

From The Most Sinful to His Service

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 July 2014

[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Let's take your Bibles and go with me to Matthew chapter 9. This is an exciting passage of Scripture.

Matthew chapter 9, you're going to see Jesus is calling His apostles. He's putting together His evangelistic team that's going to work all over the world.

And He walks up to the most unusual person in the world, a guy named Matthew or Levi, and he invites him to follow Him. And Matthew stands up and leaves everything and follows Jesus.

You're going to go through the Bible and look at the story with me. We're going to go through verse by verse like we always do. But the wild thing about this story is Matthew was a tax collector. Now, how many of you just love the IRS? Hold your hand up.

Okay, these were not like the IRS. These were corrupt people from a foreign government that sat on top of their country. And so it would be like if we had been invaded by another country.

[1 : 00] Maybe it's Germany occupying Poland during that time and Polish people who would decide to work with the German government against their own people. So these tax collectors were like the most reviled people in the world.

Nobody would talk to them. They had no friends. These are public enemies, number one, and Jesus goes to call one of them. So there's some big lessons. There's no idea what the God, no matter what your past is, what God could do with you.

But it also shows the great grace of our God to reach down and save everybody. So I want you to study with me. If you take notes, we're going from the most sinful to His service.

And start with me, if you would, in Matthew chapter 9 and verse 9. God is calling Matthew to serve Him. The Bible says, And Jesus passed forth from thence, and He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of customs.

And He said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him. Father, I pray now that You would take this passage of Scripture. I pray You'd make it come alive. I pray You'd help me to not stand in Your way, in the way of Your beautiful Bible, and help it to mean something today.

[2 : 09] Help people to be encouraged and excited. And Lord, those that are not born again, that today they might realize their sinful condition and trust You. And those that are saved, dear God, help us to realize that we are to go after everybody with a gospel message.

And I'll give You praise for all. In Jesus' precious name, Amen. In Matthew chapter 9, Jesus said, Matthew, follow me. Now that Matthew is also known in the Bible as Levi.

So you might want to write the word Levi beside this verse, because Matthew has more than one name, which isn't uncommon. There's Simon Peter. My name is William Austin. My wife's name is Leah Elizabeth, and you call her Betty.

So she has three names. So she doesn't even know what her name is, really. But so he's got two names. He's Matthew and he's Levi. In Luke chapter 5 and verse 27, the Bible says, And after these things, he went forth and saw a publican named Levi sitting at the receipt of custom, and he said unto him, Follow me.

So here's the story. Matthew was a tax collector or a publican. The publican tax collector was considered the most despised, vile, and corrupt person in the city.

[3 : 22] A publican served Rome, the conquering government, against their own people. Their first loyalty was to the conquerors, Rome, and not to their own people.

Being a tax collector was basically a license to extort money from your own people. So you went to the government, got you a job where you could come back and say, I'm going to take advantage of my brothers and sisters, people of my own country.

The tax collector was more despised than even the Roman soldiers that marched their streets. Publicans were barred from the synagogue. The place where the Jews worshipped, they did not welcome these tax collectors.

They were forbidden to have religious or social contact with them. So you can imagine at night, you're planning a party, you don't invite your publican friend. You don't have a publican friend.

And if a publican happens to be your brother, you still don't invite him. He doesn't go to church with you. He doesn't go to synagogue with you. He doesn't sit with you. You don't have him over to the house. He's an outcast.

[4 : 25] He's like a pig, which is like the dirtiest animal for a Jew. He's a pig. He's a thief. He's a murderer. He's a liar in the minds of the people. But Jesus goes to where Matthew was.

I want you to realize you've got to get the picture. I don't know who you would equate them with in our society today. I don't know if possibly you would equate them to a drug dealer.

I just don't know what bad person you could equate this publican with. But this is not somebody you have over for family supper. He is not welcome in polite society.

But Jesus goes to where Matthew was. Matthew has surely heard the preaching. Jesus didn't wait for Matthew to come to him, but he went to Matthew.

Everybody knows about Jesus. I mean, it's all over the place. Twitter is alive with it. Jesus is the trending subject of the Twitter world. He's on Facebook.

[5 : 24] He's not on there, but everybody's talking about him. He went. Jesus went to the despised, to the vile, the one everyone hated, and he invited that man to follow him.

