

An Unforgivable Sin?

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[0 : 0 0] Father, your word leads us to talk about some very uncomfortable truths. And Father, you know how we have a great habit as human beings to ignore truths that are uncomfortable, to try to do some spin on them.

And Father, you know how unpopular this text is for the average Canadian and even the average Canadian Christian.

And you know, Father, how many Christians in Canada today struggle with some of these ideas and concepts and even use it as an excuse to walk away from the faith.

Father, you know the state of our hearts. And we know that every word that you caused to be written in your word written was written for our health, for our salvation, for our healing, for our strengthening, for our good.

And so, Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit would fall with might and power and deep conviction upon us and upon all who are entering into worship through the video, through YouTube Live.

[1 : 1 2] We ask for the Holy Spirit would fall with might and power and deep conviction and that your word would do its work in our hearts. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Please be seated. Some of you know that over the years I've had lots of conversations in coffee shops.

Over the last 22 months I haven't had very many conversations in coffee shops, even recently. They're not really fully open. They're sort of open. Actually, mainly the few conversations I've had lately have almost all been with Muslims, actually, which is a very interesting development when they see me reading the Bible and they start into a bit of a conversation with me.

But there's one fellow. I'm going to call him Bob. And if you're watching for a first time or you're a guest here for the first time, one of the things I try to do when I talk is if I'm using an example of a male, I just always try to use the word Bob so I don't slip and say the person's real name.

And it's either usually Sue or Sally if it's a woman. So if you're here and your name is Bob, if I stopped using Bob when the person's real name was Bob, then you'd figure out that his real name was Bob, right?

[2 : 2 4] So it just has to always be Bob. So if you're a visitor, you're watching, your name is Bob. In fact, yeah, I'm not talking about you in this case, for sure. But ever, I'm not. But I've had one fellow that I think I had a failure in conversations with him.

At the end of the day, only God knows. But I really, I spent months talking to this fellow, always misreading him in a very serious way. The person that he always sat with in the coffee shop was a very, very, very public atheist.

And they always seemed to have very, very friendly conversations. And as I got to know this fellow Bob, I discovered that he was raised in an atheist household, that he got a PhD in one of the STEM fields, you know, science, technology, engineering, or medicine.

He had a PhD in one of those STEM fields. He was raised in an atheist house. He had had a very, very high-profile job in the STEM field for 30-some-odd years.

So I just kept talking to him, assuming that he was an atheist. And I actually, I kept missing what he was saying. And it must have really, it's like, maybe it's part of God's grace that even though I kept being clueless with him, that he kept talking to me.

[3 : 38] And I'd been talking to him for months before it finally dawned on me that with no help from Christians at all, he had come to the point where he completely and utterly rejected naturalistic evolution.

And he believed that spiritual beings existed. And I had completely and utterly missed it. All these times we were talking, we were two ships passing in the night.

I just, I just didn't listen. I guess I was just so overwhelmed by his background. And I'd never really come across somebody who all by themselves, completely and utterly separate from any interaction with Christians, had rejected naturalistic evolution completely and actually accepted that spiritual, that minds existed, spirits existed, angels, all those things, they all existed.

Then we started to have very, very different conversations just before COVID hit and then he eventually moved to a different city. Actually, if you're watching, I, for some odd reason, I'd love to have a conversation with you again if you'd do me the honor and the pleasure.

I mention all of this because the text that you, we just heard, and we're going to look at again in a moment, it makes very clear reference to Satan and to demons. And in Canada, basically there's two camps in Canada nowadays when it comes to things like this.

[5 : 01] There are a lot of people who completely and utterly reject anything like that as just being against reason, against science, against common sense. It's just kooky.

Okay? And then the other camp, which might even now be the majority in Canada, is that they accept that these things exist. It's like a non-issue. Of course spiritual beings exist.

Of course spells work. Of course crystals work. Of course there's a spiritual dimension to life. So I just want to say that, you know, over the weeks when we look at Mark's gospel, and we're going to go through all of it, we're going to take a break actually after this sermon to do more Christmas and Advent things and return to it in the second Sunday in January.

We'll return to the series. But today I'm not going to do anything to try to convince those who don't think that demons exist. I will at some point in time, because it's going to come up again in other texts, I will.

