

## **What I Cannot Do - Ephesians 2:1-10**

*G. Scott Brown - 7/14/19*

Well, I am grateful for the opportunity this morning to open God's word with you. The message today is one that has been ruminating in my heart for some time. It's something that has come up frequently when I am talking to people about their spiritual condition. When I ask the question "why do you think that you'll get to heaven," time and time again I have heard the response "because I'm a good person."

Apart from the truth of God's Word, that response kinda makes sense. Our natural intuition says that good people should be rewarded for their good behavior, and bad people should be punished. This seems right in our own eyes. We appeal to our sense of justice, which demands that if our good works outweigh our bad, then we deserve to go to heaven. We compare ourselves to others who have committed heinous crimes and say, "well I'm not as bad as THAT person." But Proverbs 14:12 warns us, "*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.*"

In the world today, Christianity is the only religion that teaches that you cannot earn your way to heaven. In Buddhism, you earn "enlightenment" through taking steps on the Eightfold Path which includes acts of morality, acts of meditation, and acts of wisdom. In Islam, you can attain salvation through observing the Five Pillars of Islamic practice - Belief in Allah, Daily prayers, Fasting, Charity, and a Pilgrimage to Mecca. In Judaism, a person's adherence to the 10 Commandments and the law determines their eternal destination. Atonement for sin can be made through repentance, prayer, and good works. All of these religions have something in common - you must work for your salvation. You must do certain things, and act in certain ways.

In all of this, I think one of the biggest reasons why we think it seems right that we can earn our salvation, is our natural human desire to be in control of our own destiny. Salvation by works appeals to our pride and longing for control. We as humans love to assert our independence and not have to rely on anyone. I think this mentality has pervaded our culture today. We live in a "Do It Yourself" or DIY culture. We have enough knowledge at our fingertips to tackle about any endeavor. If there is a problem with your washing machine, you can just go on YouTube and have someone guide you through the process of diagnosing the problem and fixing it; if you want to add a backsplash to your kitchen, you can find a video online that will show you how to do it. I'm even getting in on the game - I recently started a project to build my own guitar - there are tons of resources online that I am using to walk myself step by step through the process. Now, in all fairness, not all DIY projects turn out so well. Here are a few examples **(SHOW PICTURES #1-3)**.

The reality is, we can't make it on our own - especially when it comes to our spiritual life and salvation. Today, I want to look at God's word in Ephesians chapter 2 where we'll see 3 things that, try as hard as we might, we cannot do on our own. Let's stand to our feet for the reading of God's Word.

*Read Ephesians 2:1-10 & Pray*

### **I. I Cannot Live a Perfect Life (vs. 1-3a)**

Let's take a look at this passage together and discover the three things that we cannot do. The first point in the message can be found in verses 1 through 3, and that is "I Cannot Live a Perfect Life." At the beginning of Ephesians 2, the Apostle Paul who is writing to the church at Ephesus, paints a pretty grim

picture of our life before Christ. He calls us dead men who lived in the lusts of our flesh and were children of wrath. That may seem a little harsh, but as we'll see, that is a very accurate description of how God sees us before we are saved.

Today when you go to a bookstore, you will see countless titles about how you can better your life, how you can improve yourself, how you can become a better person. The problem with that approach is - in this passage Paul tells us that we're dead. A dead man can't better himself, He's DEAD! In the same way, modern medicine can do amazing things - remodel disfigured faces, transplant organs, bypass arteries - but all of those surgeries require one thing - that you're alive! Once someone is dead, the only thing the doctor can do for you is put a sheet over your body and send you to the morgue. Warren Wiersbe said it well, *"The unbeliever is not sick; he is dead! He does not need resuscitation; he needs resurrection."*

In the same way that a physically dead person cannot respond to physical stimuli, a spiritually dead person cannot respond to spiritual things. Someone who is lost can do good to other people, but they can't do anything spiritually good to please God. Isaiah 64 verse 6 says, *"We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment . . ."* The literal translation of "polluted garments" are menstrual cloths. That's how God sees even our most wonderful, sacrificial and generous acts if we are apart from Christ. God's standard for us is a perfect life. We're not even close - we're spiritually dead. We haven't done one single good thing that would please God.

