

Jesus Values Your Eternal Soul

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Date: 03 March 2024

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[0 : 00] But there's going to be coming a day when we'll see him face to face, and that's going to be an incredible time for all of us who trust in him.

We're going to have Bernardo and Carol come up and share for a few minutes about their ministry. We've been spending the last couple of days with them and enjoying it immensely.

They've been here before. I don't know how long it's been. Well, I guess they were here for the family conference that we had in the fall, so it hasn't been that long. But even before that, they've come several times. Our church has supported them for many years and is continuing to support them now this year.

We picked them back up. I'm not sure what happened there, but we realized, hey, we're not supporting the Krasmires, and so we made sure that we add them to our budget this year. There was one more announcement. I'm trying to remember what it was before we have them come up. Oh, so with the directories, oh, and then I'm supposed to do the memory verse. I forgot to do the memory verse last week again. So because I forgot, I know, my memory is horrible.

[1 : 10] Because I forgot, we're going to keep the same memory verse for the month of, what month is this? March. All right? Yeah, right.

So if you open up your bulletin to the very first page on the inside there, right at the top is our memory verse. It was for January or for February, and now it's for March, too. But this is a verse about our new life in Christ, and this is an important idea, an important passage for us to know. And by memorizing, we can help take God's word and put it into our hearts. And that's a big part of living the Christian life is having his word in our heart.

His word changes us. And so we'll read this together. We'll start with the verse reference and then read the passage together. You ready? 2 Corinthians 5.17 Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new. Let's do it one more time. 2 Corinthians 5.17 Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

[2 : 32] Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new. Many of us have experienced that, a new life in Christ. And I think it will take us all of eternity to really understand the breadth of our new life in him.

Let's go ahead and release the kids for Sunday school class. And then we'll have Bernardo and Carol come up and share with us their ministry and what's going on in Brazil.

So just so you know, they've been in the States for, what has it been, a year? Just over a year. And Bernardo's been working. He had to stay in the States in order to get his citizenship.

So he's now officially a U.S. citizen. He can maybe tell you more about that story. But, yeah. He did it legally, right? Ah, yes. Okay. And so, but they're heading back to Brazil here in just a few days.

On Thursday. On Thursday. And so they're going to visit with their son in New Jersey for a little bit and then fly on a plane down south. And so, but I'll let you share the rest of your story.

[3 : 49] Hello. Good morning. Good morning. It's been quite a time since we've been here together to give an update. And I know that there are a lot of new people here and that is great.

So I would like to introduce ourselves. My name is Carol Kressmeyer. And I was born in St. Paul, Minnesota. When I was eight years old, my parents went to Brazil as missionaries.

And so I've spent the rest of my life there. When I was just entering high school, I went to school with a very tall German girl.

And we started doing a lot of school stuff together. And so she would go to my house and I would go to her house. And one time when I went to her house, he was sitting in the living room in a corner.

And she kind of noticed him. And all I saw was the top of his head and these long legs. And she said, that's my annoying brother. And I said, oh, I have one too.

[4 : 48] So I know what you're talking about. And I just kept on going. But, yeah, he's not that annoying. So we got married, obviously. And the Lord has blessed us with seven sons.

And we have 19 grandchildren now. And I believe more will come along someday. And we are very, very pleased that the Lord helped us raise our sons in such a way that they all love the Lord.

And they are all involved in ministry in some shape or form. So that's a great blessing. And Bernardo's family, his parents went to Brazil also.

They were from Germany. But he was born in Brazil. Right? Yes. And now he became a citizen for a kind of funny reason.

Because he had a resident visa. And that required that he come to the States every single year. And, yeah, every single year he had to interrupt ministry, find someone to substitute him.

[5 : 57] And it was costly also and tiring. And so now was a great time. The Lord made it all work out. And he became a citizen so that he can stay in Brazil for as long as he wants.

Yes. And come back when it's convenient. Okay? Okay. So I think you may continue now. Well, as you see from all the blessings I got from the ministry of my father-in-law, born in Shirley Kuyper, I got Carol.

And I'm very happy to tell you that through the work of this grace ministry in Brazil, I was saved. And I started learning the scriptures with my father-in-law. And he led me to understand the Bible rightly divided right away.

So I was originally Catholic from the Catholic Church. And then when I was saved, I was saved and learning the scriptures the way we should, you know, rightly divided.

[7 : 18] And so I do have a very important verse to share with you. And as 1 Timothy 2 and verse 4, that says, well, read verse 3.