But for now, those of you who are watching, who are skeptical, just give us, just pretend it's, just listen to us as you would an anthropologist trying to figure out, like, weird people groups.

[6 : 05] But for the rest of you Canadians who accept that such things exist, just to let you know that there's, in a sense, there's two camps in Canada, but biblical Christianity, real Christianity, is on the side of the conversation that believes that minds exist and spirits exist, spiritual beings exist.

We disagree with most Canadians, because most Canadians who are in this camp think that this world is either inherently good or neutral, and we Christians disagree with that.

The Bible tells that that is a wrong way to understand it. But here is a text where you see that Jesus obviously believes in the existence of Satan and demons and Christians who trust him as their Savior and Lord should also believe the same as well.

Now, I just mention that because it's in the context of talking about Satan and demons that these two very, very, very unpopular Canadian ideas, one of them is more of a Christian issue, and the other aspect is just a Christian and secular issue, is that it's in this context that Jesus is going to talk about an unforgivable sin.

At least that's how it's often put. And as part of the way he talks about that and deals with some of these issues, he also, in a sense, he never uses the word hell, but he creates part of the, in a sense, the theological and spiritual superstructure and theology within which hell would be understood.

[7 : 34] So let's look at the text. Mark chapter 3, verses 20 to 35. We're preaching through the gospel of Mark.

And by the way, if you're here or if you're watching and you're either a skeptic or a scoffer or a seeker, we don't hide things about the Christian life.

That's one of the reasons why we preach through books of the Bible. And if you go through all of Mark's gospel, we're going to have to talk about sexuality. We're going to talk about identity. We're going to have to talk about money. We're going to talk about hell.

All sorts of things because we go through from verse to verse and so nothing's hidden. Here's how the text goes. Verse 20. Then Jesus went home.

By the way, this would be his, the last couple of years of his life, he had a home. Not probably that he owned, but that he stayed with in the Capernaum area. That's sort of where his home base was for ministry during his public ministry.

[8 : 33] So verse 20. Then he went home and the crowd gathered again so that they could not even eat. That is the Jesus and his disciples and the people who lived in the home.

And when his family, and in the original language, it implies not just family, but people who were close to him. So when his family, in a sense, and many of his friends heard it, that that's where he was, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, he is out of his mind.

And actually, literally, the word literally is the one that's used to get the word berserk. He's berserk. Completely crazy. Raving. Mad. Now, just a little bit of an aside.

I'm not going to say much about this in terms of the sermon. I just don't have time. It would be a whole interesting sermon in and of itself. But the thing to note here is that people at this time understood the difference between mental illness and demon possession.

They didn't just say automatically that if somebody seemed to be exhibiting weird, you know, hearing voices or all those other mood swings, the things that we would identify as mental illness. They didn't just assume it was demonic.

[9 : 43] They had two categories. And in fact, you'll see that very clearly in the text, because here in this first text, they use what we would now call a psychological category, that he's mentally ill.

And we're going to see that in the very next few verses, they use a demonic category. So, it's not, we can be really guilty of chronological snobbery and just think that because we know how to set, get a TikTok account, that somehow we're smarter than people who didn't have flush toilets.

It's not the case. You read all writers, they were very smart, very perceptive. And in this day, they had this distinction, which we've lost. And then now the text goes in a very, very bit of a different direction, although it helps us to see that they do understand the distinction between mental illness and demonic oppression or possession.

Verse 22, and the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, he is possessed by Beelzebul. And by the prince of demons, he casts out the demons.

And just sort of pause here for a second. I haven't really talked about it very much, but when you see the word scribes here, especially scribes from Jerusalem, this would really be like, a scribe was sort of a cross between somebody with a PhD, somebody who was a lawyer, somebody who was a public intellectual, somebody who was a judge, and someone who was a community leader.

[11 : 10] So it would be as if, almost as if, not quite, but almost as if Mayor Watson was also a lawyer, and also had a doctorate, and also had, like, was a public intellectual.

And they're all rolled into one. And when it says that they come from Jerusalem, what this means is the elite have come. So in our case, it would be that somebody with a PhD from Cambridge, or Oxford, or Harvard, you know, who writes for elite journals, and elite media, and is also a lawyer and a judge, that's who's come.

Like, this is a top-notch guy, has come from the center of the Jewish intellectual, spiritual, and cultural world.

