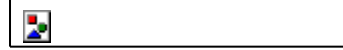


MTD and the Only Way to Heaven

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

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My wife was telling me recently about someone that she had met in a public place very recently, a few hours ago, and this woman she engaged with in a spiritual conversation, had never met her before, and this woman said that, you know, she was a Christian, she was a fan of Joel Osteen and said that she really needed to get back into church because she was having trouble with her back, and to her that made sense, to the woman who was speaking, not to my wife, and that illustrates a way of thinking about God that brings us into the realm that will help us conclude our series as we study moralistic therapeutic deism, the idea that God exists to make my life go well, I don't really need God until something goes wrong and then I can seek him out, he'll fix it and then I can get back on with my life, and this is what this woman was explaining. She did not know she was a moralistic therapeutic deist but that's exactly what she was based on the teaching that she highlighted and the way that she thought about things. Who even thinks this way? You know, if I've got a bad back, I think I need to go to a doctor, you know, or I need to go someplace where somebody can do something for me physically, and yet her thought was, "I've been away from church. I need to go to church because I've got a bad back and, you know, I'll get my ticket and I'll get back what I want from it." This is a very common way of thinking and it's very very dangerous and it's very very destructive as we've talked about and as we'll wrap this up tonight. This is the concluding message of what turned into a five-part series on this topic. So let me just review a little bit and we'll bring this all to a conclusion. This is the spirit of our age, not only in the world but also within the church, and tonight I just want to try to highlight for you in the weakness of my words, in the feebleness of my tongue but hopefully in the power of the Holy Spirit, that this is remarkably dangerous. This is not an innocent misunderstanding of the nature of spiritual life, this is the spirit that leads people to eternal destruction. People go to hell believing these things and we need to not trifle with it but to deal earnestly with it and to deal earnestly with Scripture so that perhaps some of us would be awakened and that we would not slide down the chute to distraction with them, but also, I trust for most of us, simply to sharpen our skills in being able to talk to people and to warn them and to call them to the truth.

What is moralistic therapeutic deism? This is a spiritual philosophy, not that anyone calls themselves this, there are no churches of moralistic therapeutic deism, but it is a set of presuppositions that guide the way that people think. Even though it's not taught under this name by any specific religion, you can find this way of thinking in all kinds of cults

and even professing evangelical churches as well as just the general population at large. What does moralistic therapeutic deism, it tells men that they should simply seek happiness in their lives. The point of life is to be happy and the point of God, therefore, is to aid your happiness. If you're happy without God, that's just fine. After all, the whole point is to be happy, to be nice, to feel good about yourself, and if you're feeling good without God, then the purpose of God has already been served. You're under no obligation to seek him. But if something goes wrong, if you tweak your back or if you start to feel badly, God is there for you. He can help you along the way if you need him and in the end he receives all good people into heaven and the truth of the matter is, almost all of us are good and so almost all of us are going into heaven. This is a very smooth elixir for what ails people, it is very spiritually numbing, it causes people to feel good who should not be feeling good about things at all. How often have we heard of people physically who felt fine physically only to find out they see a little bump on their neck or on their body someplace, and suddenly they find that their body is riddled with cancer and they don't have very long to live at all. The external circumstance and the feeling physically fine was deceptive. It was an illusion. It was a mirage that did not correspond to reality. Well, this way of thinking is a spiritual mirage that people go to only to find that they've been stranded in the desert and the desert heat of God's judgment will sear them in the end, and so we need to take this seriously and treat it as though we were dealing with toxic chemicals here. These are spiritually toxic chemicals that we are dealing with that we need to handle with care in order to escape the deception ourselves, and hopefully by the grace of God, to be able to be used to deliver others from that deception as well.

