

Matthew 13:44-58 | Adam Wilson

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[0:00] Good morning, everybody. If you guys have your Bibles with you, I'd encourage you to turn with me to Matthew chapter 13. I believe you guys have been preaching verse by verse through Matthew, which is fantastic.

! We have the second half of the chapter today. We'll be in verses 44 through 58. This morning we'll be looking at a very difficult section of Scripture.

This section is not necessarily difficult to understand, but it's really difficult to come to terms with. In fact, it's so hard to come to terms with that every other belief system in the world flat out rejects it. There are many religions and belief systems around the world. Some of them are blatantly pagan, such as Buddhism and Hinduism. Others are just as pagan, but maybe harder to distinguish, such as Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Islam.

But what many of these religions have in common is that they somehow incorporate Jesus Christ into their belief system. Mormons believe that Jesus was divinely created, implying that he had a beginning.

[1:13] Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus was created, but before he existed, Jesus was just Michael the archangel. And then Islam views Jesus as a prophet and divine messenger, but ultimately rejects him as the Son of God.

So while most religions speak about Jesus Christ, the question ought to be, is speaking about Christ good enough? Our resounding answer ought to be no. Contrary to popular opinion today, all roads don't lead to heaven, and it does actually matter what you believe.

So as we'll see this morning, even those during the time of Christ who have studied the Torah for their entire lives viewed our Lord Jesus incorrectly. So how you view Jesus matters because it will impact whether you will enter the kingdom of God and spend eternity with Christ, or if you will reject him and spend eternity facing the wrath of God in hell.

And so our goal this morning is to see that having a proper view of Christ matters greatly for both salvation and for godly living. And so there are three takeaways this morning if you're taking notes for you to focus on in Matthew 13, 44-58.

The first takeaway is the significance of the kingdom of God. The significance of the kingdom of God. Our second takeaway is the separation before the kingdom of God.

[2:40] And then our third takeaway is the salvation to enter the kingdom of God. So with that, let's open a prayer and then we'll get into the text. Father, we just come before you this morning.

I just pray that you would just bless our time together as we study your word. Lord, I just pray that we would not just come to understand what it says, but Lord, that you would actually help us live out your word as God, that's the hardest part of studying it is living it out.

So I pray that you would go before each of us this morning. And I just pray you'd open our hearts to have what you would have for us in your word. And pray this in your son's name. Amen. So let's begin this morning by looking at our first takeaway, the significance of the kingdom of God.

We'll read verses 44 through 46 together. The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure in the field, which a man found and hid again. And from joy over it, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls. And upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. So we're kind of introduced into this first parable, Jesus comparing the kingdom of God to treasure being hidden in the field.

[3:56] As there was no banks at this time, the people would bury their valuable assets in the ground. So at nighttime, the owner of the assets would go out to the field and withdraw whatever he needed by digging it up from the ground.

I think some Christians are hesitant with this parable because it kind of sounds unethical for a man to find the treasure in the field, not tell the owner of the field, then go and uncover the treasure and take it.

But I would say this man wasn't dishonest because he sold all that he had to go buy the field and then he dug up the treasure. He didn't just go steal the treasure out of the owner's field and then leave with it.

No, he bought the field legally, owned the treasure, which he sought after. And so in short, he went to great lengths to possess this treasure. And so the next parable is very similar in those verses 45 and 46 about the pearl.

This merchant was in the business of buying and reselling merchandise. Currently, I work at Shield Sporting Goods, so buying and reselling merchandise is what we do.

[4:58] I work in the fishing department, and so it's my job to help resell fishing equipment from our distributors. If we're on the computer and we see that someone has a trolling motor or a fishing rod combo that we think would sell well for us, we would use our shop's monthly budget and buy those items.

And why would we do that? Well, because we know if we have the money to purchase those items, we'll turn a bigger profit for the store. And so here, this merchant is kind of doing the same thing. He's buying and reselling pearls. But back then, it was extremely dangerous to search and harvest pearls. There would have been divers that would have to go look for oysters in the ocean. But obviously, they don't have the same equipment we do today, and so many divers would lose their lives doing this.

And so there would be this as the driving force of why these pearls were so valuable. Pearls were hard to obtain, and they were beautiful. If you're kind of thinking a similarity to today, that would be like diamonds for us.

But these pearls were highly sought after, and it would be easier to have a majority of your wealth into one pearl because it's much easier to bury a single, like one pearl, than it would be to just bury all of your assets in the ground.

[6:13] You can have all of your money tied up into one item. So, Jesus is using this parable because he's demonstrating the preciousness of the gospel. In Matthew 7, verse 6, Jesus says, Do not throw your pearls before swine.