So this verse became very significant for me.

Very significant for me. And then I asked myself the question, what can I do to help? What can I? I want to be used by God to help people get saved.

And then if I need to know the gospel very nice and clear to be able to present the gospel to people. So I really studied a lot about the Paul's message and the wonderful grace of God and the way he worked through us.

And like this word say, Christ in you, the hope of glory, Christ working through you. So I understanding that I know I want to be an instrument in his hand to reach out to people.

[8 : 35] And I have a passion right away for evangelism. And I started evangelizing in the city. And pretty soon I was able to help a lot of people to come to church.

And that didn't end after I studied more and more and more. Then we come to 2 Timothy 2, verse 1 and 2.

They'll say, you therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others of soul.

Well, this is an unstoppable ministry. You start evangelizing people, training them into the world and teaching them the world and organizing churches and leading people to know more and more.

Until you can spot different people in this new church that are more dedicated, that are more interested.

[9 : 39] And they have the first Timothy 3 qualifications to be developed for the leadership of the church and be ministers. So this is our goal.

We're always trying to find those people and train them. So that's the reason that I couldn't come back. I have to come back to the States every year.

But as it was hard, I couldn't stay here too long because those people were, they need somebody to be teaching them.

And I was not there. So that's why it took so long for me to finally take a time to get the American citizenship.

And I can say that with a very thankful heart because the Lord helped us bringing to us men that were able to be trained, as 2 Timothy 2 teaches, that we have to pass on the baton.

[10 : 41] And then being in training those men now, we have been away from the field the whole year. And now that we're here, there's good news coming from there.

Churches are growing. People are becoming interested. And we see potential new leaders coming. And we are so excited about going back and being focusing on those new leaders and training them for the ministry as well.

And so this is very, very important. I will give you names. Ismael. Ismael, like Ismael. Ismael in Portuguese. We, is one of our men from the city of Crisiuma, where we have a church there. And he's ready to be trained. He's already taking position of leadership because of, you know, those that knows more take a stand.

And he is really interesting. He is already going through BBI, Bering Bible Institute, the branch in Brazil. We have a branch of BBI in Brazil now. Paul, my son, is the director of the BBI branch in Brazil.

[11 : 52] And together with Graziella. Graziella, she was responsible. They are a couple. They are married. And Graziella was responsible for the beginning of the church in Crisiuma.

I bought a car from her. And in the process, I shared the gospel. And she became very interested. And then we started getting in contact more frequently. And then we started traveling down there. It was about three hours drive. And then, and teaching people that she invited to come. And now we have a church there. And also from that group, we have Aberton.

Aberton is a very young guy. Very interested in the scriptures. Very, very smart. He knows English. Very difficult to find in Brazil. Somebody that speaks English fluently.

And he does. So, he is very interested in being trained. And he also has asked me to teach him some of the guitar principles.

[12 : 53] And now he is already playing the guitar. And helping the music ministry in the city of Crisiuma. We also have Ricardo. Ricardo is another man that is, has a lot of potential.

He is in the family. They are very dedicated to the Church of Tijucas. And he is going to be one of the potential guys. And he asked me about two months ago, Bernardo, do you think I'm ready for BBI?

I said, yes, you are. And so, he's taking, he's going to start taking classes in BBI. And also, we're going to have, dedicate some time for him. We cannot, we could spend hours sharing so many things that the Lord has been doing through the ministry that we, as instruments, offer ourselves to serve the Lord in Brazil.

One of the most important ministry we always keep in mind and are always constant teaching. And right now, we have several students online to learn Growing Kids God's Way.

It's a parenting course that teach you how to raise your kids, how to grow your family, how to develop the wonderful relationship and train your children to be those men of God that we need for this world.

[14 : 20] So, family ministry is a very special ministry we have. And if you go, and I invite you to, to go down to Brazil and visit our churches, you're going to see.

Just go see in our, in our display out there. There are several young families, several, and they are growing up their children.

And it's so beautiful to see. And we also have our camp ministry. We, we own to this church for special donations that came through, through, to us to acquire property in Brazil.

And we are just so thankful every time we come here because that place, the camp, the Lord blessed it. It was a wonderful piece of property. It's a kind of a hilly area.

And from up there, you can see the valleys around. You can see the ocean over there. And it's just gorgeous, beautiful. And in that, that place, it, it took many years for us to develop a couple things and all.

[15 : 27] And we have been having camps for several years now. And while we were here, they already did several special activities at the camp this year.