What are the principles that guide moralistic therapeutic deism? Just very quickly because we've covered this so many times. 1. A god exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth. We said that sounds fine but the fact of the matter is it's too vague. This is the whole problem with the spirit of our age is that it is content with a vague spirituality that has no substance, that never goes beneath the surface. You could say this about a million different gods that exist only in the minds of those who hold to it. No, what we said was what we need to talk about when it comes to who God is, is that we must speak of the sovereign Triune God who is revealed uniquely in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's not enough to talk about some vague higher power or that I have a belief in God. I'm confident that those of you that are an ongoing part of our church understand that you don't have to be a Christian to say something like that, and if that's all a person says about God, "I believe in God. I believe in a Creator being. I believe in a higher power," and they stop there, your mind should immediately say, "I need to pray immediately for this person because they are not saved. If that is all that they can talk about God is in those vague terms, they have not gotten to the point yet of a saving knowledge of Christ."

Secondly, the second presupposition of this spirit of our age is that God wants people to be nice, good and fair to each other as taught in the Bible and by most world religions. Now, the ending clause there, taught by the Bible and by most world religions, should immediately clue you in that there's something seriously wrong here. If a person thinks that they can talk about the Bible on a level playing field with other world religions like

Mormonism or Islam or Catholicism or Hinduism or whatever other ism you want to talk about, you immediately know that there is something greatly fundamentally wrong. You are missing the message of the Bible if you think it can be equated with anything else because the Bible points uniquely to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the truth of the matter is that over against this idea that God wants people to be good, nice and fair to each other, is the reality that Scripture condemns all men because they are not good, they are not fair, they are not loving to each other, and all men are sinners who need to be born again. Jesus said, "Unless a man is born again, he will not see the kingdom of heaven, he will not enter the kingdom of heaven," John 3:3. Unless a man, unless a woman has been born again by the Spirit of God in a way that has brought them to repentance and faith in Christ, they are lost and God, therefore, God is not simply concerned about the horizontal relationships of men between men, God demands vertical allegiance. God demands not more than just mere human morals, he calls people to worship him, and if you do not worship the true God, you are the worst of sinners. So this is very sobering to think through these things.

Number 3, we've spoken about this one already, I'll just kind of run through it very quickly. The central goal of life according to moralistic therapeutic deism is to be happy and to feel good about yourself. Well, we saw that for centuries the church has been asking and answering the question what is the chief end of man, the first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Man's chief end, the answer is, is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Your chief purpose in life, the reason man exists, the reason any individual exists, is to glorify God with your life. We looked at that. I won't dwell on the point any longer.

Point 4. God does not need to be particularly involved in your life except when you need him to resolve a problem for you, and this is what we looked at two weeks ago, and what we said is this: it's hard to imagine anything more insulting against the glory and majesty of God than to describe him in those terms, that he is somehow a dispensable part of your existence to take or leave as you wish, and that you can just whistle for him like you would whistle for a cheap dog to come running to you at your command and at your beck and call to fix what you want and then send the puppy off to do its thing someplace else. That is repulsive to me and it should be repulsive to you. The true God is a God of majesty, a God of glory, a God of great great worth who not only demands our praise but deserves it, and as such, the idea of neglecting him is just foreign to any concept of biblical thought whatsoever. Rather than ignoring this God, Scripture calls us to continually rejoice in him and to give thanks to him.

1 Thessalonians 5:16, you don't need to turn there for now, 1 Thessalonians 5:16 through 18 says, "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." And so over against this idea that God doesn't need to be particularly involved in your life, are clear commands of Scripture that says your life should be oriented toward a prayerful attitude toward God at all times; that your heart should be full of thanksgiving at all times, giving thanks to him for the grace and mercy that he shows in his common grace in the way that he orders life in society, and even more for the way that he has shown saving grace to you in the Lord Jesus Christ, and

Scripture says that is God's will for you, that the disposition of your mind would be ordered toward praising God and thanking him without ceasing that there would be a settled principle in your mind that orders vertical gratitude and thanks to him, ultimately that defines the reason that you exist, more than your spouse does, more than your family does, more than your job does, more than anything else. The reason you exist is to give thanks to the God who gave you physical life and in Christ has given you spiritual life.