He goes to the one everybody hates, and he invites him to follow him. Matthew isn't the person most would have looked to to serve Jesus. He has a horrible past.

His only friends would have been the very dregs of society. He was the kind of man that was associated with the worst element. Drunks, prostitutes, criminals.

He was not welcome. There's some great lessons. I want you to first realize this. Jesus is picking his apostles. You might think he'll go to the synagogue and get the leaders there.

You might think he'll go to the Bible colleges and get the leaders there. He goes to a publican, to a sinner, to somebody that's on the bad low end of the situation.

[6 : 20] Here's some lessons. You can't determine what a person will do for God by looking at their past or where they come from. That's good news for all of us. Amen. You cannot determine what a man is going to do in the future by looking at his past.

We should go to them and invite them instead of waiting on them to come. Here's a big lesson for a church. Sometimes churches get full of sanctimonious, better than other people, pharisaical type people.

In other words, Christians kind of get to be people who look down on their nose at everybody else and say, Oh, he's a publican. That guy's a tax collector. That guy runs to the wrong crowd. I'd never invite him. That's not who Jesus was.

We ought to learn to be different too. We ought to go to them, invite them, and show interest in them. We should see grace and love where others see law and condemnation.

The religious crowd of their day said, No, Matthew, you're not welcome at the synagogue. No, Matthew, you're not allowed to come to our Bible study. No, Matthew, you can't even have coffee with us at Starbucks.

[7 : 21] No, Matthew, we will cross the street before we talk to you. But Jesus said, Hey, Matthew, come follow me. That's a major lesson for all of us.

Can you see it there? Can you or not? Amen. It's a major lesson. Second thing I want you to look at, if you would, look with me in chapter 9 and verse 9 again. Matthew left all and followed Jesus.

Matthew 9 says, And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew, also Levi, remember, sitting at the receipt of custom. And he said unto him, Follow me.

And he arose and followed him. And that's just Matthew writing the story. The Holy Spirit respects Matthew. He's going to write the very words of God. But the Holy Spirit allows Matthew to kind of leave out all the story.

All Matthew says is, I was at the table. Jesus came by. He said, Follow him. And I followed him. And that's all Matthew writes about the story. But Luke goes into more detail.

[8 : 16] Look, if you would, with me. In Luke chapter 5 and verse 28. Matthew writes the story. And he says, I just got up and followed Jesus. But there's more to that story. He left everything that he had.

In Luke chapter 5 and verse 28. He said, And he left all. And rose up and followed him. I just want you to picture this. He's sitting at a table. He's probably got some accountants working with him and some other people.

This is a very corrupt individual. You come riding by on a horse. He has the right to say, Come over here. If you paid your tax on that horse. You can't ride a horse in this community. If you hadn't paid your tax.

Let me see if you paid your tax. If you hadn't paid your tax. I'll tell you how much the tax is. You come by and he sees that you're carrying a new iPad. He calls you over and says, Did you pay any tax on that iPad? And he assigns the tax.

There's money stacked on the table. There's a business stacked there. He is a man of means. He may not be liked and appreciated. But he's been making some major money.

[9 : 13] And he stood up. And he walked away. And he left it all. And he immediately followed Jesus. That's the story of what happened when he got up. It cost Matthew a great deal to follow Jesus.

He left the only friends that he had. I just want you to understand. Imagine this. Here he is with some other tax collectors possibly. There's other guys that know him. He's not welcome anywhere.

Nobody's having him over for supper. Nobody's spending time with him. His own family has turned him out. And Matthew stands up and he leaves his money. He leaves his finances. But he also leaves his family.

He left his business. He left his wealth. Can you imagine the way his friends and associates must have reacted when he stood up and walked away? I don't know if you've ever been around somebody who gets saved out of a really bad past or out of some really bad surroundings or some really bad circumstances.

But when you say, man, they'll make fun of you. They'll try to talk you into coming. They'll invite you for one more drink before you go. They'll invite you to do whatever they can. And they've got to hold on to you. And Matthew stood up and said, look, guys, I'm out of here.

[10:19] See you later. I'm going to follow Jesus. My life has just changed immediately, totally. I am now following Jesus. He followed.