And they, in my, in our absence, we know we are going to find the place different. They have been doing landscaping, preparing the land. And because our next dream for this camp is to build something more permanent.

Through the years, we didn't have so much resources. And we're not able to build permanent buildings. We built mostly using wood.

And in Brazil, we have a little bug that really likes wood. It's the termites. And they have been attacking us, you know. And several parts of the, those buildings are damaged by the termites.

And we will have to eventually put it down. But we are willing to build something more permanent with bricks and concrete that the termites don't get into it. And this is one of our biggest projects right now.

[16:39] It's to dedicate time. And all the churches, our four churches that we established here, are working toward this goal. To make the camp a reality for more than our own churches.

We want to be able to be available to all the other great churches in our, in the southern Brazil. And we have a lot of churches there.

So we are very happy to be able to offer these facilities as a camp. And also for like a conference center for the special meetings that we have in our churches in Brazil right now.

So we, we have many, many words of thankfulness. Because we could see, and every time, how the Lord did the work.

We didn't do anything. We just want to be available. We just want to be there, available. And of course, that demands from us a sanctified life.

[17:47] It demands living the gospel in our lives. If we are not living the gospel, if you are not putting into practice the things we learned from the Apostle Paul.

I mean, from Christ through the Apostle Paul. We can't do it. You know. And it's beautiful to see that when you look behind and you see so many families.

So many people. So many places where we have been able to reach and lead people to the Lord.

So we are very thankful for that. And we are also thankful for our kids.

The Lord gave us seven boys. And today, most of them are completely involved in the ministry.

Starting with George. He is a pastor in the Streamwood Bible Church.

That when he went there, there was just a building. Empty. Empty building. Nobody was in church.

And he started all over. And now they have seven families there. And it's growing.

[18:45] And so we are praying for that for George's ministry too. He's the oldest. And then after him, we have Paul. And you know Paul. Paul is also a missionary in Brazil working in the big, huge city of Sao Paulo.

22 million people living there. It's just huge. And Paul is doing a great job with college students and teaching English and reaching out people. And he's also leading the BBI branch in Brazil.

And then we have Terry. Terry is in Germany now. He has five boys and a girl now. And while he was in Brazil, he was always involved in our ministry.

And then we have Jason. Jason is our camp boy. He helps in the camp. He is a very good administrator. He does have a good view of things, how to solve problems and things.

And he's helping a lot our board of directors of the camp. And he also is a good cook. So he takes the leadership in the kitchen. When we have any activity with a lot of people, he's going to be leading the kitchen.

[19:55] And he's good. And then we have Jason. Then we have Dennis.

Dennis is down in Florida. You know, some of you know Pastor Ken Lawson in Inverness. And Dennis is under the wings of Pastor Ken Lawson being trained also for the ministry for pastoring churches.

So he has two girls and a boy. And they are doing great there. And then we have Kevin. Kevin is where we are going from here. We are living this today after church.

We are living in New Jersey and Wayne where we are going to be with Kevin for our last days here. And he is a pastor in Prickness Bible Church in there.

And then the last one is Joseph. Joseph is just married two years ago. Well, he married twice. He wanted to make sure that. So he married here in the States and with the same girl, of course.

[21:00] He married also in Brazil because she is a Brazilian and their parents, they could not be here for their wedding. So they went. Have two wedding ceremonies, I would say.

It's only one marriage. But he is also, he's graduated from Christian, Grace Christian University. And he is willing to become a missionary in the near future. So we thank the Lord so much for everything he did and the unity we have in our family with our kids.

It's just, it makes our hearts full of mixed emotions because we're way far away from them. For those that are here in the States, far away from Kevin in Germany.

And only, only we have one boy in Tijucas where we live. And Paul was in Sao Paulo, 10 hours away. So we only have, from the 19 grandkids, we have only two we can enjoy, you know.

[22 : 05] But we know that it's part of the ministry when we have, we want the gospel to be spread all over the place. And we thank you for your cooperation, your prayers, and your financial support.

It has been great. Thank you very much for that. And we thank you, the Lord, for everything he has been doing through our lives. Thank you very much. Thank you. All right.

Thank you, Bernardo and Carol. By the way, they have, like they mentioned, they have a table, a display. You can see pictures of their ministry out there in Brazil. I got to see lots of other pictures on Bernardo's phone of the, really, campground, almost, that they've put together.