In other words, he's saying the gospel is priceless, and yet unbelievers see the gospel as worthless. This merchant sells all that he has to obtain this one pearl.

He gives up everything for one pearl because this thing must have been magnificent because he would have to sell his existing collection of whatever he had to obtain it.

And so, Jesus compares this to the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is the salvation of believers, the salvation the believers receive, which then extends to submitting to God's spiritual rule.

So, furthermore, it's important to remember in Scripture that Jesus, when he's doing a miracle or he's telling a parable, it's not just him telling stories or doing cool tricks because what he's doing in Scripture is he's teaching us a spiritual lesson.

[7:20] And so, his purpose in this parable is to illustrate that the kingdom of heaven is so precious and so priceless that those who come to a saving knowledge of their truth will give up their lives to pursue this relationship with Christ.

And so, therefore, the worth or the draw of the kingdom of heaven is hidden for most people.

However, salvation is so valuable to those who find it, they're willing to give up their possessions to find it, like this parable says.

So, let's briefly compare this with another story in Matthew. Instead of a parable, this one is sadly a historical narrative. So, turn with me, if you would, to Matthew 19, starting in verse 16.

A story many of you, I'm sure, are familiar with, the rich young ruler. Starting in verse 16. And behold, someone came to him, Jesus, and said, Teacher, what good thing shall I do that may inherit eternal life?

And he said to him, Why are you asking me about what is good? There is only one who is good, but if you wish to enter life, keep the commandments. Then he said to him, Which ones?

[8:27] And Jesus said, You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

The young man said to him, All these things I've kept, what am I still lacking? Jesus said to him, If you wish to be complete, go, sell all your possessions and give to the poor, and you'll have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me.

But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. And so Jesus said to his disciples, Truly I say to you, it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

And once again I say to you, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. And when the disciples heard this, they were astonished and said, Then who can be saved?

And looking at them, Jesus said with people, This is impossible. But with God, all things are possible. So verse 16 at the beginning, this young man calls Jesus teacher.

[9:29] Another similar account, Luke, he calls him good teacher. This man isn't referring to the deity of Christ, but he's referring to the wisdom that Jesus obviously possesses.

Because like many people do today, this man immediately thinks he's a good person. Or put another way, he thinks he's good enough for God's standards. Jesus knows this man's heart and responds by explaining that God is the only one who is truly good.

God is the only one who is perfect. And so, Jesus responds with a statement that ought to be a stumbling block for this man, verse 17, for him to enter everlasting life.

He calls the man to keep the commandments. And the point that Jesus is making here is that keeping the commandments is impossible with man. Man cannot keep the law.

Yet the man immediately begins to self-justify, in verse 20, because the man is so blinded by his spiritual condition that he actually thinks he has kept all those commandments so far.

[10:35] This is the main problem. Yeah, he's rich. He has possessions that blind him, but it really does cut deeper than that. He is spiritually blind.

And Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he explains this well. But a natural man does not accept the depths of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually examined.

Jesus knows exactly the sin that this man is struggling with. He struggles with his wealth, his earthly possessions, but ultimately is one that is spiritually blind. Jesus is really asking, do you love God more than your stuff, more than your possessions?

But not only this, but the man loved himself more than he loves God. So instead of enthusiastically giving up those earthly treasures to follow Christ, the man turns away in sorrow.

Now, this isn't a parable telling us today that we have to live in poverty to follow Christ. Not at all. In fact, Christ has said the exact opposite. He's called us to be good stewards. But the entire point of this parable is to show, or the story is to show that this young man, he had a serious heart problem.

[11:48] This is because all of us in this room have stumbled at some point in the law, and therefore all of us have broken God's law. We are only saved by coming to understand our spiritual condition before God is that we are sinners separated from him and cannot even keep the law.

This man had no idea who Jesus really was, and therefore the man left Christ in great sorrow. Jesus ends this story by responding to the question that the disciples posed.

Then who can be saved? Salvation only comes by the grace of God. It cannot be earned by the merit of man. Since salvation is by grace, by definition, we do not earn it.

We cannot work hard enough for it. It is solely by God that we are saved. When you think of the jailer in Philipians in Acts chapter 16, he went before Paul and Silas and said, Sirs, what must I do

to be saved?

And they respond, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household. It's solely by the grace of God. And so tying this back into the parable of the merchant and the pearl, the merchant understood the value of the pearl and gave all for it.