That's what it says in Matthew 9.9. You should circle that word, followed. That means he gave up his own plans and took the plans that Jesus would have for him.

Now, most of us tend to be like this. I love Jesus and I got my plans and I don't mind working in some of his plans. I'll see if I keep making on Sunday morning. I might even be generous and throw in a Sunday night or a Thursday night or a few other times.

But I got my plans that day. The man of business with power, with money, with influence stood up and walked away and said, not my plans, but him.

He gave up control of his life, his income, his future, and his family. Boy, are we not controllers? I like to know. I like to know how things are going to go.

[11:18] How many of you enjoy riding with other people? Most of us kind of like to drive, especially us men. We kind of got this thing about, I want to drive the car. Why do you want to drive the car? That way you know where it's going to go.

The worst thing in the world. We could be riding down the road and if Betty's driving, I let Betty drive a lot because I can work over there. And we'll be driving down the road and I'm looking down at my computer and looking down at my iPad and I'm working.

And all of a sudden she jerks the car this way and I jump up and I act like I'm having a heart attack. And she said, I don't know what you're acting like that for. You drive just like it. I said, when I'm doing it, I know what's happening. Amen. I know I'm good.

I ain't too sure about you. We like control. How many of you like control? Matthew had to like control. This guy was in control of his own life. He walked away from his family. He did everything on his own. And now he got up to follow Jesus and give up control.

It meant that he thought Jesus was more important than anything else in his life. He was literally walking away from his sin, his self, and his stuff.

[12:15] He was literally walking away from his sin, his self, and his stuff. He was saying that from now on, Jesus is my Lord, my God, and my King.

What has been your response to the demands of God and the Lord Jesus on your life? How have you responded to that? This is the southeast of America. We all get saved.

We're all Christians. We're all going to heaven. We're all Christians. What do you expect us to be? In Peru, you quickly learned. I lived in Peru for 18 years. And in Peru, you quickly learned. If you ask a peruvian, are you a Christian?

One lady even responded, what do you think? I am an animal. So you're either a Christian or you're an animal. Everybody's a Christian. If you're Morocco, you're a Muslim. If you're Moroccan, you're Muslim. If you're Muslim, you're Moroccan.

That's just the way it goes. So sometimes you and I, we've kind of got a flippant view of Jesus and a flippant view of his relationship with us. So I'd like to ask you some probing questions.

[13:10] Do you willingly surrender all that you are and have to follow him? If you determine that Jesus ought to be the Lord of your life and you're going to live like that, are you willing to allow him to tell you what to do with your life?

How about this one? Will you trust him with your children? Will you give up control of yourself, your stuff, your sin, and your plan for your life? Is Jesus worth more than any and everything else to you?

So in Matthew chapter 9 and verse 9, I see two major things going on. A publican, Matthew, getting saved. A publican, Matthew, not only getting saved but being placed in ministry.

Not just ministry but a major leader in the New Testament church. By the way, Matthew is one of the top three writers of the New Testament. Between John, Paul, and Matthew, just about the whole, and you've had Luke in there, about the whole New Testament's written.

So Matthew's a major person. This wicked, vile, filthy, dirty publican, tax collector, runner with the wrong crowd, will be chosen by God to write 28 wonderful chapters of the Bible.

[14 : 17] God saved him. Amen? Doesn't matter where you are. Doesn't matter what you've done. Doesn't matter how much you've failed. Doesn't matter what your past is, God can turn your life around and do great things for you.

That ought to be of major excitement to you. The second thing is God saves sinners. We're going to look at that in this passage of Scripture. He's going to make that very clear. But he doesn't go looking for Nicodemus.

He doesn't go looking for one of the major leaders of the synagogue. He doesn't go looking for a guy named Gamaliel who was one of the major teachers of his day. He goes looking for Matthew. That gives me hope.

He saves people like Matthew. That means he saves people like Austin. But the second thing in that verse was he followed Jesus. Tons of people have been invited.

Tons of people have been invited to follow Jesus. You've had the invitation given to you many times. You've been asked to be a follower of Christ, but many times you've probably said, Nope, not going to follow him.

[15 : 13] No, I've got my own plans. No, I'll do it my own way. If I come to Jesus, I'll do it the way I want to do it. But Matthew just said, Okay, stood up, walked away from everything he had, and he followed Jesus.

