

“THE WAY, THE TRUTH & THE LIFE”
Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16, I Peter 2:2-10, John 14:1-14
May 6 & 7, 2023

“A young man named Sinner once received from his Father a beautiful, bright-red convertible.

He named it Salvation - sparkling, new, clean, modern, powerful.

“It delighted the young man so much, especially because it was a gift. He could never have afforded it. So delighted, the boy even changed his name from Sinner to Saved.

“He polished his car every week. Took pictures of it. Sent it to friends. Looked it over - front, back, under, top, bottom, inside out. Never - never tired of telling others about the gift. ‘My father gave it to me. It was free!’

“Some days later Saved was seen out on the highway, pushing Salvation. An individual named Helper walked up and introduced himself and asked if he could assist.

“Oh, no thanks. Just out enjoying my new car,’ as he wiped the sweat off his face. ‘Just had a little trouble because my bumper kept cutting my hands, especially on these hills. But then a nice man helped me. Showed me how to mount little rubber cushions right here, underneath the bumper, and now I can push this thing for hours without a blister. Also, I’ve been trying something new lately. They use it over in England. You put your back against the car, lift, and it works like a charm, especially on muddy roads.’

“Helper asked, ‘Have you pushed the car very far?’

“Well, about 200 miles altogether. It’s been hard, but since it was a gift from my Father, that’s the least I can do in return to thank him.’

“Helper opened the door on the right side and said, ‘Get in.’

“After a bit of hesitation, Saved decided it was worth a try and he slid in on the passenger side and rested for the first time since he’d been given the car. Helper walked around, opened the door, slid in behind the wheel, and started the car.

“What’s all that noise?’ Saved said. Moments later they were moving down the highway quietly, at fifty, sixty miles an hour. He was taken aback. It all seemed to fall into place. It was even exciting.

He knew he needed this Salvation Car to be admitted through the gate at the end of the highway. But somehow he felt that getting there was *his* responsibility.”¹

Many in our world today are, like Sinner, trying their very best to save themselves by striving to work out their own salvation. They’re working hard, toiling through difficult situations, doing their best to achieve something that they, themselves, cannot do - pay the price for their sin. Salvation from our sins cannot be accomplished on our own, through our hard work, or by strict adherence to man-made, or even God-made rules. We cannot earn our way to Eternal Life through our own merits and by our own devices. There’s nothing we can do to earn it - we just cannot pay enough since this world’s riches have no influence upon our being saved from our sins. We cannot earn salvation through acts of kindness or self-less deeds done on the behalf of others. There’s nothing we can do on our own to achieve Salvation. Salvation only comes from the Lord as a gift to us that we must believe, receive and let live within our very lives.

We hear that in the first Scripture lesson today from Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16. King David called out to the Lord for His help, to provide a refuge for him so that he might be delivered in His righteousness from any shame he had here in this life. David came to understand that he needed the Lord’s help to find protection, and nurture, and provision, and life itself. It was God who is our “*rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me*” (31:2).

Knowing what the Lord was able to do, David put his trust in the Lord rather than on his own strength or wisdom, even to the point that he says, “*Into Your hands I commit my spirit: deliver me, Lord, my faithful God*” (31:5). Some of you might recognize that the first part of this verse was quoted by Jesus as His last words from the cross. It is a total submission into the hands of our awesome and powerful God to do His will and His work in and through us. And when we give all our life to God, He empowers us to do what He has called us to do, not by our own strength or wisdom, but by His power and might.

¹ (Larry Christenson, *The Renewed Mind*, found in *Swindoll’s Book of Illustrations*, [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989] p 504)

Only then can we say to God, “*My times are in Your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me. Let your face shine on Your servant; save me in Your unfailing love*” (Psalm 31:15-16).

That’s why God devised a plan for us to find Salvation as a gift to us from Him. He sent His Son, Jesus, into this world so that through Him, we might find the forgiveness of our sins, and freedom from the eternal punishment caused by those sins. Jesus bore our sins upon Him when He died on the cross, and paid the ultimate price for those sins as the perfect Sacrifice given once for all who would claim Him as Savior and Lord.

But how many of us are still out there pushing our salvation car, trying to do it all by ourselves. Oh, we may recognize Jesus, we may even claim to believe in Jesus, but we’re trusting in our own wisdom and strength to accomplish what Jesus has already done. We’re trying to win our way into heaven by our own merits and works. That’s what doesn’t work. And then it’s like the commercials on TV where a man or woman are pictured dressed in a lab coat and stethoscope making the claim, “I’m not a doctor, but I play one on TV,” and then they go on to try to convince us of some medical practice they think we need to have in our life.