Beloved, it could be no other way. It can't be any other way. If our existence and our security and the forgiveness of our sins are all derivative of the grace of God as shown to us in Christ, then it's obvious that that is the central focus of our lives and everything else falls beneath that in priority in our thinking. So what we've said is that the spirit of moralistic therapeutic deism conditions people and it affirms them in their sinful autonomy against God, it affirms them in their self-centered life, it affirms them in their preoccupation with things that are only temporal in nature, and blinds them to the glory of God, it blinds them to the nature of eternity, it blinds them to the need to think beyond this life for this life is just a brief closing window that will usher us into eternity for better or for worse. So I'm grateful to the Lord that we've had opportunity to spend so much time on all of these things and I'm grateful to you for sharing in it with me as we've come together on Tuesday nights.

Now the fifth and final principle, the fifth and final presupposition that we'll address tonight of MTD as we've abbreviated it, is this: good people go to heaven when they die. Good people go to heaven when they die and there's a sense in which everyone would like to believe this because if that's the case, then we can live any way that we want and we go to heaven when we die just as long we've been nice to people along the way, and of course, those who espouse this kind of view number themselves among the good people, right? I mean, is anybody anywhere teaching that all you good folks are going to go to heaven but I'm a bad person and I'm going to hell? Does anyone evangelize that way? No, this is just a backhanded way for a person to congratulate themselves on their own self-righteousness. It's deplorable. It's an awful way to think and ultimately this is the culminating lie of it all, this is the culminating lie of the spirit of our age.

Moralistic therapeutic deism and many pulpits throughout our land and throughout the world, are telling people to assume that they are good and acceptable to God. Why else, beloved, would they fall so silent on telling people about the wrath of God? Why else would they fall so silent in declaring to men and women like you, that you are sinners who have broken God's law and you fall short of his glory every day? Why would they fall short of warning people about the dangers of hell except that they are communicating, perhaps sometimes in unspoken presupposition, oftentimes more verbally expressed, that everything is fine. "Peace, peace be with you. God loves you. God will take you to heaven." And you see this reflected back in the mirror when you go to most funerals who talk about the departed, I speak as though there were an imaginary casket in front of me, I guess, the way I'm waving my hands, that, "Oh, he's in a better place. Now he's in someplace green and it's peaceful and, you know, we'll all be together one day," and just this vapid sense of uninformed spirituality, things pronounced over a man or a woman who had no regard for God in their lives and at the funeral, the lie is

repeated so many times. So the ongoing or the working presupposition is that basically men are good and acceptable to God and that even if it's not said that way, that's the controlling disposition of a heart. You're good and I'm good, we're going to be in heaven together. You know, why God would want us never crosses their mind. Why would God want someone who gave no regard to him in their lives, who had no regard for his word, why would heaven suddenly be opened to continual rebels who had no regard for him?

So the prevailing spirit of our age totally lacks any sense of sin, totally lacks any sense of the poverty of spirit of which Jesus spoke in Matthew 5:3 and 4, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." And the reality in this way of thinking is that heaven simply becomes an extension of MTD on earth and it grieves me, it grieves me for the sake of the truth of God, to see the truth of God denied and hidden. That grieves me. It grieves me for the sense of the false teachers who are promulgating this, who know that this kind of teaching attracts bigger crowds because everybody likes to be told how good they are, everybody likes to be flattered, everybody likes to have the world and to have God center around them, this is just great, so to speak. It grieves me over that, it grieves me for the sake of the souls who assume things are fine and will wake up with the rich man in Hades crying out for someone to go and warn those they left behind lest they come to this place of torment as well. So we realize that this prevailing spirit conditions men to avoid thoughts of sin or heaven and hell.