[13:05] Because when the true believer comes to terms with the gospel, he understands the glorious merit of it and will give all to receive it because the believer understands his sinful condition before God and sees the unfathomable value of the gospel put on display by the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But today, we live in an age where we are blinded by our possessions and our technology. As Christians even, we still have so many distractions and items that get in the way of Christ. We can let our jobs, money, kids, vacations, cars, school, I mean, etc. All of these can get in the way as believers of pursuing Christ. And we let our stuff get in the way of valuing our salvation and our Savior.

So my question for you all this morning is do you understand this infinite value of the gospel? Do you understand the great call to discipleship that Christ has given each of us? And I think a lot of times the distractions that we have really limit our view of salvation and the greatness of it. And so, this morning, if you're a believer and you're here and you've been struggling with idolatry, which is really what happens when you put anything before the Lord, you need to turn to Him in repentance.

[14:20] Forgiveness awaits you. Just confess your sin to Him and turn from your sin. Because for the believer, it is promised in 1 John 1-9, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We're promised forgiveness if we confess them before God. We are given forgiveness. But if you're not a believer, what you'll do is you'll always seek to do whatever gratifies the flesh.

Basically, whatever feels good, you'll go out and do that. And so, if for some reason this is you this morning, you need to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and beg for forgiveness because He will readily accept the One who comes before Him in faith.

And so, Jesus then uses another parable to make a spiritual point about the Kingdom of God in verses 47-52 of chapter 13. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea and gathering fish of every kind.

And when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. So it will be at the end of the age that angels will come forth and take out the wicked among the righteous and will throw them into the fiery furnace in that place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[15:44] Have you understood all these things they said to Him? Yes. And He said to them, Therefore, every scribe who has become a disciple of the Kingdom of Heaven is like a head of a household who brings out His treasure, things new and old.

So this morning, our second takeaway is the separation before the Kingdom of God. During the time of Christ, many of those in this audience were professional fishermen, so Jesus used this specific parable to clearly teach His audience a lesson.

For those of you who don't know, actually there's one person in this room who has known my extended family about as long as I have. I found out last night. That was really funny. But most of my extended family lives in Anchorage, Alaska. They love to fish in rivers and the ocean.

Alaska is one of the best places I think on Earth for hunting and fishing. It's also one of the best places on the planet for salmon fishing. But when you're an Alaskan resident, you can go out and fish with a dip net, which is like a really large net.

The fishermen hold the net and put it into the river while the salmon are spawning in large numbers down the river. And so the goal is to get your annual limit of salmon. My family's been dip netting for years.

[16:57] This past year, even a couple weeks ago, the numbers were so up, they got 100 salmon in one day and got like 70 in another day. They just got a lot of fish. And so this is like a very similar form of fishing to what they did here during the time of Christ in this chapter.

There'd be both good fish and there'd be bad fish. The fish you keep to eat and sell and then the ones that had to be separated because they were rotting out or there was something wrong with them.

And so, in the last days, the net will be full of bad fish of those who claim to be believers and those who flat out reject Christ.

Those are the bad fish. Even going back to our introduction, we were talking about the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses. When you talk to them, when they come to your door, they will say they are Christians.

Christians. Those are those in part of this group, unfortunately, the bad fish. But then the good fish are those who are believers, those who have put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[17:58] So with that, let's turn to a very similar passage in Matthew 25. We'll be in verse 31.

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory and all the angels with Him, then He will seat on His glorious throne.

And all the nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate them from one another as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left.

Then the King will say to those on His right, Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom which has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat.

I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited Me in. Naked and you clothed Me. I was sick and you visited Me. I was in prison and you came to Me.

[18:58] Then the righteous will answer Him saying, Lord, when do we see You hungry and feed You or thirsty and give You something to drink? And when do we see You as a stranger and invite You in or naked and clothe You?

And when did we see You sick or in prison and come to You? And the King will answer and say to them, Truly I say to you, to the extent that You did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, You did it to Me.

Then He'll say to those on His left, Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and You gave Me nothing to eat.

I was thirsty and You gave Me nothing to drink. I was a stranger and You did not invite Me in, naked and You did not clothe Me, sick and in prison You did not visit Me. Then they themselves will answer saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not take care of You?

Then He will answer them saying, Truly I say to you, to the extent that You did not do it to one of the least of these, You did not do it to Me. And these will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life.

[20:09] So here, Jesus is discussing what will take place before His millennial reign. In other words, the judgment that will take place before He rules the earth for 1,000 literal years.

The sheet mentioned here are all the believers. They are given the place of favor. They will enter the kingdom of God. But notice what is said about the believers in the first few verses here.

They'll be with God forever in eternal paradise. Now the unbelievers will also be separated. They're the goats that are mentioned here. Like the believers, they will also enter eternity.