And some of the stories from their ministry. You know, one of the stories that they shared was about, this was something that happened 20 years ago, where they were sharing the gospel and having Bible studies.

And people were telling lies about them. And about, you know, them being a cult or witchcraft or something. I can't remember exactly what it was. And they thought, what's going on here?

[23 : 22] It doesn't seem like we're bearing much fruit. But 19 years later, was that what it was? 19 years later, they found out that one of the little girls that they had shared the gospel with among all these families, she had received the gospel.

And over those 19 years, had shared the gospel with each of her family members. And over that time, one by one, each member of the family had gotten saved.

Is that the right story? And it wasn't until 19 years later, they happened to meet and connect.

Otherwise, they wouldn't have known, right? And so sometimes our ministry can seem like it's not making a lot of progress.

But God is at work, isn't he? Well, we're going to go back. We're going to jump back into Mark here for the rest of our service. So if you've got a Bible, open it up to Mark 9.

We're looking at the ministry of Jesus. And we really are going to look at the same passage that we looked at last week, but from a little bit of a different perspective.

[24 : 32] This is a heavy passage. And in it, Jesus talks about offenses that will come. And the dangers of what will happen if you stumble because of these offenses, whether it comes from those outside temptations or from temptations in your own heart.

Last week, we really focused on how this passage, in its primary context, is to the disciples privately.

And it's about something that's coming up soon for them, or at least it was supposed to be soon. Jesus' ministry was preaching the kingdom of God is at hand.

We actually talked about that during Sunday school. There's some who think, well, Jesus preached a kingdom, and well, we never saw an actual throne or dominion like we see kings today.

So it must be that the kingdom that Jesus was planning to establish must be some kind of a spiritual kingdom. And there's those who certainly have that view. But what we see in Scripture as we're teaching here is that Jesus is talking about a kingdom in which he's going to land on the earth.

[25 : 48] He's coming from the sky. When Jesus ascended into heaven in the beginning of Acts there, the angel said, Hey, guys, Jesus is gone now. Why do you keep looking up?

By the way, he's going to return again. And he's going to return in the same way that he left. And so Jesus is. He's going to return from the clouds back to the earth and establish a physical kingdom on the earth.

And so a lot of the things that Jesus taught was about that. But let's read this passage that we read again. We're just going to read not the whole thing from last week, but we'll read part of it.

Mark 9, verse 42. Mark 9, verse 42. We'll go to verse 48. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.

If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed rather than having two hands to go to hell into the fire that shall never be quenched, where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.

[27 : 03] And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame rather than having two feet to be cast into hell into the fire that shall never be quenched, where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.

And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire, where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.

You read this passage and it's heavy, right? This is a dire warning that Jesus is giving to his disciples.

You know, life is not a dress rehearsal for the real thing. Life is the real thing. What we do in this life matters and it has an eternal impact.

Sometimes I know we wish it was a dress rehearsal, that we could go back and fix things that we didn't do right. But we need to take life seriously. Because the life that we live here and the decisions that we make here will have an impact throughout all of eternity.

[28 : 17] Both for us and for those under our care, under our influence. Just to reiterate the kingdom context that we talked about last week, and we focused on primarily last week about the coming kingdom and the tribulation that was to come right before the kingdom was established, before Jesus would establish his throne, which has been delayed.

The Bible teaches in Romans, Paul teaches in Romans chapter 9, 10, and 11, how the people of Israel, their kingdom was put on hold because of their rejection of the king, the Messiah, Jesus.

And so God did something different. He pivoted. He moved towards a people called the Gentiles. And who are the Gentiles? The Gentiles are not the Jews. Anybody who's not a Jew.

And he pivoted and said, listen, I'm going to make the Jewish people my people that I love. The people, the children of the man whom I love, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, who I made promises to.

I'm going to keep those promises, but it's going to be delayed. And you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to go to these Gentile people, and I'm going to offer them something. I'm going to offer them a gracious gift in order to make my people jealous.

[29 : 39] And then a time will come, he says in Romans chapter 11, in which the time of the Gentiles will be complete, and he will return again to his people, the Jews.

And so when Jesus is teaching here, he's talking to these Jewish people, his disciples, his 12 disciples in private, in a home here. That's the setting in which Jesus is teaching here.

And it's a restored kingdom, the restored kingdom of Israel, like the kingdom of David, except with a different king, the Messiah, Jesus himself. But before that time would come seven years of intense tribulation.

where the Jewish people would go through what the prophets called a refiner's fire. Intense persecution, suffering that they had never seen before.