Now think with me as we think about this, and I'm quite confident that you have family members, neighbors, coworkers, that you're thinking about as we hear this and you can just hear echoes of what people have said to you, and so I trust that as we wrap these things up, that it burdens your heart as well and that perhaps the burden of this would motivate us, including myself, to pray even more earnestly for the Spirit of God to open their eyes and to lead them out of darkness into light, but this spirit, this way of thinking, teaches men, conditions men not to think about sin and hell and in light of everything that we've said in the prior four messages about the prior four principles, beloved, think with me, why would they even have a thought of being afraid of those things? God exists to make them happy. They see God as someone who simply wants to solve their problems and so they run inside a church building when their back hurts to cash in on this nature of God and then they can get back to their lives. Beloved, if God exists simply to solve your problems and to make you happy, there is no possible way that sin could be a problem to you before God. There's no possible way that hell could be a problem. Why would God send anybody to hell for eternity if the presupposition is true, that he's just such a guy that wants people to be happy? And all of a sudden you have added to the blindness that leads people to destruction. Yes, you can fill a large stadium in Houston talking about these things and making people feel better for the moment. You can do that. There is living proof of it. But it leaves sinners exposed to hell and condemnation from a holy God and sooner or later, beloved, that weighs on a godly heart and if not genuine physical tears in their literal eyes, it brings tears to the heart of the true believer.

Moralistic therapeutic deism is premised on a false assumption that most men are good and I want to just say this plainly, that this spirit, this kind of teaching that is embodied in

what we are saying here, beloved, let me say it just as plainly and directly as I possibly can in a simple sentence: moralistic therapeutic deism is not Christianity. This is not biblical teaching. It is a false religion. It is a false hope. It is a false security. It is the false religion of those who are satisfied that they have prayed a prayer to Jesus to come into their heart without any sense of remorse over sin, without any true repentance, without any love for Christ, without any desire to follow him. That is false religion. It is not Christianity. MTD is the false religion of those who attend church occasionally and yet live any way that they want to. MTD is the false religion of those who may pay lip service to the Bible but have no desire to read it, to understand it, to study it, or to hear it taught. You cannot possibly read the Bible, start with the Bible and read it cover to cover, read the New Testament consecutively, and come out with this kind of deformity that passes for the religion of our age.

You see, the Bible tells an entirely different story about this idea that good people go to heaven when they die. Turn in your Bible to Isaiah 64. Isaiah 64:6, it says, "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away." And look at this in verse 7, "There is no one who calls on Your name, Who arouses himself to take hold of You; For You have hidden Your face from us And have delivered us into the power of our iniquities." The prophet looks on things, this is the same prophet who in chapter 6 cried out woe upon himself because he had seen God and he realized he was a man of unclean lips and he lived among a people of unclean lips. That is the reality that we are living in today as well and, beloved, we just need to be clear that the punishment for sin against this holy God is eternal destruction. We looked at this just a week ago on Sunday when we talked about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You see, it's not the question, it's not the issue that good people go to heaven when they die, the problem is that hell is for bad people. We might get people to nod in the general direction of that but where moralistic therapeutic deism has to stop nodding is when you go the next biblical step further and say, "And friend, we're all bad. We're all bad. Hell is for bad people and we're all bad." So A + B equals C, and the C stands for condemnation.

Even though we've turned there many times, let's turn there again to Romans 3. A + B equals condemnation. We'll go a little further than what we often do when we look at this passage. In verse 9 it says, "Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin." Let me state just for the record that as I say these things, I fall under the umbrella of condemnation of which I speak myself. I speak down to no one as we talk about these things. This is the condition of humanity and I am included in what I saying here.

Verse 10, "There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one." Keep going, "Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving, The poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood, distraction and misery are in their paths, and the path of peace they have not known." And Paul gathers up these Old Testament quotations and says this in verse 18, "There is

no fear of God before their eyes." Now beloved, he says that in a statement condemning the entire human race and as we have seen as we have gone through this phenomenon that marks the spirit of our age known as moralistic therapeutic deism, we have said over and over again what Paul summarizes as being the pinnacle of the condemnation, the righteous condemnation of the human race, it's that there is no fear of God before their eyes, and as we have rehearsed these things, we've said over and over again, this lulls people into a false sense of security. It conditions them not to think about sin and hell. It conditions them, indeed, it tells them that you can ignore God and just come to him when you need him and he'll be there for you. Don't you see that everything woven in that is built off an assumption that there's nothing to fear about God at all? And Paul says and blankets the human race with the condemnation that they do not fear God. Any religion that conditions you to never fear God, to never revere him, to never worship him, when those thoughts don't cross into your mind, it cannot be the truth.