What is the cause of this spiritual death? Verse 1 of our passage says, "you were dead in your trespasses and sins." Now if you have been a believer for many years, that verse may make perfect sense to you, but if you are new to the faith or not yet a believer, it is so important that we understand the nature of our sin, so that we can understand our need for a Savior. The word sin means to "miss the mark, to wander from the right path, to go wrong, or to do wrong." It is anything any thought, or word, or action that is contrary to God's law.

We read in the book of Genesis that God made this world and everything in it - he made the trees, and rocks, and all that we see around us. And he also created the natural laws that govern our world. He created the law of gravity - that what goes up must come down. If we break God's natural laws - there are consequences. If we decide that we don't believe in gravity and jump off a skyscraper, guess what, there are consequences - namely, you're going to become a pancake. In the same way, God also created spiritual laws to govern our world. When we deviate from these spiritual laws, we are committing sin. Tim Keller said it this way, *"When you, a being created to live for God, live instead for yourself, you violate your design."* We were created to live for God and follow His laws.

So, you may be thinking - "ok, great, so all I have to do is follow God's laws perfectly and commit no sin and then I can get to heaven." Well, you would be right. If you could go through this life and commit no sin, then yes, you would earn your salvation. The problem is though, none of us can do it. Romans 3:23 says, *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

In the book of Genesis, we see that Adam and Eve committed the first sin by disobeying God's instructions. Ever since that time, the human race has been infected with the disease of sin - and we are born into it. Psalm 51:5 says, *"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."* We have a natural tendency towards sin, even from our first breath. Commentator John Phillips says, *"One of the first behaviors a child displays, as soon as it is able to express its developing personality, is disobedience. No one ever has to teach a child to be disobedient. Rather, a child has to be taught to obey, and the lesson has to be reinforced often. Disobedience comes naturally."*

My wife, Lindsey, and I are experiencing this firsthand with our 1 year-old son Samuel. We love him to death, but right now, he is discovering what it means to obey and disobey. He knows what he is

allowed to do and not allowed to do, but he loves to push the boundaries. For Christmas last year, he was given a little child's rocking chair, and instead of sitting in it, he loves to stand up on it and rock back and forth (**SHOW PICTURE #4**). Of course, Lindsey and I have made it clear that he is not allowed to do that. But any chance he gets, he's up swinging away on that rocking chair. What you don't see in this picture is often times when he is caught doing something wrong, he will give us a big cheesy grin and start waving at us - as if saying, "Look at how cute and innocent I am." That doesn't fly. The point of Lindsey and I teaching him boundaries is not to spoil all his fun, it's to keep him safe! We know what is best for him and only have good intentions with our rules. In the same way, God didn't design spiritual laws to keep us from having any fun, he wants to spare us the pain, regret, and suffering that comes along with our sin.

In verses 2 & 3 of our passage, the Apostle Paul outlines 3 forces that encourage us in our disobedience and sin. They are the world, the devil, and our flesh. Each of these influences can wreak havoc on our spiritual lives if we let them. The first is the world. By the world, the Apostle Paul is referring to the ideologies and systems of thinking in our world. If you flip on the TV or surf Facebook, it doesn't take you long to realize that our world has some messed up ideas. The media today loves to even flaunt things that are clearly contrary to God's law. The world was rebelling against God the day that the Apostle Paul wrote this book to the Ephesians in the first century, and it is still hostile toward God today. I like how the Message translation puts verse 2, "*You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live.*" In order to overcome the world, we need to look to God and His word - which tells us how to live.

The next influence is the devil, referred to in our passage as "the prince of the power of the air." Jesus said, referring to the devil in John 10:10 that, "*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*" The devil would want nothing more than for your life to end up in complete ruin. He wants to break up your marriage, cause your kids to rebel, make you miserable at work, and keep you from any kind of relationship with God. The devil doesn't want you to come to church, he doesn't want you to give, he doesn't want you to serve, he would like nothing more for you to remain in your sin and be miserable for the rest of your life. But Jesus, wants to give you life and life abundantly. Let's look to Him and not be caught in the schemes of the enemy.