So a scribe is at the pinnacle of the intellectual, the cultural, the, you know, the biblical, and even in many ways, often because of their consultancy role, at the very height of politics, all blended in a way that doesn't exist anymore.

And so they've come down from Jerusalem, and they say that Jesus is possessed. So the interesting thing, by the way, is that what this means is, they accept, they realize, they can't deny that Jesus has been doing miracles.

[12 : 29] His fame, if you look, you read the other part of the gospel before this, the way the gospel writers work, is they record a couple of significant incidents, that involve a miracle, or a healing, or an exorcism, but they also regularly tell you, that he did this all the time.

And if you go back, there's been a couple of summary statements earlier, that basically just say, you know, Jesus is doing this all the time, all the time, all the time, all the time. We're just recording a couple of them. And in fact, in the text that we looked at, either last week or the week before, it just said that one of the reasons, that's one of the reasons why Jesus's fame, without social media, had spread so far, even into areas that were majority pagan, and mixed pagan Jewish areas, and the Jewish homeland, and the center of the Jewish homeland, the fact that he was doing these things, had become very well known.

So the scribes, these cultural elite, they come, and they accept, that he's been doing exorcisms, and miracles, and healing, but they saw this, as evidence of something, very opposite, of what Jesus was interpreting it as.

In fact, they say, that the fact that he's able to do this, is because of Satan, which we'll see in a moment, Beelzebul, Satan, sort of a common name. So the, if you think of the, demonic world, C.S. Lewis wouldn't say, that it was a hierarchy, if you read the screw tape letters, and if you haven't read, the screw tape letters, read the screw tape letters, at the bottom of the lower archy, or the height of the hierarchy, but a demon, that has more power, and influence, than other demons, and that Jesus is possessed, by this very, very high level, demon, or from God's perspective, a low level, demon, and that's why Jesus, is able to do this.

So how does Jesus respond? Well here's how he does it. Look at verses, I'm going to read all of 23 to 30, and then we're going to circle back, and sort of unpack it. So they make this claim, against Jesus in public.

[14 : 22] So verse 23, Jesus called to them, and to him, he called them to him, and said to them in parables. Now he's answering this question, in public. How can Satan, verse 23, he called them to him, and said to them in parables, how can Satan cast out Satan?

If a kingdom is divided, against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided, against itself, that house, will not be able to stand. And if Satan, has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end.

But no one, right, so now that is in a sense, he's given a bit of set of some arguments, about why it can't be Satan. Now he's going to challenge them, to understand how they should be, interpreting it in a different way.

But, no one can enter a strong man's house, and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed, he may plunder his house.

And now it takes this, sort of very deeper turn, about the significance, of being closed to this truth. Truly, and by the way, those of you who remember, the King James Version, that would be verily.

[15 : 34] This, we could almost translate it as, Amen. And it means, whenever you see this, it's used about, I think, ten times or something in Mark. It means that God, Jesus is making a very solemn statement.

Amen. Rather than us say, at the end of a prayer, Amen. Catches your attention. I say to you, all sins will be forgiven, the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, literally in the Greek it says, whatever blasphemies they blaspheme, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin, for they were saying, he has an unclean spirit.

So, whoa, that's heavy. What's going on? Well, here's a couple of things. Part of what Jesus is saying is, here's how your argument works.

Okay? When you're trying to interpret what I'm doing, we'll use the example of Martin Luther King, Jr., and his great action in the 60s to begin to break down segregation, to really begin to challenge at a very, very deep level.

It was a cultural turning point, the United States, the great work of Martin Luther King, Jr. and if somebody said to you, Martin Luther King, Jr., in all his works, he was actually working for the Klan, the Ku Klux Klan.

[17 : 06] You know those things, and I don't want to put an image, because it would just, it would, it would, it would, it would defile our room to put up an image of the Ku Klux Klan. Those evil men robed in white with the white hoods, cowards, covering their faces, the burning crosses.

So imagine somebody said, you know Martin Luther King, he was actually working for the Ku Klux Klan, and you'd go, what? What? They'd say, yeah, yeah, yeah, all that stuff, the demonstrations with the cops, and, you know, the bus boycotts, and breaking down segregation, and opening places up, they were actually working for the Klan, and you'd go, what?