Paul goes on in verse 19 and he says, "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin." No one escapes this condemnation. Every mouth is closed. No one is good enough. No works that anyone does will justify them in the sight of God because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. So it fails utterly on the score of the depravity of man and the sinfulness of all humanity.

Now let's take it a little bit further here as, again, we're just wrapping all of these things up and summarizing them. Not only that, beloved, let me remind you of this: it is a horrible deception, it is a great false conceit for men to think that most people will go to heaven when they die. That is a deception and it is born out of the conceited heart of humanity to think that way, and if I could remind you of something that I said right from the beginning, over and over again the spirit of our age crashes on the rock of Jesus Christ and is shattered before his person and before his words and everything that he said. The idea that most people will go to heaven when they die could not have been more directly contradicted by our infallible Lord than by what he said in Matthew 7. Turn there with me. Matthew 7:13. Matthew 7 beginning in verse 13. Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." So the idea that most people go to heaven when they die is just immediately refuted by the teaching of Christ. He said in Luke 13:24, "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."

So beloved, speaking to you if I can put it in this way, considering ourselves apart from Christ: you are not good; you are sinful; and you must be born again. God requires a perfect righteousness to go to heaven that none of us have on our own. We must receive righteousness as a gift because we cannot earn it and we do not have it. So all of us, all of us are humbled before the narrow gate that leads to heaven. We realize that our sin excludes us from admission into God's holy presence. We realize that out of our sinful

hearts we cannot generate anything good to save ourselves and so there is a sense in which we are sitting outside of the gate with sores all over us like Lazarus was sitting outside the gates of the rich man, needing someone to show kindness to us, someone to show grace to us because we are not in a condition to enter through that majestic gate on our own and that's why the Gospel is so glorious, my friends. That's why it is so wonderful to realize that in the Gospel God gives us a gift of righteousness that we do not deserve. In the person of Christ, God came to earth and Christ lived a perfect life in perfect obedience to the law of God and then offered himself up as a sacrifice on the cross of Calvary for everyone who would ever believe in him. God accepted that sacrifice as shown by the fact that he raised him on the third day, and what happens in genuine true salvation is a guilty sinner comes to Christ and confesses his sins and calls upon Christ to have mercy on him to save him, rather than coming with an air of arrogance, rather than coming with a spirit of entitlement, of expectation that, "I have something here that I'm entitled to." The one that God justifies, the one that God saves comes to him humbly confessing sin, confessing unworthiness, and asking for a gift of mercy that he does not deserve. Any sense of asserting right before God, asserting a right before God for his blessing is in utter contradiction to the principle of grace that underlies Christian salvation. And in this gift of salvation, what God does is that God looks at that sinner and, as it were, assigns the righteousness of Christ to his account and says, "I will credit you with the righteousness of Christ which is a gift that you utterly do not deserve and could never earn on your own." And in salvation, God takes the guilt of the sinner and places it on Christ who paid the price for it at Calvary, and when you understand and when you think about salvation in these terms, you start to realize what a magnificent gift it is and that it could be no other way, and there is no way to earn that. There is no way to qualify for that in your own righteousness. This is a gift. You come as a sinner to Christ and cry out for mercy. You come knowing that you don't deserve anything from God and the glory and the gift of the Gospel is that God takes that righteousness of Christ and places it over you, assigns it to your account, looks on you as though you had lived the perfect life of Christ yourself. He thinks of you as having lived the righteous life of Christ yourself. I'm saying the same thing in a lot of different ways. What I'm trying to do here is to articulate the principle of imputation in multiple ways to help you grasp it as we look at the same thing from different angles. That's all we're doing here. And God takes this infinite righteousness of Christ's perfect obedience to the law of God and says, "I will look at you as though you had done that yourself."

