentia, which means to agree.

Did they agree? No. What would you call it? I would call this, I don't know if there is such a word in Latin because I don't know Latin, dissentia, but I would call it dissentia, from which we get the word dissent.

Do you know what a dissenter is? It's somebody that does not agree. They dissent from the position. And Paul preached Christ and the resurrection from the dead, and they sneered.

He said, oh, good grief, can you believe this guy? Resurrection from the dead. Who ever heard of such a thing? Isn't that the dumbest thing you ever heard of? They're called dissenters. But some wanted to hear more.

And do you know what these are saying? They said, we will hear you again on this matter. What they're saying is this. I don't know if what you're saying is true or not, but I'll tell you something, Paul.

[49 : 05] If what I now believe is wrong, I'd like to know that. So I'm willing to give you another hearing. That's having the mind of a Berean that is being open and available to the possibility that you might be wrong.

It is essential that a preacher do this. I cannot tell you how many times I have discovered, much to my chagrin, and sometimes to my embarrassment, that I had something completely wrong.

Just completely wrong. And the most painful thing of it is, sometimes you have to live with the fact that you've already preached that. And you don't have an opportunity to get that same crowd back and tell them where you were wrong and apologize.

I remember when I used to stump for four-point Calvinism. Never did buy five, but I was a strong four-pointer for a long time.

Unconditional election, the whole nine yards. No more. Can't buy it. An additional 10 or 20 years of the Scriptures convinced me that it doesn't have validity.

[50 : 27] And I will be giving you my latest discovery in the next couple of sessions. And what guarantee do you have that they won't be wrong?

You don't have any because it's just my understanding, my assessment. God knows. I think I'm right. But I thought I was right then.

So what's the only surefire guarantee? The Scriptures. What God actually says, not what man says God says. That's the only authority.

I am not an authority. or even close. I am not an expert on anything. Do you realize I'm not even an expert on me? Well, if I'm not even an expert on me, how could I be an expert on anything else?

And matter of fact, there are no experts. Someone said an expert is somebody who knows something more about something than you do. And someone else said an expert is somebody who can tell you more about something than what you want to know.

[51 : 34] There are no real experts. No human experts. God's the only expert. An expert is the one who knows everything that needs to be known without any error.

We don't have any people like that. We talk about financial experts and medical experts and scientific experts. That's all hogwash. There are no experts. Everybody's got blind spots. We are all ignorant.

In fact, if we knew how ignorant we really are, it would probably scare us to death. So, Acts chapter 20, and this will be my last reference.

Acts chapter 20, and look at verse 17. From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus, and he called to him the elders of the church, and when they'd come to him, he said to them, You yourselves know from the first day that I set foot in Asia how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews, how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable.

And I might add here, anything that was profitable even though it wasn't politically correct. And teaching you publicly and from house to house.

[52 : 59] What was he teaching? Solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

What he's saying is, everywhere I went, to the Jew or to the Greek, I've dispensed information. And the information is designed to get people to say, What?

What is he saying? I've never heard that before. Is that true? I have to think about that. What are the ramifications of that? What does that imply? Where does that put me?

What do I need to do about this? And even maybe have some sleepless nights. worrying and wondering about your true status before God.

Does it even exist? Could I have been wrong? Am I wrong now? What can I do about it? All of this is information. It is designed to agitate the mind, stimulate the mind, stir up things, make you think, ponder, consider, meditate, reflect upon.

[54 : 04] And when you do, through that process, you come to a conclusion that the jury is in.

I have been wrong. I need to change my mind. I need to reorder my thinking.

You know what? I've had it all wrong, all along. Do you think that makes people feel good? Of course not. Makes you feel terrible.

Wrong. How could I have been so blind? What do you think Saul of Tarsus was going through his mind after the Damascus road scene when Christ appeared to him and we are told that he didn't eat or drink anything for three days and three nights and he was smitten with blindness?

I think God smote him with blindness to enhance his thinking. Have you ever tried to think of something real hard? And you close your eyes because you're trying to eliminate distractions that may keep you from concentrating on what you're thinking.

[55 : 26] Let me see now. You close your eyes him. What did he say? What did you say? Paul was blind. What was going through this man's mind?

Do you realize what an incredible radical 180 he did from persecuting these people to now being confronted with the resurrected glorified Lord on the road?

You mean I've been wrong all this time? You mean I've been this wrong? You mean those people that I've been ridiculing and mocking and putting away in prison and mistreating and abusing?

You mean they're right and I'm wrong? I can't believe it! This can't be!

I'm dreaming! So he would back up and run the whole scenario through again and it comes out the same way every time.

[56 : 35] Always comes back and says to you, Paul, you're wrong! Dead wrong! Oh, man! So what did he do?

He repented on the basis information he repented. I've been wrong. I need to reverse myself.

I need to change my mind. I've had it all wrong. That involves the salvation of souls. You cannot come to rightness until you have dealt with the reality of wrongness.

repentance. And that's what's involved with repentance in a moral, spiritual sense. It is such a powerful concept.

And yet, it seems to be almost absent in preaching today, even by evangelists many times. It is not a popular theme, and we would rather not step on toes and offend people, because you might not give them back, and what's worse, you might not get any money from them.

[57 : 49] So, tread lightly upon those areas. Try to find some nice diplomatic way of telling people, yes, it's true, you really are wonderful, but there is a little bit of displeasure that God may have with you, and we'll see if we can't fix that up with your help.

So, we've got to be more bold about this, because the information is vital. Vital. Vital.

vital means life-giving. That's what makes it important. That's why God provided it.

And we are grateful, our Father, for what you have provided for us. We recognize that we are lacking in understanding, but we want more.

And we want to open ourselves as an individual pastor and as a congregation for truth from yourself. We cannot afford to embrace something that is not true.

[58 : 59] And we look to you for wisdom and direction. We recognize the foibles of our flesh and our tendency to make the scriptures say what we want them to say.

And we pray that you might see fit to deliver us from that or reveal it to us, if that's what we are doing. We ask that you will use this truth to stimulate us to further truth, minds and hearts of each one who hears.

In Christ's name, amen. You are dismissed. You are dismissed.