And there will be offenses that will come. There will be those who cause the little ones, not children, but the little ones were his disciples.

[30 : 45] They will cause you to stumble. So watch out for those who will cause you to stumble.

And he says, as he does here, those who cause you to stumble, my little ones, it would be better for them that a millstone were hung around their neck and they were cast into the depths of the sea.

It won't turn out well for them. But then he also gives a warning to the disciples themselves. Look out for the sin that is in your own heart.

And he describes it in terms of hands and feet. And he really makes this contrast between your physical well-being and your spiritual, eternal well-being.

At the end of the tribulation, the Bible describes, Jesus actually himself describes that there will be this time at the end of the tribulation. It won't be the final judgment, but it will be a judgment right before the kingdom is established in which he separates the sheep from the goats.

And he will reward the sheep with entrance into the kingdom. And the goats, they will be cast out. They will not be given entrance into that kingdom.

[31 : 56] And that's the immediate context. But what about us today? Is this something that is relevant to us today? I think there is a larger context for really people at all time.

Because the big picture is sin has an impact on our lives and the lives of everyone around us.

Sin is a horrible thing. It is a destructive power. It's to be avoided at all costs, Jesus said.

There is a cost to sin. He said if your hand causes you to sin, to cut it off. That's how important it is to avoid sin. As we talked about last week, if you cut off your left hand, is that going to prevent your right hand from sinning?

Or if you pluck out your left eyeball, is that going to prevent your right eyeball from sinning? He is using hyperbole metaphor figures as he's saying this, but he's using it to make a very important point.

[33 : 04] But this sin problem isn't just with the Jews, is it? In fact, as we read in Paul's epistle to the Romans, Paul's epistle to the Romans is this great theological discourse about why are things the way they are and what did Jesus do for us to solve that problem.

And the whole first few chapters of Romans are about the sin problem. The sin problem among the Jews and among the Gentiles, among the rest of us. There's this one passage that I think many of us have memorized.

Romans 6.23. It says this simple phrase, For the wages of sin is death. And that is this universal law that isn't just held for the Jewish people.

That wasn't just for the Jews, though the law said that as well, right? But for all people, for all time, the wages of sin is death.

And is that something that's hard to accept? Is that just something we have to accept by faith? Or is that something that we see all around us? We see wherever there is sin, there is a tendency towards death and destruction and pain and suffering and misery.

[34 : 36] Just a couple of examples. We look at drug abuse and alcohol abuse, which leads to violence and homelessness, liver disease, and those, those are just a few.

We see something like sexual immorality, adultery, other kinds of sexual morality, which leads to brokenness of all kinds.

Broken hearts, broken relationships, broken homes, and even broken bodies with all the sexually transmitted diseases that are out there that is just a taste of the death that the Bible talks about that is the result of sin.

But it's not just natural death, right, that sin leads to, though it does and can lead to that.

But what the Bible calls, what we refer to as eternal death, spiritual death, which is ultimately a separation from God. And that's what Jesus was referring to here, being cast out.

[35 : 52] where the worm does not die. And by the way, that phrase that he kept repeating, that's a phrase from the prophet Isaiah who talked about, he's quoting Isaiah word for word, basically.

But why would God do that? I mean, isn't God forgiving and he's just going to forgive everybody? Right?

Why judge sin? Why punish people? Why is God so mad anyway? Isn't he supposed to be a loving God?

I mean, if you look at a lot of views of Jesus today, he's a pretty chill dude. He just kind of, he likes to hang out with sinners and people and chill out with them and hang.

If God was really good, he wouldn't punish anybody like that. But what about our own criminal justice system? I know if you are the one who's had a crime committed against you and someone stands before a judge and the judge says, eh, no big deal.

[37 : 17] How do you feel? Outrage, right? But typically, if we're the one that committed the crime and we stand before the judge and he throws the book at us, what do we feel a lot of times?

Well, hey, it wasn't that big of a deal. Come on. The perspective matters, doesn't it, a lot of times. In fact, Paul, the apostle, references this in Romans 2, verse 3.

He says this, and do you, he's talking about people who reject this idea of a God of judgment. He says this, and do you think this, oh man, you who judge those who practice such things, he just listed off all these sins, and doing the same thing that you will escape the judgment of God?

You know, every time we point the finger at somebody else, right? We've got three more fingers pointing back at us, right?

We have to take an introspection of our own life. There's lots of, lots of people we can point fingers at, rightfully so. But what about us?