Now when you understand it that way, you realize how greatly humbling that is. "God, You are looking at me and You are giving me credit for something I didn't do." Precisely. "God, that's really good of You." Precisely. "God, God, this is humbling to be on the receiving end of a gift like that." Precisely. "God, all I can do is thank You and express my gratitude through my lips and my life." Precisely. "God, I have nothing to boast in, then. I have nothing of my own in which to boast." Scripture says precisely. Paul said, "God forbid that I should boast save in the cross of my Lord Jesus," Galatians 6:14. This is not a matter of good people going to heaven when they die, this is a matter of a good God giving a great gift to bad people.

Then you look at it from the other side, you know, and just as the majesty of Christ is exposed through God's word to us and as the Spirit opens our eyes to these things and we see his majesty and we see his glory, we see his goodness, we see his condescending love, we see his kindness and his patience toward us, and we realize that that great Christ, that most worthy Son of God who was love incarnate, who was God incarnate, full of grace and glory, full of truth, that that one was the one on Calvary. He who was pure and blameless and innocent, undefiled and exalted above the heavens, and God looked on him and said, "I will assign the guilt of that one to You and You will pay the price. You will suffer the equivalent of eternal punishment for what all of their sins deserved." And imputing your guilt to Christ and you step back for a moment and say, "But wait, wait, timeout! He doesn't deserve that. He didn't do that. That was my sin. I'm the one to blame. I should be punished." And Christ was pleased for his Father to assign the guilt to him though he had done nothing wrong, though he was sinless as even his enemies were forced to acknowledge because they could find nothing wrong, they could find nothing to accuse him of, and your guilt was assigned to Christ and the stroke of your eternal punishment was inflicted upon him.

Look at Isaiah 53:5 prophetically speaking of a crucifixion yet to come when Isaiah said these words 700 years before the coming of Christ. "He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed." Verse 6, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him." There is this lovely Lord Jesus on the cross, innocent, righteous, the Maker of heaven and earth, and your guilt God assigned to him. God looked on Christ as though he had committed your sins. He assigned it to Christ. Christ took responsibility for it. He was held accountable for what you had done and the punishment fell on him and multiple hours of darkness fell on the earth, and that righteous soul cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And the bitter cup of wrath that was ours to drink, he took the cup from our hands and drank it to the full, drank it down to the dregs and paid it all. In the climactic moment when the wrath had been extinguished and the wrath had been absorbed to the full, he cried out, "It is finished!" The work of redemption was done.

Don't, don't talk to me about the goodness of man. There is one good and that is the Lord Jesus and, beloved, Scripture would teach us, Scripture would have us to think along these lines: if there was any possibility for you to be good enough to go to heaven, then Christ died without reason. There was no point to what I just described if there was another way to heaven. There's no point in it. Galatians 2:21, if you want to turn there with me. Galatians 2:21 says this, Galatians 2:21, "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." Applying that verse to the topic at hand, if moralistic therapeutic deism was true, it would nullify the grace of God. If you can be good on your own without regard or mention of Christ, then Jesus Christ died needlessly. The whole purpose of redemption was foolish in this worldview but, beloved, Christ did not die for no purpose. He died with reason and, indeed, I would go so far as to say that this prevailing worldview cannot begin to explain the purpose and

mission of Christ as he himself articulated it. It can't begin to explain it. It makes absolutely no sense.

Look at Mark 10:45. Mark 10:45 says that "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." If good people, if people are basically good and good people go to heaven, then why on earth did Christ come to do that? That makes no sense. What I would suggest to you is that what doesn't make sense is the prevailing spirit of our age. What Christ said makes perfect sense and the fact that it contradicts the spirit of our age merely vindicates and shows forth its glory all the more. It is not an argument against the words of Christ that the world disagrees with this, that couldn't be true and it's not true. Jesus said in Luke 19:10 in the presence of Zacchaeus and those who were objecting to Christ's kindness to that tax gatherer, he said, "Hey, the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 5:31-32, "I did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." It's not those who are well who need a physician, it's those who are sick. Those who say good people, most people are good are going to heaven are saying, "We don't need a doctor. We don't need a Savior. We're good enough on our own." Jesus says, "Fine, have it your way. I didn't come to call people with that mindset." Just understand that that mindset leads you to judgment. You might want to reconsider the mindset.