But unlike the believers, however, they will face God's wrath forever and ever. There's no second chances here. There's no mulligans.

They rejected Christ all their lives and now they will face God's wrath. So each of you consider this morning, if you were to die today and you were to face the judgment of God, do you know exactly which group you are in?

[21:14] Are you part of the sheep or are part of these goats? And then furthermore, if you're a Christian here this morning, consider how are you living your life right now?

Would others know you as a believer or an unbeliever? You don't lose your salvation. You don't lose your salvation. But if you're here and you're noticing that your life is not matching up to this

glorious gospel that you believe, I just encourage you to make that right with the Lord. Because all of us will face judgment one day and that will either be a glorious day when we'll enter the kingdom of God and be physically present with Him in paradise. or the other option is that you'll enter into eternal damnation and face His wrath because you rejected the Son of God.

Charles Spurgeon once said, true Christianity is not just a matter of outward profession, but is evidenced by the inward change that manifests itself in our actions. The sheep are those who by their deeds show that their faith is genuine and alive, while the goats are those who have a mere outward form without the substance of real love and charity.

What Spurgeon is saying here is that the gospel changes our lives as believers. It's a glorious regeneration that takes place by the Holy Spirit. And guys, it is pretty easy to look good to the outside world.

[22:37] Maybe you've been sitting here today and you've deceived people thinking you're a Christian as well, but only you and God know your spiritual condition. And if that's you this morning, just know I've been there before.

Up until I was nine years old, I come from a church where my dad's been an elder my entire life. And what I was supposed to do was sit there and be a good kid, but I didn't have any spiritual interest until I was nine years old.

I was just sitting there deceiving the outside world, but really kind of just deceiving myself that I was a believer until the Lord graciously saved me at Turkey Hill one year.

I want to emphasize strongly, guys, you can fool others now, but you'll never fool God on the day of judgment. The good fish will be sorted out from the rotten ones and the sheep will be separated from the goats.

And unfortunately, there are some people who are deceived and think they are sheep serving God, but in reality, they're the goats that are leading people astray. Because this is precisely what the Jewish leaders were doing, as we'll see in this next section of Matthew chapter 13.

[23:41] And we'll get to our third and our final takeaway, which is the salvation to enter the kingdom of God. Starting in verse 53.

Now it happened that when Jesus finished these parables, he departed from there. And he came to his hometown and began teaching them in their synagogue so that they were astonished and said, where'd this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?

Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary and his brothers James, Joseph, and Simon, and Judas, and his sisters? Are they not all with us?

Where then did this man get all these things? And they were taking offense at him. But Jesus said to them, a prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.

And he did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief. So we see in the story, Jesus returns to Nazareth to teach in the synagogue among those whom he would have known probably from growing up.

[24:42] The people immediately recognized his teaching as wise and they associated his teaching with the miracles in which he performed. So while they had this intellectual grasp of who God is, they never really came to a deeper understanding than that.

They saw him as a wise teacher. They saw him as a person doing wondrous miracles. But ultimately, they reject him as the Messiah, the only begotten son of God. But look at this response from the people here in verse 55.

They grew up with Jesus and therefore, they should have known he didn't have any formal rabbinic teaching. They should be asking, where is all this knowledge coming from? Well, instead of asking that, they list his family members because their prideful assertion is that the family members are nothing special, so therefore, Jesus must be nothing special.

And so they called Jesus wise. They marveled at his miracles, but they rejected him. They were astonished at his teachings.

They then were offended by them. But their heart and response wasn't a surprise to our Lord Jesus. Because in Scripture, there are two groups of people, those who are believers and those who are not.

[25:57] Matthew 7, 13, and 14 makes this very clear. So there are only two roads.

There's the narrow way and there's the broad way. The narrow way leads to eternal life and the broad way to eternal destruction. Those who obey the voice of Christ enter the narrow way and those who reject him will face eternal damnation.

Matthew 7, continues with verses 24-27. Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and does them may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.

And the rain descended and the rivers came and the winds blew and fell against the house and yet it did not fall for it had been founded on the rock. And everyone hearing these words of mine and not doing them may be compared to a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

And the rain descended and the rivers came and the winds blew and slammed against that house and it fell and great was its fall. So Christ uses this illustration to continue clarification of these two groups.

[27:17] The wise man is being depicted as hearing Christ's words and obeying them because this is a solid foundation. This is one that cannot be blown over in the storm. However, what's the other person?

The other person is the foolish man. He built his house in the sand. The storm came and the house was wrecked. To use another illustration, as I previously mentioned, my grandparents live in Alaska.

