

Two Trees

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[0 : 00] And I want to bring a thought to you this morning and kind of contrast two trees. And in the contrast, the message will speak for itself, it will become plain.

And so I'll begin in Jeremiah chapter 10. And have your place ready if you can in 1 Peter chapter number 2.

Two trees. In Jeremiah 10, we'll begin in verse number 1. Hear ye the word which the Lord speaketh unto you, O house of Israel.

Thus saith the Lord, learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven. For the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain, for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workmen with the axe.

They deck it with silver and with gold. They fasten it with nails and hammers that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not. They must needs be born, because they cannot go.

[1 : 17] Be not afraid of them, speaking of the trees. For they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. For as much as there is none like unto thee, O Lord, thou art great, and thy name is great in might.

Who would not fear thee, O king of nations? For to thee doth it appertain. For as much as among all the wise men of the nations and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee.

But they are altogether brutish and foolish. The stock is a doctrine of vanities. And he goes on to talk about them, and he says again in verse 10, But the Lord is the true God.

He is the living God and an everlasting king. Now in this chapter, there is a practice of the heathen to cut down a tree. And if we connected this to other passages, we would see in Isaiah that they are chiseling this thing down and carving it down into a statue or into an idol.

Here they are decking it with, probably plating it perhaps with silver and gold, making it a golden idol to worship. But the base of this is a tree. This is a tree that is fastened and held up, and it can't do anything.

[2 : 37] And in Isaiah, they bow down to it, and they pray, and they say, deliver me. So they go out and cut a tree down and put it up and then bow down to it and ask the tree to save them, to deliver them.

And Jeremiah shows us the folly of this and then returns glory to God, saying, that the Lord is the true God. He is the living God. Their stock, which is this tree or the rest of it, is a doctrine of vanities. Now there is one tree, and it is the way of the heathen to cut down a tree and stand it up and to worship it. Now come to 1 Peter chapter 2. I just want to use this as an analogy this morning that is fitting for this time of year, I believe.

1 Peter chapter 2, and come to verse number 21. 1 Peter 2 verse 21. 1 Peter 3, and come to verse number 21.

By whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep gone astray, but are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls. I don't need you to turn.

[4 : 10] We could turn for all day, but let me read another verse that came to mind in Galatians 3. The Bible says in verse 13 that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.

So there's two trees. There's the tree of the heathen, or the tree of, we'll call it the lost, and then there's this tree that Jesus Christ hung on, a rude and rugged cross that we'll call the tree of the saved.

The one's the tree of the redeemed. The other, the tree of the reprobate. The one's a tree that makes Christians and believers holy. And the other, we read, the tree of the heathen.

There's two trees. And this time of year, folks cut down trees. And they put them in their house, and they stand them up, and they must needs be born. And they carry them, and they deck them with just pretty sights and lights and ornaments, and they make a show of it.

And then they put underneath that tree presents. And if you could imagine in your mind two trees up here, the one just ornate and gorgeous and full, and underneath it loaded with presents.

[5 : 26] We have a tree at our house, and there's presents underneath the tree already. And the one that's mine doesn't fit under the tree. It's a little too big. No, I'm serious.

It's leaning against the wall. It's just too big for the tree. But on the other side, let's picture a different kind of tree. This one's not so attractive. This one really doesn't look like a tree at all.

It's just what the scripture describes as a tree. This one's the shape of a cross. And there's gifts that are offered at each tree. And I want us to consider this morning the gifts that may or may not be received this year.

This tree has a great look to it, appealing. And this tree of the lost has seemingly so much to offer with your name on it.

And you can come and get all excited and see your name on all of these boxes, all of this waiting just for you to get a hold of. The other tree, it doesn't appear to have much.

[6 : 30] But when we dive into the word of God, we find out that it's got your name on it too. It's got some things that that tree offers us that when it's all said and done, I think you'll want to burn the one and glory in the other.