Like, how could you possibly look at Martin Luther King and say that he was working for the Klan? But actually, it would even be worse if it went the other way.

If somebody said, yeah, yeah, Martin Luther King, I've just been doing a lot of reading about him, I've really been doing lots and lots of research about him, and do you know that Martin Luther King ran the Ku Klux Klan? And you'd go, you'd laugh, like I just did, you'd giggle.

And then they said, no, no, no, no, I've been studying it. Like, I've been looking at archival footage, and I've been reading interviews, and Martin Luther King ran the Ku Klux Klan.

[18 : 27] Now, you'd start to realize, what? Like, okay, how do you have a conversation with somebody like this? Like, how can anybody in their right mind possibly think that Martin Luther King organized the people in the white hoods to go around and lynch black people?

And, like, wouldn't that be a, like, wouldn't it almost make you want to gag and vomit that it's such a perversion of the truth and such a slander against a very, very, very great man?

Like, and you might try to say to them, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, like, Martin Luther King did things to stop black people from being African Americans from being lynched.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, no, it was all part of a Ku Klux Klan. No, no, no, no, like, you, and that's what Jesus is saying here is going on with these scribes and the scribes.

He's saying, like, like, one moment, like, if you know mentally ill people, imagine, you know, some of the, those of you who are downtown a fair bit and you see these regular mentally ill people, there's this really, like, I see so many sad cases of mentally ill people on the streets of Ottawa that are off their meds and, and you just see them gaunt, raving, waving their arms as they wander down the street with the sores all over their body, huddled in, in little corners, talking to non-existent people and if somebody healed them that all of a sudden they were in their right mind, how could you possibly think that that was the devil doing it?

[20 : 18] Like, how could you, if you saw somebody on the street and their arm was all bent and when you saw them, you know, their sleeves came up and there was basically no flesh on it and they'd lost all control of their fingers and then, like, a day later, you saw that their arm was straight, there was muscle on the arm and their fingers were moving and you said the devil do that, you say, what?

That's not the sort of thing the devil does. You see, what the, what, what Jesus is pointing out here, like, look, look again at verses, 28, see, look again at verse 27, but no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first finds the strong man, then indeed he may plunder his house.

Jesus is saying that if you actually look at the evidence, what you see is the strong man of death is being, is being bound. That's why people are being healed.

You are seeing the strong man of mental illness being bound and that's why people are being put in their right mind. You see the strong man of demonic possession being bound by someone stronger still and that stronger one is obviously of God because it brings life, it brings clarity of mind, it brings healing, it brings a putting away of death and you're going to see other nature miracles later on as it goes on and that what you're seeing is not demonic, but what you see is that it's possible to close yourself to the truth, so close yourself to the truth that no truth can penetrate your mind.

Some of you have probably heard the old joke, there's a doctor dealing with a patient and then one day he comes because he's troubling all of his family, it's a psychiatrist, and because he believes he's dead and so, like how do you tell a live person that they're not dead and so then they have conversations about it, they try medication and all of that type of stuff and every time he comes up with something about well you do this and dead men do this, he always has some type of explanation as to why it really just proves that he's dead, not alive.

[22 : 35] Anyway, finally one day the fellow comes in and he happens to mention he'd just been watching a movie and murder and he noticed that one of the things which is very telling is that dead men don't bleed and the psychiatrist goes ah, maybe this will work.

He's come to the conclusion that dead men don't bleed. So he said you understand that dead men don't bleed, right? And the guy says absolutely so you can put out your hand he cuts him and he cuts him here on the arm and blood comes out and the man goes whoa, doctor, thank you so much.

You've shown to me that dead men do bleed. Sorry, it wasn't very funny. Sorry, anyway, it's so possible to be closed to the truth that you just, and you know we see this in life if you think about it for a second.

How many people, maybe it's been some of you in the room here that have had a problem with a teacher or a boss or a coach or a parent and for some reason the teacher just turns against you.

They put you in a certain category, a bad category and then it doesn't matter what you do. If you do an act of kindness, it's manipulation. If you accept responsibility, you know, they come up with some other bad, well of course you accept responsibility, of course you did that bad thing, we already knew you did bad things and no matter what you did, it always gets twisted by the person in a bad direction and we see that it's in movies, it's what happens with bullies, it's what can happen with parents, people will talk about that, you know, just something that Louise and I were watching the other night and it was this kid talking about how his dad tried to kill him when he was 12, how his dad was an evil man and nothing he did could ever convince the dad that the kid had any worth, that he was any good, everything would be twisted in an evil way and what Jesus is warning us about is that there is a way for us as human beings to be like that with God, to be like that with God.