Without Jesus in our lives as our Savior, AND as our Lord, we have no authority to be proclaiming to anyone that we have the answers to life’s problems. Yet we masquerade as people of faith but have no hope of eternal life for our own because we’re trying to tell God how salvation is to work. However, Salvation is ONLY of the Lord Jesus, and only those who believe in Him, receive Him as their Savior, and then trust in Him in their everyday lives find eternal life through Him.

We hear that same message in I Peter 2:2-10. We are to “*crave pure spiritual milk*” found only in Jesus Christ, “*so that by it you may grow up in your salvation*” (2:2). Only as we come to Jesus and let our lives be nourished and guided by Him can we find our lives changed and our salvation won. He is the One that fills us with love and joy and peace and patience so that we might endure all that this world has thrown at us. We are to rely upon Jesus completely in our lives - He’s already won the war.

We don't need to accomplish salvation again, but we need to give control of our lives over to Jesus so that we can have real life through Him.

Peter continues to encourage us to put our dependence upon Jesus. *“As you come to Him, the living Stone - rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to Him - you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”* (2:4-5). Only as we put Jesus as the foundation cornerstone of our lives are we able to live for Him, work for Him, and find ourselves blessed by Him. Outside of Jesus, all of our efforts toward righteousness are empty and worthless.

Peter refers back to Isaiah 8:13-14, telling us, *“The Lord Almighty is the One you are to regard as holy, He is the One you are to fear, He is the One you are to dread. He will be a holy place; for both Israel and Judah He will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall...”*

And explaining further what Isaiah tells us, Peter says, *“They stumble because they disobeyed the message - which is also what they were destined for”* (I Pet. 2:8).

Anyone who claims to be a Christian has to have Jesus Christ first and foremost in their life if they are the real deal. Just claiming to be a Christian doesn't give us the Salvation we need. We must first claim Jesus as our Savior, and then begin to implement ALL of Jesus' teachings into our lives and strive to live according to ALL the teachings of the Bible if we can even hope for Salvation from our sin, and thereby receive eternal life. Only then, by proclaiming Jesus as Lord of our hearts, minds, and souls, and then living for Him by doing all that He has commanded us to do, can we find the Salvation of the Lord.

Jesus reinforces this very concept as He met with His disciples the day before He was arrested, tried and crucified. Listen to these words of John 14:1-14. (READ John 14:1-14)

Jesus was telling the disciples exactly what His purpose was and is - to bring us to be with God the Father, in His house, as His family. In these first few encouraging words of Jesus, we can have confidence of being with Him in the Father's house, as we *“believe also in Him”* (14:1) because He is

the One who enables us to get into the Father's house. As the Son of God, Jesus opens the door for those whom He determines to come into His Father's house. Jesus is the One making plans for those who believe, receive and live for Him, so that they might be welcomed into eternal life. And He has promised to return to gather all of those who are His to escort them into the Kingdom of God.

But then Jesus makes this marvelous statement, "*You know the way to the place where I am going*" (14:4). That was a completely new concept for the disciples. Jesus had told them that He was going back to the Father, but there was nothing implicating the way in which He would do that.

So Thomas spoke up and asked "*Lord, we don't know where You are going, so how can we know the way*" (14:5). It was an honest question. The disciples were all thinking from an earthly perspective, thinking that maybe Jesus was going to become the King of Israel and reside in Jerusalem. Being that they were His closest friends and followers, they may have hoped to be there with Him when He became the King.

However, Jesus was speaking from a spiritual perspective, talking about life beyond this life, an eternal life with God the Father. No earthly roads can get us there. Nothing from this world can get us there. The earthly things in this world cannot obtain spiritual things of God. He wasn't telling them how they could make it happen, like Peter Pan telling the children, "The first star on the right and straight on till morning." Rather, Jesus was telling them, "Follow Me and I will guide you there." So Thomas was rightly confused over the way to get to God from starting here on the earth.

Jesus hoped to answer his question, and help to open up the eyes of the disciples. "*Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you really know Me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him*" (14:6). Remember, Jesus had just told His disciples to believe in Him. He was and is the key that would unlock the door to the gates of Heaven to allow in all those who put their trust and faith in Him as the Messiah, the Savior. No other work had to be done. All we need to do is to trust in His work of Salvation and then follow Jesus the rest of our lives. We don't have to go out and kill ourselves or

others in order to obtain our place in the Father's house. It is a simple decision to let Jesus become our Savior, but then the difficult job of living for Him the rest of our lives.

That one statement of Jesus to His disciples is the absolute crux of the Christian faith. To be a follower of Jesus Christ, we need to believe that Jesus is The Way, The Truth, and The Life, but not only that, we need to live it. But what did Jesus mean when He stated that He is The Way, the Truth and The Life?