Let's pray together and then we'll consider these two trees. Father, it's with thankful hearts that we bow before you. Thankful for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to save us from our sins. We're thankful that he bled and died and offered himself as a sacrifice unto you to make a payment for all the things we've done against you. Lord, I'm grateful that we can receive eternal life through our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm thankful to have that, to possess eternal life. And Lord, as I bring this thought out, this message, please be with me and guide my mouth and thoughts and guide the ears of the listeners.

May they hear the truth. May they receive it. And Lord, please free us from distractions and just let the rest of the things of this life just fall aside for now. And may Jesus Christ be lifted up.

[7 : 34] We pray it in his name. Amen. So let me take you through the Bible a little bit. Go to Ephesians chapter 2. I want to just pick a few things out here that the scriptures say and relate them to these two trees.

And I don't know how many verses to cover. There's so many in each one. I have probably seven different things to say here. And I'll be cognizant of the time and not wear you out.

But in Ephesians 2, let's go there because we see three things right away in one verse that I want to bring out. Ephesians chapter 2.

And if we were going to look at this tree of the lost, as beautiful as it appears, there's some things that aren't underneath it. Look at verse number 12. It's describing people that are saved by Jesus Christ.

They're born again, but this describes what they were before they were saved. And it says in verse 12 that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

[8 : 47] But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. So in the old days, the Old Testament period, back God dealt primarily with one nation, with Israel.

They were his chosen people of all the nations of the earth. He chose Israel. And he talks to Gentiles like you and I and says, hey, at that time you were without Christ.

You were without God in the world. Why? Because you didn't have a connection to him. He dealt with Israel. And if you wanted to get in on what God offers, you had to go through them.

And so he describes them as being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. Gentiles are not Jews. They're outside. They're aliens from that nation. And then he says that they were strangers from the covenants of promise.

Because God covenanted with that people Israel some promises to them of future blessings and of earthly blessings. And he says to the Gentiles, look, you guys, sorry, but you're not in on it.

[9 : 51] You're strangers to all of that. But now in Christ Jesus, if you're in Christ, you sometimes were far off, aliens, separated, strangers, you're made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Now that's the setting here. Understand then that the Gentiles, the tree of the lost, there's some things that are not there. And in verse 12, it says you're without Christ. Without Christ. It also says you're without hope, having no hope. And then without God in the world. I want to consider that for a moment.

We'll just start with God. The tree of the lost has no God. They're not, they don't know God. That tree can't offer them God.

What does it have to offer? Well, according to this Bible in 2 Corinthians 4, it has this God, a God of this world. In John 8, 44, Jesus said to those men, ye are of your father, the devil.

[10:56] And so for somebody who doesn't have the cross of Jesus Christ and forgiveness of sins through his blood, they don't have God. Oh, they believe in God. They may believe God exists, but they don't have him.

The Bible says without God in the world. That's a terrible place to be. In verse number 2 of this chapter, it says, You don't have God.

All you have, sadly, for your sake, is the devil deceiving you and leading you astray and putting up shiny things in front of your face to attract you, to allure you, to suck you in to this world.

But you don't have God in this world. You just have things. You just have distractions. Distractions. And in those distractions, it takes your heart and mind away from looking for God.

From seeking, who is he? Where is he? What do I need to do? How can I please him? How can I be accepted of him? You don't realize it, but if you don't go to the Bible, then you don't ever hear that this Bible says that if you don't have him, you're his enemy.

[12:14] Now, man doesn't think that way. Man thinks, I'm a good person. God should like me. I'm created in his image, right? And I'm a good guy. I haven't killed anybody, and I'm not a thief, and so God should like me.

I think he should. But according to the Bible, if we're sinners as we are, then we're far different, far more different than we even imagined from a holy God.

And we need to be brought nigh unto him. I want you to consider under that tree, it's shiny, but there's no God there. It's distracting, even, how much it offers you or supposes itself to offer you.

There's no God. Secondly, there's no Christ. No Christ. We read that in Ephesians 2, verse 12, that at that time you were without Christ. Now, you might think, what do I need Christ for?