[24 : 40] Now why does this matter? Obviously it can matter to a kid to have a parent like that that nothing you do will ever show that parent that there's something good about you or that you've moved in a good direction, that their mind is completely and utterly closed against you.

But why does it matter? Look at verses 28 to 30. Truly, remember, amen, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin for they were saying he has an unclean spirit.

Now we get troubled with the last part but not realize how amazing the first part is. What the Bible is saying here is that there's a watershed, a potential watershed in a person's life.

Many of you know if you come here I really love the analogy of the watershed. If you're driving along the Trans-Canada at some point in time, I think it's between North Bay and Sudbury, there's a sign on the side of the road from here on in that all the water you see is flowing to the Arctic.

Before this point it's all flowing south but from here on in it's a watershed. Everything is flowing in the direction it's flowing north. It's flowing towards Hudson's Bay or the Arctic.

[26 : 03] And what Jesus is saying here is that there's a watershed moment will come in your life and on one side of that watershed is eternal forgiveness.

The flow of your life, the flow of the waters of your life are immersed in eternal forgiveness that you've been forgiven and you flow towards a forgiveness that will go on into all eternity.

and on the other side of that watershed sorry for you folks here I'll try to reverse it later on. You're not bad guys okay on this side but the other side of the watershed is that you will never have forgiveness.

The sin that is in your life is a sin that not only has begun in this side of the grave but continues. That direction the flow will continue into all eternity.

And you see what Jesus is doing here is he's preparing us to understand what's going to happen to him at the end of the gospel. That his death is not just a mere death but his death is that which creates a watershed.

[27 : 26] That you can come to a point in time in your life where you receive what Jesus has done for you by his death upon the cross and that when you receive it what you've received is eternal forgiveness and the crossing over of a watershed that the flow of your life is now in forgiveness to forgiveness for every single thing that has ever been done or you ever will do.

he's not saying that if you happen to let slip a stupid thing about the Holy Spirit you're going to go to hell forever. You see blasphemy is like couldn't you blasphemy is slander blasphemy is believing lies blasphemy is believing not just lies about a person but terrible offensive lies just as if I was to try to argue to you that Martin Luther King ran the Ku Klux Klan I mean just imagine if I tweeted that without any context I'd break Twitter I would break Twitter and I should by the way it would be an evil thing and so the reason that Jesus mentions the Holy Spirit is to under because it partly it's not here in the text it's part of the bigger picture of the Bible that all of the Trinity is involved in a person becoming a Christian in redemption the Father sends the Son the Son dies as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and the Holy Spirit is God who brings you to a saving faith and knowledge of Jesus all of the Holy all of the Trinity is involved in your salvation and mine it was the Holy Spirit that led you to Jesus it was the Holy Spirit that led you to accept him as your Savior and your Lord it is not your doing it is nothing that you can pat yourself on the back for it is not because you are so clever so winsome so cute so charming it's the work of the Holy Spirit and so to deny the work of the Holy Spirit and to say that the work of the Holy Spirit in miracles in the person of Jesus and to be so completely and utterly close to the truth you are being towards God exactly like that parent or coach who completely and utterly sees the child as an evil child a bad child and no amount of action and no amount of truth will break through the hardness of their heart and the Bible says that even if you are a

Kanata soccer mom and you're really really pleasant or you live in Rockcliffe or you live in a rich section of Manik or out in West Carleton or you're a hockey star or you're a PhD from Harvard or a D Phil from Oxford or you are the head of the Globe and Mail or whatever it is if there is in fact a possibility for you to be completely and utterly so close to God that nothing can penetrate that see the other thing about this is that sin is not puny sin is not puny God is infinite you are finite when you as a finite being do something that separates you from the infinite God you have created an infinite distance between you and God and so only an infinite sacrifice can cover the infinite distance that you have created between yourself and God only the infinite can cross the distance between the infinite and the finite and so this is pointing very powerfully towards who Jesus is and what he accomplishes for you on the cross it is the infinite God closing the infinite distance between you and God and an infinite distance which