Now go with me, if you would, to Matthew chapter 9 and verse 10. Work your way through that passage with me. The Bible says in Matthew chapter 9 and verse 10, And it came to pass, as Jesus said, And it came to pass, as Jesus said, at meat in the house.

Behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why does your master eat with these filthy people?

Why do you eat with your master with publicans and sinners? So here's what happens. I want you to catch what happens. Matthew's made a major decision. Now he could have been 007 Christian.

He could have walked away from the tax table and said, Let's go to another town. I'll go by a different name now. People won't know who I am. And I will go follow Jesus. That's not what he does. He said, All right, I'm leaving.

[16 : 09] So before he leaves, he said, Hey, all you guys, why don't you come over to my house for supper tonight? Yeah, buddy, I'm going to throw a party tonight. All you guys, come one last shindig with Matthew, Levi, before I leave.

And so he invites everybody to his house. The Bible says in Luke chapter 5 and verse 29, a parallel passage, it says, And Levi made a great feast. He put on a big banquet in his own house.

And there was a great company of publicans and others that sat down with them. So all of a sudden, Jesus and Paul, Jesus and the disciples and Matthew are at a party.

Levi, or Matthew, makes all the preparations. He spares no expense. He knows what they expect in a party. He gets the food and the music and the decoration together.

He invites all of his work associates, his friends and others to come to his house. Matthew's not just going to walk away. He wanted them to know who and why he changed his life.

[17 : 05] He said, I might be walking away, but you guys ought to come meet the one who changed my life. And so all of a sudden, there's a party being thrown at Matthew's house. And there's all these apostles hanging around the house.

All these other friends of Jesus, followers of Jesus, they're there. Jesus and his disciples and Matthew's there. And they're invited to a party. It was an intentional attempt to get his friends to meet his new friends.

It was an intentional attempt. Hey, he changed my life. Come find out what he did. Matthew's embarking on a new life, but not before telling his friends of the great change in his life.

Can you imagine the introduction he gives to Jesus before he invites him to speak? We used to do this in Peru quite often. In fact, there's one of the leading families in one of the churches there.

There's probably 50 people out of this pretty wealthy family that attend one of the churches in Arequipa. Some of the family have actually been here and visited our church. And that all started because they invited one of the pastors on staff to go to their house.

[18 : 06] And they'd gotten saved. They accepted Christ as their Savior. And they invited them. They later invited me. They invited bunches of us. And they'd have big family get-togethers. And all the family would get together, and we would be in the room.

And now they are drinking and cussing and just aggravated. And they'd say, what's that preacher doing here? And the guy in charge of the house would say, I thought he might like to say something.

And so all of a sudden, here we were right in the middle of the den of iniquity, man. And we'd say, well, the Bible says this. And when he explained the gospel today, about five of those guys are preachers. All of those people are attending church.

God changed an entire family. That's what Matthew did. Matthew said, come to my house. I'm going to bring Jesus over, and I'm going to let him introduce him. I'm going to introduce him. Can you imagine when he introduces him?

I can only imagine. And this is not in the Scripture, but I can imagine Matthew as he stands up. He says, all right, guys, everybody quiet. Taps on the side of the glass with his knife. Gets everybody to listen. He says, hey, I've got the guy here, Jesus.

[19 : 01] He's the reason I'm leaving the tax collecting business. He's the reason I'm walking away from everything I have. He's the reason I left my money today. I want to introduce you to him. Man, I was messed up. You and I both know.

Both of us, we know who we are. We know where we stand in society. I know the emptiness I felt inside of me. And I'll tell you something. This guy has filled my life. He's changed me. Jesus, would you say a word?

And Jesus stood up and certainly preached the gospel to them. Can you imagine that introduction? Can you imagine the disciples as they worked the crowd sharing what God's done in their life?

Everybody's sitting around. The meal's not ready. And everybody's talking. And the disciples are talking about Jesus. This was very unusual. No religious leader like Jesus would meet with these untouchables.

Boy, the church crowd's on this side of town. And the dirty crowd's on this side of town. The synagogue people over here. The Jews are over here. And these dirty Jews are on this side of town. But now the disciples are seated at the table with these people.