The first two influences, the world and the devil, come from outside of us, but the last, comes from within. We've already talked about our natural propensity to sin, and this manifests itself in what the Apostle Paul refers to as our "flesh." Pastor Matthew preached an awesome message a few weeks ago about the "hindrance of the flesh," so I'm not going to go in depth here, but suffice to say, our own sinful desires can produce all sorts of problems in our lives. In 1 Corinthians 9 verse 27 the Apostle Paul says, "*But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.*" Paul is encouraging us to exercise self-control, which is a fruit of the spirit. This cannot be accomplished by our own effort, but by God working in and through us. We must guard ourselves against all three of these influences to keep ourselves from sin.

You may be thinking at this point, "Scott, I've heard about sin from when I was a little child in Sunday School, this isn't any news to me." To all of us today, my hope is that we not only acknowledge the fact that we have sinned, but we also begin to have a further understanding of the depth of our sinfulness. I think we can sometimes have a casual attitude towards sin - "oh it's just a little white lie" or "it's not going to hurt anybody" - but I pray that we recognize how our sin grieves the heart of God. If it grieves God, it should grieve us as well.

I was listening to a sermon recently by David Platt, and he told this incredible story that deeply challenged me as it relates to my brokenness over sin. He began to recount that at the turn of the century in the year 1900, less than 1% of the Korean population were Christians. That all began to change at a conference of leaders in what is now known as the Pyongyang Revival of 1907. In January of that year, there was a conference held with a number of Christian leaders including both Koreans and missionaries from other countries in Pyongyang, what is now the capital of North Korea.

In anticipation of that meeting, many of them were pleading before God, the country was struggling, churches were struggling. They were desperate. And during the meeting, the preachers, both missionaries and Korean pastors, while they were preaching became overwhelmed by the sin in their own lives and the need for repentance. They started confessing their sin in front of everyone at the conference. Their confession led others in the audience to do the same, people started spontaneously standing up and confessing their sin, crying out for God's mercy.

One pastor wrote about that first night. He said, *"Just as on the day of Pentecost, God came to us in Pyongyang that night with the sound of weeping. As the prayer continued, a spirit of heaviness and sorrow for sin came down upon the audience. Over on one side someone began to weep, and in a moment the whole audience was weeping. Man after man would rise, confess his sins, break down and weep, then throw himself to the floor and beat the floor with his fists in perfect agony of conviction. One friend tried to make a confession, broke down in the midst of it and cried to me across the room, 'Pastor, tell me, is there any hope for me? Can I be forgiven?' then threw himself to the floor and wept and wept, and almost screamed in agony. 'We would all weep, we could not help it, so the meeting went on like this until 2 o'clock in the morning, with confession and weeping and praying.'"*

What happened that night continued the next day, and the next, and the marks of Korean revival were born. And in the days to come, that movement of God's spirit swept into village after village and church after church. People started coming to Christ left and right, churches were being planted. Christians were praying early every morning; they would gather for all night prayer gatherings. Fast forward one short century later, through all sorts of political turmoil and persecution, in South Korea alone, by the year 2000 there were over 10 million followers of Jesus. Ten million. And South Korea is now second only to the United States in the number of missionaries sent around the world.

Oh, that we would have the same kind of brokenness over our sin that took place in Pyongyang. Oh, that we would begin to see our sin as God sees it. John Phillips said, *"We have no real understanding of how outraged God is by our sin, what an insult sin is to His person, or how sin fires the flames of His wrath."*

That brings us to our second point in the message, that we cannot avoid the consequence of sin.

## **II. I Cannot Avoid the Consequence of Sin (vs. 3b-7)**

In Ephesians 2, the second part of verse 3 tells us that we are by nature children of wrath. The NIV translation says that we are "deserving of wrath." God's wrath isn't one of those subjects that we love to talk about. It doesn't make us feel too good about ourselves and to be honest, God's wrath is scary. In the church, we talk about God's mercy and grace all the time, but we don't often broach the subject of His wrath. To be honest, some churches choose to ignore that aspect of God altogether. One of the songs we sang this morning, "In Christ Alone" has been edited by some to exclude the phrase "the wrath of God was satisfied." Instead, they sing, "Till on that cross as Jesus died, the love of God was

satisfied.” While it’s no one’s favorite subject, we need to recognize that throughout the scriptures, we see that God does indeed exercise His wrath.