I mean you can't add to infinity it's just infinity but your whole life is just part of an infinite separation from God and God in the first God the son of God closes that infinite distance that no finite being could ever cross and he dies a death that covers that infinite distance and offers you a fellowship and a walk with that infinite eternal God and when you accept Christ as your savior and know him as your savior and know him as your Lord that eternal life of forgiveness begins and carries on into eternity I think it was C.S. Lewis but it might have been somebody else who said you see if you're so completely and utterly closed to God if you become at a subtle level like these scribes who see these evidences of the strong man of God breaking into our world and they either just you just dismiss them as just being so much nonsense you don't care about them you don't give a hoot for them you don't get mad about it you just deny it you just close your mind to it you just say yeah whatever yeah whatever

I'm empathetic but whatever it is it closes you to these things and if that state of your soul continues into all eternity then even if in eternity in the new heaven and the new earth you experience the love of God in a way that that love of God could not be denied or could not be avoided but you actually began to experience without any veil the powerful goodness and love of God you would experience it not as release but as torment you would experience the warmth of the love of God not as a warmth which heals your bones but as a fire that burns your bones that it is possible for a human being to so become close to God and resent the presence and the demands of God that even his mercies will be experienced as torment so some of you might say

[33 : 53] George I mean that's all very sobering I mean I guess what you're saying is that the hell is an uncomfortable truth and according to you it's a truth and so you shouldn't close your eyes to it but think about it but George are you saying that you sort of somehow are more open to God than I am that you're more open to truth about God than I am I mean frankly George your poop smells just as bad as mine and you're no better than me so I just I even resent the fact that you would think that that's the problem with Christians they think that and the other thing George you just listen to what you're saying I mean what you're saying just defies all the logic of morality and culture and religion and spirituality and the good things and things like stoicism like if you really believe that then why on earth wouldn't you just go ahead and do whatever you want knowing you're going to be forgiven like George what you've just said is both is both personally very offensive and is morally ridiculous and those would be good reactions by the way and I'd have to say well

I'm going to be honest with you yeah there's times I think I'm a lot better than other people but that's me at my worst not my best there's there's times I do somehow think I've just figured these things out and why don't other people do it but that's me at my worst not my best that's me forgetting the Bible not being based on the Bible in a very interesting way Jesus sort of addresses some of these issues in the very next part or Mark has Jesus address this issue in the very very next bit that comes just part of it one of the things he doesn't I'll talk about that at the end look at what happens in verses 31 to 35 and his mother and brother and his brothers came and standing outside they sent to him and called him and a crowd was sitting around him so they're sitting around him to listen to him and they said to him your mother and your brothers are outside seeking you and the implication is that they're sort of making demands on Jesus you're not just saying oh where's

Jesus oh you've seen Jesus no no no get Jesus here okay we're outside we're his mom these are his brothers get Jesus and tell him to get his butt out of that place and come here that's that's what's going on get his butt out of there come here I'm his mom these are his brothers tell him to come and Jesus answered them that's the people who passed it on and he says who are my mother and my brothers verse 34 and looking about at those who sat around him he said here are my mother and my brothers verse 35 for whoever does the will of God he is my brother she is my or he is my brother she is my sister and my mother whoever does the will of God now there's a couple of things here which are going on in this text the first thing is here that you see here's the great thing about this

Ted Lasso if you've watched that one of the things he talks about is that sports players have to be like goldfish because goldfish only remember things for 10 seconds and you know that's probably good advice if you're in sports to get over things but the problem is that human beings especially Christians but human beings we're like goldfish we very very quickly forget and the thing that we very very quickly forget is that we forget that what had just happened what just happened well Jesus just said there is a way for you to be eternally forgiven the implication is is that the infinite God has done something that a finite human being cannot do to cross the infinite distance between God and you and he has done something you cannot possibly do for yourself he has died for you it is his death that covers everything that you've ever possibly done this is an unbelievable not unbelievable hopefully you believe it this is a a truth of a profound thing that