There's a box there, and it doesn't have the name of Jesus Christ on it because you don't have him. The box just has your name. What's inside of that? It's not Christ.

[13:15] What does Jesus Christ offer? Why is it valuable to have him? In the Bible, the word Christ means Messiah, or it means anointed, the anointed one.

He is the chosen one that would come promised. He is the deliverer. He is, as the verse behind me says, the Savior. He's called in this Bible an advocate that steps in between God's wrath toward our sins and steps in between and intercedes for us.

He's our defender. He's our shepherd, our friend, our propitiation for our sins, our redeemer. But a lost man that has a beautiful life and a beautiful tree and everything can look right doesn't have a redeemer.

He doesn't have Christ. But you, if you're saved, can look on that old rugged tree and see the blood that was shed for your sins, and you can see a redeemer, and you can say, I don't need the gifts of this world.

I don't need the trash, supposed treasure of this world. I'll take the forgiveness, and I'll take redemption, and I'll be brought nigh to God because of Jesus Christ.

[14:27] They don't have God. They don't have Christ. And thirdly, in that verse, it says, having no hope. There's a box that has their name on it, and you can come to that tree if you want to.

It has your name on it. And you can come to that box and pick it up, and it feels awful light. I don't think there's anything in this box.

They must have forgot to put something in it. You know what's not in it? Hope. It's an empty box.

Oh, it's wrapped beautiful. It's probably huge. And it's got all the bows and all the things you think in your mind.

That's a good one. I've got something. This world has given me something wonderful. And you find out it's empty. Because in this world, there's no hope. That box is empty.

In this world, without Jesus Christ, it's not going to get any better. You don't have anything to look forward to. You don't have any hope. You don't have a promise of a brighter day ahead.

[15 : 29] Come to Romans chapter 15 in your Bibles. Romans chapter 15. The Bible describes Jesus Christ as hope.

And if you have the Lord Jesus Christ, then I'm happy to say you have hope. You have what's called a blessed hope. You have in Hebrews chapter 6, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.

And which entereth into that within the veil, which whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus. Made a high priest forever. The Lord Jesus Christ, we have.

We have him. We have hope. He's our hope. Look at Romans 15 in verse number 4. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.

So God is offering and giving us hope. Verse number 13. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.

[16 : 38] There's a present, a gift that's not apparent at this old rugged tree. But in that cross, there's hope. There's hope.

Oh, but how many people would rather take the one that's pretty? The one that's glamorous. The one that looks like it's more than it ever will be.

The world's distracting, friend. The world will offer you something it can't back up. It'll pretend to have something for you, but it'll never fulfill it. But in the cross of Jesus Christ, on that tree, there's hope.

Underneath that tree. In Romans chapter 12, verse 12, the verse says, rejoicing in hope. That's something we have. We know.

We have assurance in our spirit and soul that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming back for us. We know that he's redeemed us from all iniquity. We know that he's paid a price for our sins that we could never make good with God.

[17 : 38] We realize from the scriptures that he's done the work and it is finished. And we can rest and have hope that we're accepted in the beloved. And we get all of that from the word of God.

Now come back to the back of the Bible. If you want to keep your place in Romans, we'll be back here in a little bit in chapter 3. But I want to go back to 1 John chapter 5. And here's a verse that just slams a contrast that you cannot overlook between the two trees.

There's another box under that tree. But that box again is awful light.

You can shake it around and there's no sound. Because there's nothing in it. It pretends to offer something, but it can't fulfill it. 1 John chapter 5 and let's look at verse number 12.

Verse 11 first. And this is the record that God hath given, a gift, given to us eternal life. What's Romans 6, 23?

[18 : 47] The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. God hath given to us eternal life. And this life is in his Son, verse 12.

He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. You know what you won't find underneath that tree?

It might pretend to be there, but it's an empty box, and that is life. Eternal life. You can't earn it. You can't get it from the world. You can only get it from the cross of Jesus Christ.