[38 : 35] Is our life clean? You know, judgment, God's judgment, and his final judgment even, is part of his goodness. God is a good God.

A God of love, the Bible says a lot, a God of loving kindnesses and tender mercies. And so, a good judge does what?

He upholds justice. He's not going to allow the criminals to take advantage and to ruin the lives of the innocent.

Especially not forever and ever. So there is a coming a day in which God will make a separation.

And he will separate those who humble themselves before him from those who reject him and live life their own way.

this passage in which Paul talks about this hypocrisy of judging other men and doing the same.

[39 : 47] Well, he lists the things previously, doing the same. He says in Romans 129, being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetous, maliciousness, full of envy and murder and strife and deceit and evil-mindedness.

People who are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, and unmerciful. I mean, we've all seen these sins. We've seen them in others, but regrettably, we've seen them in ourselves, too. And we've seen firsthand that these things that he listed here lead to pain and misery and suffering and he cares for us.

God does. So one day he's going to make that separation. The Bible teaches that in the end of all time there will be no more pain and suffering.

Why can't God just send everybody into hell? Well, it's because when you take all the people that cause pain and suffering in the world who are emboldened to do so and you put them in heaven, you know what happens?

[41 : 17] It turns into hell. But is this what God wants?

Does he want to make that separation? Is he looking forward to the day when he's going to separate the sheep from the goats with, aha, I can't wait! Is he happy about it?

In Ezekiel 18, verse 23, the prophet Ezekiel speaking on behalf of God says this, Do I have pleasure at all that the wicked should die?

Says the Lord God. And not that he should turn from his ways and live? God's mercy, his love, and his grace is greater than any of us, I think, can imagine.

In Psalm 103, verse 8, describing God's mercy and graciousness and love, the psalmist says this, the Lord is merciful and gracious.

[42 : 27] He's slow to anger and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, he won't always be upset with us, nor will he keep his anger forever.

He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. This is a psalm about Israel who was constantly under the judgment of God.

But was it ever under the full wrath of God? Remember David, it reminds me of David. He committed a grievous sin and God asked him, you know, here's a couple of different judgments, which one?

Would you like to be judged by the nations or by me? And David said, I'm going to go with you because these other nations, they won't have any mercy, but I know that you will.

so Jesus in this passage in Mark here, he's imploring his disciples whom he loves, don't stumble into sin.

[43 : 32] There's going to be seven years here where it's going to get really, really tough. And you can think, wow, I can escape all this and I can just enjoy the pleasures of sin.

And he warns them, don't do it. Don't stumble into sin. Don't let these offenses take you out.

Because sin leads to death. And why should you die? Jesus wanted them to know in this passage, I want you to live. I want you to live with me forever.

That's what Jesus wanted from his disciples. Because he cares, not just for their here and now, he cares for their eternal soul that will live on forever and ever and ever.

But is it just the disciples that Jesus cares for? Is it just the people of Israel that he cares for?

Bernardo read just a little bit earlier, the same passage, 1 Timothy 2.4 in which Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, says this, that God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

[44 : 59] Not just Israel, not just the disciples. God loves every man, woman, and child on this planet and wants to see them with him forever.

He cares for the soul of his disciples. He cares for the souls of all of Israel. And he cares for the souls of you and me.

In this text in Mark, like we talked about last week, Jesus describes what the disciples must do and not do to get the heavenly reward or really the earthly reward, the kingdom, and to avoid the punishment.

Jesus taught them that you've got to keep the law of Moses. You've got to keep that law. You've got to avoid stumbling into sin. You have to endure through the tribulation.

But here's a question. Is that what is required of us? Is that what we must do? And if it is, then we need to give it a go.

[46 : 13] We need to do everything we can. This is the most important thing in the world. Our eternal soul. Yet Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, reveals something in Romans.

It's another path to take. It's a new path that was offered through something that Jesus did after Mark chapter 9.

And it's the second part of that verse that we read in Romans chapter 6, Romans 6, 23. for the wages of sin is death. Sin has consequences.

It leads to death. But here's how that sentence ends. But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God. The gift that he offered for everyone, not just Israel. First to Israel. The Bible says actually that the gift was offered first to Israel and then it was offered to the Gentile people, to the rest of us.

[47 : 27] But it's a gift to all men, a gift of eternal life. And what is eternal life? Eternal life is living with God forever, forever and ever.

And he offered that gift. Why? Because he cares for our souls. For those who receive that gift, Paul describes in part what that accomplishes.