God has done for you and you cannot do for yourself and then we come here and say the will of God oh the will of God means I have to be good to be right with God what why are we all goldfish what does the will of God mean listen to Jesus and do what he says believe that he is the Savior in the Lord and you cannot save yourself what does it mean it means that listen I did not become a Christian because I am so clever and I could follow all the evidence so well God did something for me in the person of the Holy Spirit that I could not do for myself the Bible says that when we appear before the judgment seat of God no one will have an excuse no one will be able to say that God didn't do things in their life in such a way that they did not have moments of freedom and clarity where they could not have responded to the gospel that's what

[39 : 38] Romans 1 through 3 is talking about amongst other things and all I can tell you is if you're watching this if you're honest with yourself before I became a Christian I wasn't honest about this until after I became a Christian but before I became a Christian I didn't want it to be true I didn't want Jesus to be the Savior and the Lord I didn't want him to be the Lord of my life do you know how geeky nerdy awkward and just unlikable Christians are and you want me to become one of them no way the Christian life comes when there is that pressure of the Holy Spirit Romans 3 Revelation 3 talks about Jesus knocking at the door of your heart and the Christian life comes when you lay down your sword and shield and you stop running and you've been running like this to try to shut out

Jesus' voice and you've been running with your eyes closed and the Holy Spirit just puts that pressure and you finally say I surrender and you stop you take your fingers out of your ears you open your eyes and you turn and you let him come with all his love and you let him take you for himself and what does it mean to be completely forgiven of everything you've done in your life if you take that to mean that you can do whatever you want then you're like the mom and the brothers outside demanding Jesus come out and talk to us because we're who we are that's not what it means it's only in the perspective of forgiveness that you can begin to have moral clarity about the world and about yourself that you can begin to have humility that you can be convicted of a sin of pride or prejudice or racism or greed or gluttony or lust or something and before that we always wanted to put up our good fronts that we're this type of person and so we try to figure out a way to spin that to deny it to make it look like we didn't do it you know we used to joke in my house that sometimes when one of the kids you'd hear this loud crash and what was the thing they say first they say nothing happened second they'd say it wasn't me and then the third thing they'd say it wasn't my fault that was the litany right nothing happened how come somebody's screaming wasn't me how come they're screaming your name not my fault right and you go through and it's only if you know you're completely forgiven that you can actually stop and say yeah that was me that was me

Lord help me to see the moral world as it really is help me to confront the selfishness and the greed in my life it's only in that perspective in that place that you can actually begin to have true moral improvement at the very very deep level of the heart as the gospel becomes real to you invite you to stand if you are here and you've never given your life to christ and you feel that pressure in your heart all i can say is just as i used in that example that's the holy spirit knocking that's god giving you an opportunity to no longer be closed off to him for god so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son to the end who all that all who believe in him will not perish but have eternal life have everlasting life that's god calling and all i can say to you is just turn and face him and say jesus be my savior do that miracle of conversion in me and for those of us who gather we gather as goldfish who've been redeemed and the reason why church is so important is that we can say the creed we can gather around the word of god and be reminded of the gospel and of eternal forgiveness and how we forget it ten seconds after we can recommit around the lord's table that we are the lords that he is our savior that we do not deserve salvation but he has given it freely and fully we are his he will never let us go it is worth following him and it doesn't matter if legislation says that this is all a pile of baloney which just happened this week it's the truth it's the truth let's bow our heads in prayer father we ask that the holy spirit would come with might and power and deep conviction we thank and praise you that you do not weigh our merits but pardon our offenses we thank and praise you father that in jesus that infinite distance between us and you was closed that we are now in your arms that we are your children by adoption and grace that christ is our hope of glory that you will never forget us that you will never abandon us that you will never leave us alone that you will never mock us or deride us that all you want to do father is have your word come deep within us so that we might be formed by the gospel might be formed by grace that we might be formed by forgiveness that that grace and forgiveness might humble us and create within us a longing and yearning to bring you glory to live a life that honors you and is good for this city is good for this nation is good for this world that you will give us a heart for the broken and the lost rather than contempt father we thank you for the gospel that we can recommit around who jesus is and what he did for us on the cross and father grant us a heart to share the gospel to bear witness to jesus he is the hope of glory and there is no other we ask all these things in the name of jesus and all god's people said amen but today is enduring nothing■■ Slim our value wedding we'll be able to receive victory and be held to fight with baby and if we recognize and we see again we align to vordan she's biblical to respect to the people who and stand to choose and

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