He that hath the Son hath life. You want eternal life? You want to go to heaven when you die? You want your sins to be forgiven? You're going to have to get to Jesus Christ, because this life, the Bible says, is in his Son.

You can't get to heaven apart from Jesus Christ. You can't have your sins taken away without the Son of God. Under our tree, there's life. It's eternal. But under that tree, there's no life.

[19 : 48] There's only death. Only death awaiting the lost. So their solution is they've come up with some other names, some other thoughts, some other theories for the afterlife, for what happens.

They've come up with one they call reincarnation. There's no basis for this. There's no scripture for this, of course. They can't prove it. No one's ever achieved it.

But it's just the thought in the minds of men to make up for what is under the tree that Jesus died on and to put under this tree. And they say, well, you're going to come back as something else.

And if you do good in this life, you'll come back as another level. It'll be better. You may have been a frog in your last life, but if you were a good frog, you may come back as something better. A dog.

If you were a bad frog, you might come back as a cat. Something really bad. Amen. The idea can't be proven. It can't be displayed.

[20 : 44] It's just in the minds of men who reject reality and truth and the word of God come up with some other way to talk about another thing after life. What a shame.

There's no hope in that. And there's no truth in that. Another thing man will try to do because he can't have eternal life, he'll try to transcend his frame and sit down cross-legged and hands out and hum.

And he'll try to obtain nirvana. He'll try to get outside of his frame and achieve something else, some spiritual connection. He'll seek to the spirit world. He'll try to reach out for something that he can't get a hold of.

And there's no life in it. Only death. Only deception. He'll try and try and try. But he'll never make it. Because the tree of the lost, it's beautiful, but it's empty.

There's nothing there. Now we're going to go back to Romans 3. Romans chapter 3 and verse number 17 where the Bible says, The way of peace have they not known.

[21 : 53] The way of peace have they not known. Remember messages in Isaiah we read in 57, I think it was, that there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. No peace.

And so there's another big shiny box under that tree. If you came in the room and had to choose between the two trees just on looks only, you'd say, There's a lot for me under that tree. But you could rip that paper open and you can open that thing up and look down and say, Hey, wait a minute.

There's no peace under this tree. There's nothing in here. I want peace. I want to know that everything's going to be all right.

And men seek for peace. They strive for peace. But the way of peace have they not known. Why? Because there's no fear of God before their eyes. They're striving for peace and seeking for things to be okay.

Doing the best they can. Trying to be a great dad. Trying to be a good husband. Trying to obey. Trying to be successful. Trying to make more. Trying to get more things. And then looking and realizing, I'm going to die.

[22 : 58] That person just died and they didn't take it with them. That person I met, they died. They got sick and died. And what do they have now? And now they start to realize, I've been working for all of these things and I can't take it.

And there's no peace inside of them. What is this all about? What am I even doing here? How can I get around this? Without peace, they can't. Come to Romans 5 and look at verse number 1.

But if you come to this cross of Jesus Christ, you'll find something unexpected there. Verse number 1 says, Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. My, how all of these things are through our Lord Jesus Christ. Eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ. Our hope is in Christ. When you have Christ, you have a whole lot of things you didn't realize.

You have peace with God. You're no longer an enemy, like mentioned down in verse number 10. In this passage you're mentioned, you're called the ungodly in verse number 6.

[24 : 05] And in verse number 8, you're called sinners. And in verse number 10, you're called enemies. But because of Jesus Christ, those enemies and those sinners and those ungodly can be reconciled to God.

Verse 10, by the death of his son. You can receive the atonement mentioned in verse 11. And with that is peace with God. There's not only peace with God.

No longer are you at odds or enemies. Because your sins, they've been taken care of. And now you can be one. But there's also this thing in the Bible called the peace of God. It's something he puts inside of your spirit.

It's something that's called a fruit of the spirit. Love, joy, peace. In Philippians chapter 4, it's described as the peace which passeth all understanding.

And it keeps your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. There's peace under this tree. It doesn't look like it. It doesn't seem like it.

[25 : 01] It seems like a hard road to go that way. But when you find out when you receive Jesus Christ, you get a peace that lasts. A peace that takes you through any storm of life.