Salvation is not a reward for good people. Heaven is not an oasis for people who were good on earth. It's a gift, an undeserved gift of grace to bad people, ungodly people, who come to Christ crying out for mercy, crying out for salvation and giving themselves to him in an act of loving self-surrender and self-commitment to him which is faith.

In Galatians 2 again, verse 16, Galatians 2:16, and we're rounding third and coming to home here on this series. When I do series, I've said this from time to time, when I come to the concluding thought of the last message of a series, there's always a little sense of wistfulness to bring something like this to a close. Galatians 2:16, it says, "nevertheless," actually look at verse 15 because it just, the Bible is just so repeatedly clear on what it says. Galatians 2:15, "We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; nevertheless knowing this," be it Jew or Gentile, "a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified." He triples the statement in a positive way: we're justified through faith in Christ; we believed in Christ; faith in Christ. He mirrors it in a negative way, he triples it: not justified by the works of the law; not by the works of the law; by the works of the law no flesh will be justified. It's a gift, beloved, for it is by grace you have been saved and that not of yourselves, it is, what? What is it? It's a gift. It is a gift of God not of works that no one should boast. It is such a gift that God even has to work life in us and God has to work a life that produces the faith in us. We can't even bring faith on our own power. We need a work of God in our heart to even generate that kind of faith in us.

One final passage. You don't need to turn there as I wrap this up in 2 Timothy 2. In 2 Timothy 2, Paul tells Timothy that, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome,

but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will." Ephesians 2, God is granting faith. 2 Timothy 2, God is granting repentance. He's giving it as a gift. We are sinful and our only hope is in a merciful Christ.

Beloved, everything about moralistic therapeutic deism, everything about the spirit of our age collapses in the presence of Christ; falls to the ground based on the clear statements of Jesus. It is destroyed in light of Scripture. This spirit of our age dulls people clear to hell and that means that we need to proclaim Christ to them. We must cling to Christ and the Bible for ourselves for only then we are safe, and as we come and talk to people as you have the opportunity to engage in spiritual discussions with them, oh friends, open your Bible to them because the Scripture is what God uses to open the eyes of the blind, to unstop the ears of the deaf, to loosen the tongues of the mute. We must come to the word of God. We must show them the word of God because that is where the power is. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes," and that Gospel is revealed in the pages and in the word of Scripture.

So as we draw this to a close, I trust that we've seen the spirit of the age, we've smelled the smoke of hell all around it, and we step even further away from it and look with gratitude and trust renewed to our great Lord Jesus who loved us and gave himself up for us. That and that alone is our eternal hope of salvation.

Let's pray together.

Dear Father, we thank You for the majestic clarity of Your word. We thank You for the majestic glory of Jesus Christ. We thank You for the majestic glory of the cross. We thank You for the majestic glory of the work of the Spirit in our hearts regenerating us, imparting life to us that we might repent and believe in Christ. We thank You for the majestic truth that the Spirit now indwells us as believers in Christ and is the down payment that our salvation will be completed in the end; we will be glorified in heaven in the end. O God, O God, with all of our hearts we are repulsed by the spirit of our age. We are repulsed by the thought that we would take credit for our salvation. We are repulsed by the thought that anyone would strive arrogantly, as it were, toward the gates of heaven and say, "I'm here. Aren't you glad? I deserve to be let in." That's not our spirit here, Father. We confess our spiritual bankruptcy. We mourn over our sin but we rejoice in Christ who loved us and gave Himself up for us and, therefore, we gladly say to Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

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