

Sunday, December 25th sermon: "There is none that doeth good, no not one – Merry Christmas to poor sinners!"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS,
by John Pittman Hey

Romans 1:18-21; Luke 2:1-20

The angel told Joseph to "call His name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sin."

The angels told the shepherds, that "unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a savior, who is Christ the Lord!"

Yet these people hardly grasped the magnitude of the gift the world had received!

Perhaps they thought Jesus would rescue Israel from the Roman tyrants, or even from their own corrupt leaders.

But no, the promise was far greater: Christ Jesus saves His people from their sins! Without that salvation, we are all doomed to judgment and Hell forever.

Even believers often fail to grasp the depravity, the pervasiveness, and the damning reality of our sin.

To begin to understand it, start with the greatest commandment of the law: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, body, and strength!

Then in the same chapter, God told the people, that if they kept all His law, that would be their life.

That promise slams the door of Hell after every single one of us, for who can love God perfectly as He commands us?

Jesus repeatedly embraced that great commandment as essential, making clear that even the Pharisees didn't come close to obeying it: "except your righteousness EXCEED the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven!"

In Romans 1, Paul pounds more nails into our coffin, when he describes how every man knows God's eternal power and deity from nature itself, so that we are all without excuse before Him. But knowing that, we all refuse to glorify Him, or be thankful to Him.

In Romans 3, we are found to be unrighteous, with no understanding, and none of us seeks after God.

There is none that doeth good, no, not one! We have no proper fear of God. We are all utterly condemned by the law.

These passages have a startling practical consequence: everything that a lost man does is sin.

Even the plowing of the wicked is sin!

Anything done without faith is sin, for without faith it is impossible to please God.

All our so-called good deeds are condemned by God: we are all an unclean thing, and all our "righteousnesses" are as filthy rags. There is no one that calls upon God's name, or that stirreth up himself to take hold of God.

King David traces the root of his own sin back his very beginning: I was shaped in iniquity, and conceived in sin.

These truths were thrust upon this preacher during interactions with false teachers who believe in so-called "libertarian" free will.

Men are so pleased with their "freedom," thinking they decide everything for themselves, without God's determinant counsel or ordination. They think, incorrectly, that this complete freedom is what gives God the "right" to hold them accountable for their sin.

But the Bible tells us that, in fact, we cannot choose all by ourselves to do anything good. Every act of an unregenerate person, a lost man, is an act of sin against God.

That's because no one, of themselves, can act in love for God, or perfect fear of God, or faith in God, or gratefulness to God.

All our "free actions" are sins of presumption against God.

But false teachers, and lost men, don't want to hear the truth that, of themselves, they always choose to sin no matter what they do. They want to think that they can choose to do good with their "free will."

They will not acknowledge that only in Christ, only by the power of the Holy Spirit, can anyone do anything good and acceptable to God.

Every drink of water, every so-called "noble" act, ever diligent labor, every love of others, in a lost man, is an act of rebellion and sin against God.

Scripture tells us lost men are "unable to please God." None of our acts are taken with God's glory in mind, and perfect love towards Him. We are "dead in sin," and cannot do anything truly good in our natural condition. In our flesh dwells no good thing!

It is deeply offensive to lost men, to be told that everything they do is polluted by their sin against God, and is therefore displeasing to God.

They that are of the flesh cannot please God.

Paul himself, as a believer, placed his own "good deeds" right where they belonged – on the garbage dump. He'd rather be found clothed in the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ!

So where is the hope for poor sinners, if nothing we do can please God?

David cried out for mercy, for God to disregard his sins, to cleanse him from them, and to create in him a clean heart before God.

David could barely grasp the idea of a Redeemer Who could take away sin by His Own death in the place of sinners, though the Holy Spirit did reveal some of those promises to David.

But there was a Savior coming, and when He came, it was to save His people from their sins.

We don't even know how helpless we are to obey God! Some of us are deceived by false teachers to think we can do some good things ourselves, by our own free will choices.

But the truth is, in our flesh, it is all actually bad that we do, and that offends most people.

Jeremiah grasped this truth, when he wrote of the coming Messiah, and foretold that He would be called by this name, The LORD our Righteousness!

It is only the righteousness of Christ that clothes His people and makes us acceptable before God!

We don't contribute our own deeds, we don't mix our works with Christ's, we don't "cooperate" with God in the saving of our souls!

Our only hope lies in the obedience and blood of Jesus. He came, clothed in our humanity, to die in our place, and take away our sins, and justify us before a holy God. Jesus satisfied and obeyed all the law in the place of His people, and God imputes His perfect obedience to our account.

One final point: most presents start out delighting the recipient, but as time goes by, they lose their luster, they break, we grow tired of them, we grow out of them, and they are stored away and forgotten.

But not so, the gift of our Savior!

"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy! Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord!"

"Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins!"

The longer we possess this precious gift, the longer we believe the Gospel, the longer we meditate upon our blessed Redeemer, the more we will treasure the Christmas gift of our Lord Jesus.

Truly, there is none that doeth good, no not one.

But today is a Merry Christmas for poor sinners!