[20 : 01] The discussion tonight isn't about earthly gain. Matthew's not going to introduce to them a new Ponzi scheme or a new pyramid scheme or a new way to make money. He's going to introduce them to Jesus who changed his life.

Why are they all giving up their lives to follow this new teacher? Why are all these disciples? They're businessmen. Fishers that owned their own boats, nets, and had employees. Why are they following Jesus?

The grace of God. His mercy and salvation are put front and center to the people who would never have heard otherwise. So I want you to listen to this story.

You're often going to hear Jesus ran around with publicans and sinners. He was a wine-bibber and a glutton. That was all just insults made by the religious crowd. Because the religious crowd always likes to look like what they're not.

Religion is a game of mirrors. It's a game of sham. It's a game of deceiving people. Jesus was real. The religious people over here saying we are sanctimonious.

[21 : 03] Jesus was really holy. And he walked in and changed people's lives. So I'd like to ask you a couple of questions as members of our church. What efforts have we made to get the gospel to our friends?

Have you intentionally invited them to church? Have you shared your faith? Have you had them over for coffee and explained who you are and what you're doing? Do you try to hide the Christian side of your life or do you share Jesus?

Do you tend to think that business and church don't mix? You know, honestly, that's one of the big problems. You're kind of like the guy who got married from Tennessee and he left his wife at home all the time.

They said, why do you always leave your wife at home? He said, I'm embarrassed to take her out. I don't want anybody to know about her. That's about how you are with Christ. You've accepted Jesus, but he's only for Sunday morning when nobody knows. You pull in.

There's a church that was started in Notty Keepin'. It was actually started for 007 Christians in there for a long time. The pastor told them, when you pull in, we will shut the gate and no one will see your car.

[22 : 01] No one need know that you are coming to church. And some of us have been living that way. Not old Matthew. Matthew's like, man, I met the one who changed my life, my present, my future, and my past.

And I'm going to share Jesus with them everywhere I go. But you get in Matthew chapter 9 now down to verse 11 and you find out what the story is. What's the great lesson about salvation in this story?

Look, if you would, in verse 11. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said, why is he eating with these wicked people? Why is your teacher, why is your master, why is your leader eating with these wicked people?

Because religious people couldn't believe Jesus would mix with this kind of people. It's kind of like the story of most churches today, if you be honest. Like, man, we got the holy sanctimonious crowd over here and the dregs of society over here and the two shall never mix.

But Jesus would have gone to them and told them the truth. If Jesus really was a holy man, he should have known how bad these people were. He should have known they're not that holy.

[23 : 06] Religion and preaching were considered to be for good people. The fact is, if you recall, Jesus tells a story and he tells a story of a rich man who dies and goes to hell and a beggar goes to heaven. And one of the reasons he's telling that story is to blow their minds.

In their minds, if you were rich, you'd go to heaven because you had God's blessings. And if you were poor, you obviously didn't have God's blessings and you'd go to hell. And Jesus said, backwards, backwards, rich guy going to hell, poor guy going to heaven.

And blew their mind. Now Jesus is over talking to them. Had nothing to do with being poor or rich about going to heaven. But you can't judge that from the outside. The religious people considered some to be beyond the reach of religion.

Don't even take it. But Jesus explains his position in verse 12. Look at verse 12. When Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that behold need not a physician, but they that are sick.

Here's the Tennessee hillbilly rendering of that verse. Sick people need doctors. Well, people don't. Sick people need doctors.

[24 : 13] That's what Jesus said. The religious crowd only worked with people that were already in good shape. Jesus came to help the helpless. Those that couldn't help themselves.

The ungodly. Those that were the furthest from God. You have to understand. Religion goes around with all this mirrors and smoke and sham and game they're playing. And Jesus is over here with the dregs of society giving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

Giving CPR and saying, You can live. And he's saving those who don't deserve to be saved. That's a Bible truth. God saves bad people. God saves sinners.

Not good people. Look if you went at Romans chapter 5 and verse 6. Right in the margin of this passage. Romans chapter 5 and verse 6. Look what it says. For when we were yet without strength.

Would you underline that? Who did he save? Who did Jesus die for? Those who couldn't. Underline that. Those who couldn't. You're here today and you say, Man, I really want God to make a difference in my life.