In Colossians 3 verses 5 & 6 we read, *“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming.”* We also see that God’s wrath burns against those who reject His ways and the truth of His word. Romans 1:18 says, *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.”*

God’s wrath is not exclusive either - it doesn’t matter who you are, sin provokes His wrath. In Exodus 32, we see that while Moses is up on the mountain hearing from the Lord, the nation of Israel had made an idol in the form of a golden calf and was worshipping it. This did not make God too happy. In Exodus 32:10 we read, *“Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation out of you.”* Here we see God’s wrath burn against His own chosen people - the Israelites - because of their sin.

It says in verse 3 of Ephesians 2, that we were by nature children of wrath, *like the rest of mankind*. Here Paul is implying that both Jews and Gentiles are subject to God’s wrath. No one is exempt. Every single person here in this room today, including me, either used to be a child of God’s wrath or currently is a child of God’s wrath.

We’ve established already that we all have sinned and cannot live a perfect life, and the consequence for that sin is God’s wrath upon us. The Bible tells us that God’s wrath is poured out in a place of torture called hell, where those who don’t believe in Jesus will spend all of eternity separated from God. In Matthew 25, Jesus tells us about the final judgement. In verse 31 we read, *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”* Skipping down to verse 41 we read, *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”* One day, we will all stand before Christ in judgement, and you will either be on his right or on his left. We need to be ready for that day.

While the Bible describes hell as a very real place, there are many who can’t reconcile the fact that a loving God would send anyone there. The Bible says that God is love - He is the very definition of the word - how could He condemn anyone? How could a loving God send someone to hell? That is major question and barrier that prevents many from coming to Christ. Our culture defines a “loving God” as a completely non-confrontational being who tolerates anything we want to do. That is not a biblical definition.

1 John 4:8 tells us that God is love. But God is not JUST love, He is so much more than that. God is faithful, God is good, God is kind, and God is also just. He cannot in Himself let sin go unpunished. That would be against His nature. But how can God be both a God of justice and a God of love?

Think for a minute of the last time you got a speeding ticket. You were clearly going over the speed limit, and the police officer caught you red handed. As the officer approaches your vehicle and you roll down your window, what is the first thing you likely do? You probably try to make excuses or plead with the officer to let you off with a warning. In that instance the officer has two choices. He could either be just and give you the ticket like you deserve, or he could show mercy and let you off the hook. If he lets you off the hook, he may be demonstrating love, but he is not being just and upholding the law that he has sworn to honor. So, he can be either loving or just. He cannot be both. But what if the officer does

something unexpected. What if he writes you the ticket, but then does the unthinkable and pulls out his checkbook and writes you a check to cover your fine. He is then both upholding the law and demonstrating love towards you.

That is exactly what God has done for us. God has to uphold His law, because He is just, but He took the punishment for our sin upon Himself. The love of God and the justice of God collided once and for all on the cross of Jesus Christ. There is no greater picture of love, and no greater picture of justice than what Jesus has done for us. God's justice makes His love shine all the more brightly.

Here we reach a turning point in Ephesians 2. Verses 4-7 say, *"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."* Isn't that good news? Can we praise Him this morning for His love for us?

The fact is, those that are saved from God's wrath draw even more delight from the fact that they are saved. If there was no consequence for our sin, then we would have no reason to celebrate our salvation. 2 Thessalonians 5:9 says, *"For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."* God doesn't want us to experience the consequences of our sin, He wants to take the punishment so that we can be with Him in heaven. 2 Peter 3:9 says, *"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."* We cannot avoid the consequence of sin, but Jesus has taken that consequence upon Himself, so that we can be saved.