First, Jesus is the way in which we can know God. Philip had asked Jesus to see God and then it would be enough for them (14:8). But Jesus responded, *“Don't you know Me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?' Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing His work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves”* (14:9-11).

Everything Jesus did was from the Father. Everything Jesus said was from the Father. Jesus was manifesting the Father while here on the earth, making known the Father to us so that we could come to know Him. His miracles were done because of the divine power within Him as the Son of God. His teachings were given through the Holy Spirit that lived in Him. Jesus' whole life was to show us the Father so that we could believe in God, receive God into our lives, trust the Word of God and implement it into our lives, and to then help others see God through us.

Outside of Jesus, we have only glimpses of God's presence. Moses saw God as a burning bush. The people of Israel saw God as a pillar of fire and cloud. Elijah experienced God as a still small voice. Isaiah saw God in a vision, *“high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of His robe filled the temple”* (Is. 6:1). That vision called him into ministry for the Lord God to reach out to the people of Israel to call them back to worship of the Lord. King Nebuchadnezzar saw God as a hand writing on the wall.

Jesus came as God in the flesh, “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*” (John 1:36). He came as the perfect Sacrifice to atone for our sins so that we could stand before God without spot or blemish, having been purified of our sin by His work on the cross. Jesus is the One who makes it possible for us to receive eternal life, but only if we put our trust in Him as the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

Jesus is also The Truth. The gospel writer, John, describes Jesus as the Word, being with God and being God, made flesh to dwell among us (John 1:1-2, 14). Everything Jesus said was truth. Everything Jesus did was Truth. There was nothing false in Him - no lie, no breaking of the commandments, no carousing, no unrighteousness, no hatred, no malice, no sin whatsoever. The teachings He gave were directly from the Hebrew Scriptures, they were from God, Himself, and they were to counter the lies of the world.

“After a morning church service a man stopped [the pastor] and said, ‘I’ve waited till the end to talk to you, because I’ve got a question that may take a long time to answer. I want to know from you, what is the truth? I’ve heard you talk and I’ve listened to you preach. What do you mean when you refer to the truth?’

“He was standing with his arms folded hugging a Bible to his chest. [The pastor] punched the cover of his Bible and said, ‘Everything within the covers of that book, and nothing else.’ [The pastor said,] I don’t think I had ever answered that question like that before. He expected a long answer, but to his surprise, and a little to mine, it wasn’t very long at all. Scriptural truth is what we need.”²

So if Jesus used Scriptures in His life and teachings, if He is the Word who was with God in the beginning (Jn. 1:2), and if the Scriptures tell of His life, teachings, death and resurrection, then He is our Truth in which we can put our hope upon above any other source.

John Stott explains to us, “To walk in the Truth is more than to give assent to it. It means to apply it to one’s behavior. He who ‘walks in the truth’ is an integrated Christian in whom there is no

² (Charles Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Ultimate Book of Illustrations*, [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998] pg. 590)

dichotomy between profession and practice. On the contrary, there is in him an exact correspondence between his creed and his conduct.”³

Finally, Jesus is The Life. If Jesus is the Word, who was in the beginning with God, and “*Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made*” (Jn. 1:3), then it is right to say that “*In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind*” (Jn. 1:4). The world around us, the life we have, the air we breathe, is all from Him, and He is what makes life possible. Without Jesus, there is no real life. Oh, there may be existence from the creation of the world giving birth to other creatures, but outside of Jesus Christ there is no meaning, no purpose and no standard for life.

Tony Evans puts it this way. “I like those truck commercials where they show the towing ability of a truck. They always show the truck pulling something, like a boat, up a hill. Do you know the thing that is being pulled is doing nothing but going for a ride? You never see a boat hitched onto and towing a truck, struggling to climb a hill. The power for the tow is located under the hood of the truck. The power is built into the vehicle. All the boat had to do is be hooked onto the truck.

“The power for your Christian life is not in you. The power for your Christian life is Christ under the hood; it’s Christ in you, the hope of glory”⁴ given to you as you let Jesus live and grow and work in and through you.

Jesus is our Way, our Truth, and our Life as we believe in Him, receive Him as our Savior and trust in Him as our Lord. There is none other who brings us to eternal life. Let’s pray.

Father, we spend so much time trying to gain Salvation by ourselves. Yet Jesus has already made it possible for us. Help us to give up our own pursuits of gaining Heaven, and simply let Jesus become the One we follow for all things so that He can lead us back to You in all things. Grant us the courage to let Jesus be our all-in-all so that we might bring honor and glory to Him as we live as His witnesses in our world today. Help us to let Jesus be our Way, Truth and Life. This we pray in Jesus’ Name. AMEN.

³ (Charles Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Ultimate Book of Illustrations*, pg. 589)

⁴ (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publications, 2009] pg. 49, #114)