[25 : 14] I really want to change. I really want to better my life. I really want to get over my past. I really want help. But I just can't seem to do it. You're in good company. Because Jesus helps those that can't help themselves.

Look at the verse. For when you were yet without strength. In due time. Just on time. Christ died for the good people. Right? Look at the verse. Christ died for the.

Help me say the word. Christ died for the what? Ungodly. Man, the bad guys. Those who are unlike God. Those who are unlike God. That's who Jesus died for.

Romans chapter 5 and verse 6. Look at Romans chapter 5 and verse 8. Same passage of scripture. Two verses down. Jesus came to save people that were still doing wrong.

Listen to this. They were still doing wrong. They weren't on their way to do right. They weren't turning over a new leaf. They weren't improving themselves. They weren't cleaning themselves up.

[26 : 11] I know some people say. If I could just straighten this up in my life. I'm going to get saved. If I could just make this change. If I could just fix this. I'm going to get saved. That's not who Jesus died for.

He died for those without strength. He died for those who were ungodly. And in Romans chapter 5 and verse 8. It says God commended. Or God showed. His love toward us. And that while we were major word. Underline it.

Circulate. Yet sinners. While you were still sinning. Jesus died for us. Christ died for us. He came to save sinners.

He came for the sick people. He came for those that were in need. By the way. Jesus came to love those that didn't love God. Or him. The Bible says in 1 John 4.19.

We love him. Because he first loved us. It isn't like you get your life straightened out. And you come walking up to God. And say I decided to love you. And God says. Okay. Good deal. I'm going to love you.

[27 : 05] No. God comes to you and says. Oh. You're ungodly. You can't help yourself. And you're still sinning. And you don't love me. So I'm going to love you. That's a pretty strong statement. Amen. That's the God you're serving.

That's salvation. Salvation is God loving us. When we don't deserve to be loved. God coming to get us. When we don't deserve it. For you to really enjoy salvation. You must recognize your true condition.

I'd like to talk to those of you. That are born again. Quote unquote Christians in the room. Those of you who believe that you're saved. I'm not trying to get you to doubt your salvation. But I want you to consider some things. So often we're all saved.

And you go knocking on doors in the southeast. And everybody's a believer. And everybody's going to go to heaven. But true salvation. There's some truths. And here's some of the questions. I would ask you.

Were you sick? Before you got saved? Did you realize that you were in bad shape? It's not just that you were going to hell.

[28 : 02] But that you were indeed a sinner. True salvation is for the person that realizes. That God had to save them. And change them. Real salvation is for the person.

Who's not for the person who's in pretty good shape. And just signs up with God. Some of us all. All we make is mental assent. We say okay. Sure.

You can call me a sinner. If you want. You can say I'm a bad guy. If you want. You can say I need to be saved. If you want. I'm not really that bad. I don't mind saying. I'm willing to say anything you want me to say. But I don't think that's true.

Not for you. True salvation. You come to God saying. Oh me. Oh me. Oh me. I stink. I'm sick. I'm in trouble.

I can't go to heaven when I die. I can't. There's no hope for me. And when you get there. There's hope for you. But it's not in you. But it's in him. Real salvation.

[28 : 59] Is for the sick. And the dying. Those that truly see. Their need. As long as you have a solution. Jesus isn't for you. As long as you have a solution.

Jesus isn't for you. He's not just another thing you do. To be sure. Of yourself. It's not like you say. Let me see. I want to make sure I go to heaven.

So I. I don't eat pork. And I. I keep the Sabbath day. For the seventh day Adventist. And I go to the Mormons. And I wear this. Special underwear. And I've been baptized. By the Baptist. And I've been baptized. By the Methodist.

And I've been baptized. By the church of God. No no. It's not like there's some kind of checklist. Basically. Here's what you say. Oh boy. I'm in trouble. I need Jesus.

Did you honestly need someone. To get you out of the mess you were in. Too many times. We think that we weren't like other people. We weren't such bad sinners.

[30 : 04] We feel like we could use a hand. But not that much help. Just give me a hand. We feel that we're already doing okay. And God sure was kind to give us a hand.

That's not true biblical salvation. I was raised in a Christian home. I've been in church all of my life. I do not remember when I memorized the books of the Bible.

I do not memorize. I do not remember when I memorized John 3 16. I've been to church way more than three or four times a week. Average for my entire life. Never been with another woman.