### **III. I Cannot Earn my Salvation (vs. 8-10)**

That leads us to the final point in the message today, that I Cannot Earn my Salvation. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."* I like the way the Message translation puts it, *"He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. He did all this on his own, with no help from us!"* We can clearly see in these verses that salvation is a gift, not a reward. Warren Wiersbe said it this way, *"Salvation cannot be 'of works' because the work of salvation has already been completed on the cross. This is the work that God does for us, and it is a finished work. We can add nothing to it; we dare take nothing from it."*

#### **A. My Works Do Not Save Me (vs. 8-9)**

The fact is, my works do not save me. We see this not just in Ephesians 2, but in many other places in scripture. Titus 3:5 says, *"He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit."* We also see this in Romans 3:28 which says, *"For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law."* There are even passages in the Old Testament that point to the fact that our works can't save us. Right now I am doing a devotional through the book of Psalms, and I came across Psalm 49:7-9 and it blew me away! It says, *"Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice, that he should live on forever and never see the pit."* In other

words, we cannot save ourselves! There is no price that we can pay or thing we can do to save our own souls.

Ephesians 2 verse 8 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith.” God loves to demonstrate His grace. The word grace is mentioned 3 times in our passage this morning, and another 115 times throughout the New Testament. Grace is giving us something we do not deserve, and it is God’s work, not ours. In this verse, we can see a salvation equation if you will (**SHOW PICTURE #5**). We have Grace + Faith = Salvation.

Grace is God’s part and faith is our part. We see here a change in action and also a change in belief. In accepting God’s grace, we are signifying a change in action. We accept Christ’s forgiveness for our sins and we repent or turn from our sinful way of doing things. In looking to Jesus in faith, we signify a change in belief. We are saying that we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and acknowledge Him as Lord of our life. When we accept God’s gift of grace and place our faith in Him, we can be saved.

But we must always remember that faith is not the end of our part, it is only the beginning. Salvation is not just a get out of hell free card. We are not just saved FROM something; we are saved TO something. Warren Wiersbe said it this way, “*God’s purpose in our redemption is not simply to rescue us from hell, as great a work as that is. His ultimate purpose in our salvation is that for all eternity the church might glorify God’s grace.*”

## **B. My Works Are the Evidence That I Am Saved (v. 10)**

Ephesians 2 verse 10 says, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” The purpose of God giving us spiritual life is for good works. My works do not save me, but instead my works are the evidence that I am saved.

The book of James has much to say about faith and works and how they go together. In James 2:14-17 we read, “*What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*” What James is saying here is that our works are the evidence of our faith. If our faith is not producing good works, then maybe we don’t have a genuine faith at all.

James goes on in verse 19, “*You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe - and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works.*”

James here uses an excellent illustration of how faith and works go together. Many of us know the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22. God instructs Abraham to sacrifice and kill his only son, Isaac, whom he loves. As a Father, I can’t even imagine the turmoil God’s instruction must have put Abraham through - yet he obeyed. Even to the point of raising the knife over his son’s body. We know the rest of the story, that an angel stopped Abraham and then the Lord provided a ram for the sacrifice. In all of it, Abraham was being tested to see who he loved most - his son or the Lord.

Here’s how we see faith and works at play in the life of Abraham. Hebrews 11:9 tells us that Abraham believed that God could raise the dead, and so in this instance, he believed that God would either spare his son, or raise him back from the dead. That is the faith part. But Abraham didn’t stop there,

he obeyed. He took his son, tied him up, and was completely prepared to follow through with what God had told Him. If Abraham had have just believed God could do it, but not acted upon it, he would not have obeyed the Lord. It was only when faith and works were combined that God was pleased with Him.

We must be careful though, because it is easy to fall into one of two ditches when it comes to our works. One the one side, we can fall into legalism and on the other side we can fall into lethargy. First, we must guard ourselves against legalism. Legalism involves keeping man-made religious rules to obtain the righteousness of God. It is dangerous, because it can lead to the trap of once again believing that we can be saved by our works. Legalism was prevalent in Jesus' day in the life of the Pharisees. They followed all of these rules that were outside of God's law in order to try to find favor. They had an outward form of religion, but they were doing it for all of the wrong reasons. They sought to find honor in the sight of men, but not in the sight of God. As a result, Jesus called them "whitewashed tombs" in Matthew 23, that are beautiful on the outside, but are full of uncleanness and dead people's bones on the inside.