And this is in Romans chapter 8. He describes it this way. He says, there is therefore now, for those who have received Christ, there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Jesus introduced this new law.

law. We just talked about the old law. It's not just old. It continues. The wages of sin is death.

[48 : 46] It is this law that says, the man who sins must die. And it makes sense.

That's what we see in our criminal justice code. well, not as much as we'd like to see it, right? But we used to have capital punishment.

You shed a man's innocent blood and you will be put to death. And that is justice. But through the death of Jesus, a new law was introduced here called the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

For those who dare to trust in Christ and his death and resurrection, the Bible says here that we are made free. We are freed from one law to experience a new law.

We're released from the law of sin and death that says that if you sin, you must die. How in the world can that possibly be?

[50 : 05] Why did he do that? Kind of doesn't seem fair, right? But he cares for our souls. He wants us to see him, see us, live with him forever.

Jesus defeated sin through his death on the cross. So, for us believers, here's the question.

Well, now that we are no longer under that law of sin and death, where sin leads to death, maybe it would be a good idea for us to enjoy the pleasures of sin in this life, right?

Maybe that would be a good idea. After all, many sins are very enjoyable, at least for the short term.

This actually comes up in Romans with Paul, and he says in Romans 6, 1, what shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not.

[51 : 14] How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? And so, of course, sin still has destructive power.

If we live in Christ, it doesn't have the power anymore to separate us from God. But it still has the power to lead to a pretty miserable life here on earth, to have a pretty negative and miserable impact on those around us, and even on ourselves.

But is that the primary reason why we should not sin is because we want to prevent the kind of impact that we'll have on ourselves?

I think what the cross did, when Jesus on the cross, is he showed us a better way, the way of love. Remember when Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment?

What did he say? He said there's two. It's to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and to love your neighbor as yourself.

[52 : 27] And what did he say that did? He said, this is the fulfillment of the whole law, love. And so Jesus came and he demonstrated more than anyone had ever done before, the way love.

And that teaching that he gave was, hey, listen, if you love God, if you love your neighbor, you're not going to sin against them. And so our life, the Christian life, is not about avoiding sin, though we should, but it's about loving God and loving our neighbor with all that is within us.

Being like him, laying down our lives for others. When you're busy laying your life down for others, it's hard to find time to sin against them, isn't it?

God showed us through Jesus the way of love. And so by looking towards our Savior, and by being grateful for what he did, looking to what he did on the cross, his life, what he did, it motivates us, it influences us to be like him, to be more, as the Bible says, to be more like Christ.

And that is our goal as Christians, is to be like him. I'd like to finish up with this question.

[54 : 05] I've said a few times this phrase, Jesus cares for your soul. Jesus cares for the souls of every person in this room, for every person outside these walls.

Jesus cares for their soul. He wants them to turn to him and live. But did you know that there's a lot of people out there that don't care for their own souls?

I've talked to so many people over the years, trying to share the gospel with them. And I found that one of the huge hurdles is not, well, did Jesus really live?

Did he really rise from the dead? all these kind of apologetic type objections? But one of the biggest walls is apathy. Huh?

Whatever happens, happens. I don't care. Everybody I've ever met, though, they seem to love their body, right?

[55 : 13] They love their hands. If something happens to their hands, they're going to spend whatever it takes to go to the doctor and try to fix things, right? Something happens to their feet and they can get it remedied? We have a trillion dollar health care system in this country that attests to people loving their bodies.

And so I found it useful over the years as I talked to people about the gospel to use this passage as a way to point to something even more important than their physical health.

And so I'll share with somebody and I'll ask them this question. If I offered you a million dollars for one of your eyeballs, would you take it?

Would you do it? A million dollars will change your life. It will. But would you be willing to give up? Just one, one of your eyeballs for a million dollars.

95% of the time, no way. No way. I wouldn't do that. Occasionally, you'll get somebody. So I'll say, okay, well, what about both of them? No, I'm not going to do that.

[56 : 31] And then I'll ask them, did you know that Jesus actually talked about this? And most people who are not familiar with the Bible who are not Christians, they have no idea, even a lot of Christians don't know, that Jesus spoke these words.

And I'll quote to them what Jesus said. That it's better for you to go into eternal life maimed, blind, lame, than to go into hell with all of your body parts intact.

just hoping that maybe by referencing that and pointing them to that, it will show them the need that they have to love their own soul.