Never used dope. Except when the doctors gave it to me. Never used dope. Never. Just been a good guy. I've had a few speeding tickets. Smoked a few cigarettes. I'm a pretty good guy.

But I'm as hell deserving as the biggest pedophile on this planet. Until you can see yourself there. You don't really get to see true salvation.

[31 : 08] You have to understand you took your own way. You see there's two ways. Your way and his way. And if you take your way. You get what your way produces. They have all gone out of the way.

They've all turned astray. They've all gone astray. Isaiah 53 and Romans chapter 3. Are you sick? The first question was for people that are already saved or think they are.

This question is for you if you're visiting. Do you realize you're in trouble? Do you realize you aren't worthy of being saved or helped? Do you realize that God and God alone could change you?

If you've gotten to that point. Then he's ready to work in your life. I want you to understand something. Before I finish the chapter. We look at just a couple more verses here. In the passage. You need to understand something. Jesus didn't save those religious people.

Amazing. There were Pharisees that were so good. They dressed right. They talked right. They did right. They were good in every way. But Jesus was always aggravated at them.

[32 : 08] He was always aggravated. John the Baptist and Jesus insulted people. But only those religious people who thought they were so good. He was never mean to common people. They could bring a woman to him.

Take it in the very act of adultery. And he'd be merciful. He loved people who knew they needed help. That's what Matthew is about.

He calls Matthew to be an apostle. He's going to do great things. But he's screaming something to us. I came to save sinners. I came to save sinners. And the problem in the southeast is we tend to think we're not.

We tend to think, man, people use drugs. People do all those bad. They're bad. Not us. So Jesus now quotes scripture to show that his ministry was exactly what the Bible said it would be.

Matthew chapter 9 and verse 13. But go and learn. Go study what I said in the Old Testament. What that meaneth. I will have mercy and not sacrifice.

[33 : 11] For I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. Jesus is quoting Hosea 6.6. For I desired mercy and not sacrifice and a knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

God was not looking for more religious performance. But he wanted to know him. We're like this. Right now you're probably sitting there thinking, man, that guy's right.

I have got to do better. No, no, no. That's not what I'm saying. I'm not saying you've got to do better. I'm saying you've got to give up. I'm saying you've got to say I can't do better. I've tried everything there is.

I come just as I am. I come broken. I come needy. I come needing God to do something in my life. He wasn't looking for their sacrifices.

He came to show mercy. Jesus came to call sinners to repentance and to turn to him. He did not come to get good people and make them better. He came for the horrible people like Matthew to completely change their lives.

[34 : 13] Where are you in relation to Jesus? Did you come to him as a sick, sinful, lost person who needed God to love him? Did you realize that without him you were nothing and could do nothing?

Are you ready today to place your trust in the work that Jesus did on the cross of Calvary? So I listen. I finish with this. It's a great story. Matthew gets saved.

His life has changed and he's going to serve God. But Matthew didn't get chosen to be an apostle because he was a good guy. Matthew got chosen to be an apostle because he wasn't a good guy, but he would trust Jesus.

It's not that you've got to go out and do a bunch of wicked stuff. It is that you have to realize you have sinned against the holy God. He came to save sinners. Well, that goes against everything in us.

We're positive thinking people. We believe that we're good, but we're not good according to the Bible. According to the Bible, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There's none righteous, not a one.

[35 : 13] None of us understand. We've all gone out of the way. We need Jesus. Why did Jesus die on a cross to save people like me and like you that didn't deserve to be saved, to love us, to save us, and to change us?

So would you, listening today, I ask you, do you know that you've been born again? Do you know you've trusted what Jesus did? Not you, not what you can do, not what you have done, but what Jesus did.

Have you trusted your strength and your ability, or have you trusted what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary? I challenge you today to trust Jesus. He and he alone can save.

You can never be good enough. You can never earn it. You can never get there. It's Jesus and Jesus alone. Father in heaven, I pray you deal with hearts today. I pray that some people today might be saved.

I pray, God, that somebody today would say, boy, that was harsh. That was hard. That was straight at me, but I know I needed it, and today I want to trust Jesus as my Savior.

[36 : 21] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. For more information, log on to www.visionbaptist.com, where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.

Thanks.