In our struggle against legalism, we must remember Ephesians 2 verse 9, which tells us that we are saved through faith, not a result of works, *so that no one may boast*. If we're honest though, sometimes we do take pride in our righteousness and in our faith. We may advertise to others how often we read our Bibles, or how much we serve, or how long we've been a believer. This spiritual pride can lead us straight into legalism.

I was told once by a wise believer that, "the kingdom of God is level ground." What he meant by this was that it doesn't matter if you are the Pastor of the biggest church in America, or if you are a recovering drug addict who just put their faith in Christ - God sees all of us the same. There is no status in the kingdom of God. We need to get off our high-horses and humbly serve the Lord.

Well, we must not only guard ourselves against legalism, but we must also guard against lethargy. This attitude says - "Well I'm saved by faith, so I don't need to do any good works. I can just sit here and wait until God calls me home to heaven." Statistics tell us that there are many who adopt this attitude. In a 2014 survey, researchers found that 63% of Americans believed in God, but only half of those people read their Bibles once a week and regularly attended a worship service. Right at 50% of people acknowledge their belief in the Lord but aren't doing anything about it! They have fallen into the ditch of lethargy.

Ephesians 2 verse 10 tells us that we were created for good works that God has prepared for us to do! Don't just sit in a chair on a Sunday morning and think that your "duty" to the Lord is done, get out there and do something for Him! Stop for the person with a flat tire, listen and pray for a hurting co-worker, invest in the lives of your neighbors, go on a mission trip, serve on a ministry team here at Crosslink, be the hands and feet of Christ!

I heard in the news just this past week that a local government in China is offering rewards for those who report Christians who are gathering to worship illegally. These cash rewards are intended to bribe community members into reporting their neighbors to the authorities. It's a heartbreaking reality, but it also begs the question, if that happened here in Virginia, would your neighbors report you? Is it evident in your life that you are a Christian or would your neighbors or co-workers or friends have no idea? Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:16 to ". . . *let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*" We are called to demonstrate our faith through our works, but we are also to always remember that those works cannot save us.

## **Conclusion**

Well, this morning we've seen 3 things that we cannot do. We cannot live a perfect life, we cannot avoid the consequence of sin, and we cannot earn our salvation.

I'd like to conclude the message today with a story that can be found in David Platt's book *Radical*. In the book, Platt tells a story of sitting outside a Buddhist temple in Indonesia where he was engaged in conversation with a Buddhist leader and a Muslim leader in that community. They were discussing how all religions are fundamentally the same and only superficially different. They argued that they may have different views about small issues, but when it comes down to essential issues, each religion is the same. Platt listened for a while, and then they asked him what he thought.

He said, "It sounds as though you both picture God at the top of a mountain. It seems as if you believe that we are all at the base of the mountain, and I may take one route up the mountain, you may take another, and in the end we will all end up in the same place." The Muslim and Buddhist leaders smiled and happily replied, "Exactly! You understand!" Then Platt leaned in and said, "Now let me ask you a question. What would you think if I told you that the God at the top of the mountain actually came down to where we are? What would you think if I told you that God doesn't wait for people to find their way to him, but instead he comes to us." They thought for a moment and then responded, "That would be great." Platt replied, "Let me introduce you to Jesus."

You see, when other religions say "DO," Jesus says "DONE." We cannot live a perfect life, but Jesus DID! Hebrews 4:15 says, *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."* What is impossible for man, is possible with God. We cannot avoid the consequence of sin, but Jesus took the consequence of sin for us! That line in "In Christ Alone" is true, "Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied." Jesus took our place, He took our sin, and He paid the price so that we could be saved. We cannot earn our salvation with our good works, but Jesus DID! He lived the perfect life that we couldn't live, He died a perfect death, and He rose again in victory, securing salvation for all that call upon His name! We can strive and strive and try to climb the mountain to God, but the reality is, God is not at the top of the mountain. God came down the mountain and is here with us. He is not asking us to try to climb up to Him, but to simply accept the free gift of salvation that He offers.

Let's Pray