A submission to him. A calling upon him. A falling at his feet. That just transcends anything that can happen in this life. There's been people that have gone through a lot of hard things in this life.

There's been believers, some seated in this very room, that have faced some real trials. But they know something. They've experienced something. It's peace.

Even as nasty as it gets, it's still inside. They know it's all right with God. They know this hasn't taken away what they have with God. They'll lose friends. They'll lose family.

They'll lose acquaintances. They'll lose their job. They'll lose their house. But through it all, there's this common line of just flat. It doesn't go up and down and doesn't rise with the occasion.

[26 : 00] It's just flat. It's just calm. Inside, deep with inside their soul is a peace that carries them through. And it's a good one. You can't put a price on that peace.

You can't buy it. You can't value it until you experience what it does for you. I told you of a family some a while back, a family that I grew up with who lost their daughter.

They had to bury their daughter. It was a horrible situation. Horrible. It wasn't just a sickness. It was a murder. It was a murder. And it was a lot involved. And that family got up and gave a testimony that said, I don't know how somebody who doesn't have Jesus Christ can live through such a thing. I don't know how they could possibly not blow their brains out and just end it all. They know how they get through it because they have peace. Come back to Romans chapter 1.

There's two more things I want to point out. Things that are under one tree but not under the other. Romans chapter 1 and look at verse 20.

[27 : 09] The Bible says, For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

So God lets us know that he's the creator and what he created declares his power and glory and ability, declares his existence for one thing.

And in the end, he's not going to allow any man to say, I didn't know you existed. I didn't know. I was taught that there is no God.

And what does he say to that? His answer is, they are without excuse. You know, underneath that tree, when it's all said and done, one thing you can't, it's not in a little gift bag, a little card that you can pull out and hold up to God and say, oh no, I have an excuse.

No, you don't. That little gift bag under the tree with your name on it that says, here's your excuse, it's empty. The Bible says in chapter 3 that every mouth may be stopped.

[28 : 19] Look at that one, by the way. We're close by. Look at chapter 3 and verse 19. Now we know what things soever the law sayeth, it saith to them who are under the law that every mouth may be stopped.

And look at this. All the world may become guilty before God. Not that God wants you to become sinners and guilty. No, it's describing you are guilty.

And the law, the word of God declares it. It displays to you your sin before him. It declares who he is and who you are. And you can't walk around this world and this life thinking that, oh, it'll be okay one day.

I'll just take my chances. You're going to stand before a pure and holy God. And he's going to demand an answer. Why haven't you received my son? Why haven't you come to Calvary and by faith believed on what he did for your sins?

And you're going to have what to say? Well, I got a list here, but it's, it's, you're just going to crumple it up because you won't have an excuse.

[29 : 22] You'll be looking at the ground. You'll be scared to death to even open your mouth before a holy God that's about to judge you for your sins. You're going to know you're guilty. You're going to feel your sins in your being when you're standing before the purity of holy God, the creator.

You will be without excuse under this tree, though. You know what? We don't need an excuse. There's no excuse necessary.

If you have Jesus Christ, he is your excuse. He, he, it's all you need is Jesus Christ. That's what you have. That's the card that gets you out of hell, gets you out of hell for free charge.

That card, he's got everything we need. We've been made righteous. We don't need an excuse. He's sanctified us. He's made us holy. We don't need an excuse before God.

He's not going to judge me based on my sin when I stand before him. And he's not going to worry about that. It's covered. It's taken away. The Bible says that light has come into this world.

[30 : 29] But men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. And that evil man is going to stand before a holy God in his sin and wickedness and transgressions.

And his mouth will be stopped. Mute. Will offer nothing. He will not. I'm telling you, the word of God says it. And I get a little sense in my mind about this. Of the majesty and glory of God and his holiness and just unbridled, just beaming out.

Any sinner is going to be scared to death. They're going to be so afraid to speak against him. To contradict him.