I was at the library a few weeks ago, and I couldn't help overhearing, there were some young ladies talking there, high school girls, and they were talking quite loudly, so I couldn't help but overhearing them.

And they were talking about life and getting married one day and all these things, you know, they're 16, 17 years old and I think they're in their last year of high school and who am I going to marry and what's life going to be like?

[57 : 50] And then as I listened, one of the girls, she said, you know, I don't want to get old. Can anybody feel her there?

No, nobody wants to get old. Yeah. Yeah. And then she said, and then I'm going to die.

I don't want to die. I think her friend got a little bit uncomfortable. I was like, wow. what a great place for somebody to be who doesn't know the Lord.

And so I took the opportunity and I walked up to their table. Hope I don't get offended or mad. I was listening into what they were saying. They were being pretty loud though. It wasn't my fault. And I said, I overheard you talking and I heard you talking about death.

And she was like, oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be so loud. And I said, no, no, listen. This is very important. We all want to live forever, right? I said, have you ever read the Bible?

[59 : 03] No, never read the Bible. I said, do you know the Bible will show you how to live forever? So I wrote down a piece of paper, a web address that had some gospel content.

And then I said, you know, here's something that you can read about that. But even if you don't go to this website, open up the Bible. And in the Bible, it's the most popular book of all time.

Most published, most read, most popular book of all time. Open it up and read it. And in there you will find the path to eternal life.

And so I don't know what they thought. They looked at me with kind of big eyes and okay, okay. and then we moved on. Once somebody has crossed that marker to care for their own soul, the Bible says, well, what's required now?

We talked about that this salvation that we call it is a gift. gift. But what is the cost of that gift? Well, how much do gifts cost usually?

[60 : 23] Usually nothing, but a lot of times, even in the Christian world, people are always adding things in. Well, it's free except you have to do this. Well, it's mostly free, but you at least have to do some of these things over here.

Maybe the cost is just too high. We should just forget about it. Maybe it's a gift, but maybe it's hiding somewhere and we just have to find it.

Where is it at? Romans 10 tells us about the gift. Romans 10 verse 5 says this, For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law.

The man who does those things shall live by them. That was the law of Moses. The law of Moses was, hey, if you want to have life, you have to do these things in the law.

The man who does these things in the law, you will have life through them. You will live through them. That was under the law of Moses.

[61 : 31] But a change happened when Jesus died. And he continues on. But the righteousness of faith speaks this way.

So the law spoke in one way, do these things and live, but the righteousness of faith, this new path to God speaks in this way.

And here's what it says. Do not say in your heart who will ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down from above, or who will descend into the abyss, that is to bring Christ up from the dead.

But what does it say? The word is near you. It's in your mouth and in your heart. And that is the word of faith which we preach. That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

There is no need to build a highway to heaven. There's no need to explore the depths of the oceans. Where is this gift at? That I so desperately need.

[62 : 40] There are no obstacles. The word is right here. He calls it the word of faith which we speak. And what is that word? Here's what it is.

Jesus died for your sins. That's it. That's the word of faith. And not just Jesus died for your sins, but Jesus died for my sins.

And if you will confess that with your mouth and believe that with your heart, you will find eternal life in Christ Jesus. The word is right there.

That's all it takes. It's so simple. And so I'll leave you with this. If that's something that you have not done, would you be willing to believe that today?

To put your trust in him? To confess that with your mouth? I believe that Jesus died for me. And hold on to that with all of your heart and with all of your soul.

[63 : 49] And he promises that if you do that, we will live with him forever. are you glad today that Jesus cares for your soul?

Are you glad that he made it so simple? So easy to do. You know, the number one obstacle that I find is there is an obstacle, but it's not out there.

The obstacle is in here. It's an obstacle of pride. I don't need that. I don't need him. I'm fine. If we can overcome that little obstacle that sometimes seems so big, the rest of it is just as simple as can be.

Just to humble ourselves and be willing to trust him. Let's take some time to thank him for that gift. Father, we love you. We do.

We want to live. We want to live forever. You designed us. You created us to live forever and you made a way that even though our lives have been a mess, that we can have that just by trusting in you.

[65 : 03] We don't have to build a stairway to heaven or explore the depths of the ocean or look all over the globe for you've made it available, readily available right in front of us.

I pray that if there's anybody here in the sound of my voice that has not done that, that you would work in their hearts to do that even today, that they might become a child of yours and live forever and ever with you.

We thank you for all these things. In the name of Jesus our Savior, Amen.