And say that he was wrong. They're just going to want him to be merciful. Just please don't do what I know I deserve. They're not going to say a word. They're going to. But that's not going to get them through.

They'll have no excuse. One more thing. If you want to turn, I'm going to John 14 to read there. And I'm also going, most importantly, to Hebrews chapter 2.

[31 : 35] That'd be the place to go, if any. Hebrews chapter 2. There's one more thing I want to say about these two trees and what they offer us.

And there's something else that's missing from the tree of the lost. Hebrews chapter 2. And notice this statement in verse number 3.

Hebrews 2 and verse 3. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

Jesus Christ said similar words in Matthew 23. How can ye escape the damnation of hell? And he spoke that to a bunch of goody-two-shoes religious leaders.

How can ye escape the damnation of hell? You know what the answer is? There's no escape.

There's no excuse. And there's no escape.

[32 : 40] When God sends your soul to hell because you didn't believe on Jesus Christ, you're not getting out. You can cry. You can plead. You can beg. You can promise. But you're not getting out.

The sentence has been settled and fixed. Judgment has been made. However, however, in John 14, Jesus Christ said this in verse 6.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me. Jesus Christ offers in 1 Peter 3 to bring us to God.

No man cometh unto the Father but by me. There is a way, if you want to say a way of escape, offered by the cross. By this rugged tree with blood all over it from a man that hung and died and was beaten and was murdered to make a sacrifice for your sins.

In that cross is a way. And Jesus Christ is that way. A way of escape. But if you choose that tree and all the wannabe gifts underneath that tree, there's no escape.

[33 : 49] There's no peace. There's no hope. There's no eternal life. There's no God. There's no Christ. There's no excuse. There's no escape. You won't have one.

And so when it comes to your soul, when it comes to eternity, you can ignore the cross. And you can receive the abundance of supposed pleasures of this life that it offers you.

And you can chase money and you can chase just all the magic of this life. And just reject the cross and reject the Lord Jesus Christ and say, I don't need that stuff.

I'm okay. When it comes to your soul, rejecting Jesus Christ is going to land you straight in hell. My pastor growing up used to say, God will send you to hell like a bullet and you're not getting out.

Or you could repent and turn from that and come to that cross of Jesus Christ and humble yourself and bow down before it as a sinner and beg for forgiveness.

[34 : 58] And realize that he died for your sins. He died in your place. And at that cross, at that old bloodstained cross, you can receive the gift of eternal life.

You can receive forgiveness of all of your sins. You can receive what you'll never be able to earn on your own. You can receive the gift of righteousness.

Romans chapter 5, he gives out the gift of righteousness. Just gives it to people that will believe.

Have you received that gift? This holiday season, you're going to give and receive, give and receive.

And everybody's interested and excited about what's under that tree. I can tell you what's not under that tree. And I don't care what you open up this holiday season. If you haven't received eternal life, you have nothing.

You have hell is what you have waiting for you. There's two trees up here. And they offer different gifts with much different outcomes.

[36 : 00] Have you received the gift of eternal life? Are you born again? Do you know Jesus Christ is in you? Do you have the Son of God?

If you do, you have life. Do you have that peace that he offers you? Do you have joy in the Holy Ghost? Do you have the gifts that come under that tree? God forbid that anybody is so deceived and distracted in this room that they'd walk out of here rejecting the cross of Jesus Christ and take some, take a chance.

Because as I showed you from Scripture, you're not taking a chance. There's no escape and no excuse. Let's bow our heads together. And in a moment we'll be dismissed.

But before we take off, I want to invite you to bow before that tree, the cross that Jesus Christ, I read that he bear in his own body our sins on the tree.

Have you come and knelt before that tree and through your eyes of faith looked back to Calvary and believed on Jesus Christ that what he did there was for you?

[37 : 13] You have to let go of you and thinking that you're good. You have to let go of thinking that I can do enough or God's okay with me how I am. He's not. The Bible says all have sinned.

That's you and me. And come short of the glory of God. As a sinner, you come short of the glory of God. You need to be saved.