Since they're on a fault line, they get earthquakes pretty regularly. However, they received a severe one several years ago and it shook their house so violently, the house came off its foundation, cracked many of the walls, it destroyed their patio and their deck and it was thousands of dollars of damage because it turns out the house was never actually built upon a concrete foundation because the builders, when they built it years ago, decided to make their own lives easier and just build the house literally on sand.

And so, my poor grandparents had no idea how weak their foundation was until it was already too late. The same can be said here for those who hear the words of Christ and never heed them.

Or those who witnessed His miracles but never came to understand the spiritual significance of them. Or even those who think that Christ is just a good man, but He was not the Son of Almighty God.

[28:44] The believer understands that Christ Jesus is the Son of God. He was born of a virgin and He lived a sinless life. And He lived His life pleasing to the Father, fulfilling the law in every single point.

And He went obediently to the cross on our behalf out of love for us and love for the Father. And there on that cross, Christ took our sin and wrath of the Father upon Himself and gave up His life in our place.

And so three days later, Jesus rose from the doom. He conquered sin and conquered death and He ascended to the Father where He is seated today and He is pleading on behalf of His people.

So if you've never come to believe this Jesus, the true Jesus, you have been deceived because religion will never save you. Good works will never save you.

Your parents can never save you. And even just showing up to church and having Christian friends will not save you. There is only one path, one way of salvation, and that is through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[29:47] Because if you miss Christ, you miss the Gospel because Christ is the embodiment of the Gospel. We read it this morning but I'll read it again. 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us, He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

This righteousness in which we share is not of ourselves. It's given to us by the grace of God through the infinite sacrifice of Christ Jesus our Lord. The Father made Christ's sin on our behalf so that in turn we may be considered righteous.

The person of Jesus Christ is what divides us as Christians from every single belief system in the world. And so back to this passage in Matthew 13, in verse 54, it says that Jesus was teaching those in the synagogue.

I mean, what things was he teaching? I mean, most likely he was teaching that he personally came to fulfill the law and that he is the Son of God. But in return, what's the response from those who spent their entire lives studying Scripture that says they took offense at him?

Jesus' disciples finally came to understand this message that Jesus was telling them, but for the most part, the Jewish leaders never understood it. They were so hostile to Jesus in his own

hometown that Jesus left them.

[31:16] He left them in their depravity. In fact, this account, according to Mark, says in Mark 6.6 that he was marveling at their unbelief. Now, this isn't a marveling in the sense of amazement and excited.

This was to be extraordinarily disturbed. Simply put, Jesus was extraordinarily disturbed by their lack of faith. I mean, it's important to note, Jesus didn't need the faith of the people to perform miracles.

Rather, he didn't perform miracles because the people wouldn't have understood the spiritual message associated with them because their spiritual condition was still dead in sin.

The people literally just thought these were healings, were cool tricks, healing the blind. That was kind of cool, but I don't really know what he's doing. They never came to terms with the spiritual lessons Christ was showing them with the miracles.

The healings were to show the spiritual healing that Christ does to a believer. Healing the blind shows that Christ will open the eyes of the one that is spiritually blinded.

[32:24] But however, the people reject Him so sadly, Jesus leaves them. And Paul, one of the ones who wrote many of the books of the New Testament, was one of these Pharisaical men until his conversion.

But we'll look at what he says in Philippians 3. More than that, I count all things to be lost because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, from whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish, so that I may gain Christ and be found in Him.

Not having righteousness of my own, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness, which is from God upon faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings being conformed to His death in order that I may attain to the resurrection of the dead.

So in the end, the Pharisees' knowledge won't save them, their good works won't save them, and their religiosity won't save them. This morning, if you're here, you've never come to terms with the Gospel, there is still good news for you.

Because you're sitting here and you're listening to this message today, there is still currently hope for you. You can turn from your sin right now and turn to the Lord Jesus. You don't have to face eternal judgment, eternal wrath.

[33:42] You can turn to Christ. Call upon the name of the Lord and be saved. As we're coming to a close here, I'd like to close this morning with two stories.

These are two different people who I know well and sadly, two people who currently face two different eternal destinations. The first man is a professor who I had while attending the University of Northern Iowa.

This man was my professor for secular Bible classes I took. The man was kind, friendly. He was always open to have discussions. He's read the Old Testament more times than literally any man I've ever met in both English and Hebrew.

He can exegete Hebrew perfectly, written several books on Scripture he's exegeted. He did his entire PhD on the book of Job and the complicated translation issues that arise in Hebrew.

But moreover, this man can actually perfectly articulate the Gospel and explain the significance of the Gospel. Almost every summer break, he goes to Israel to live and say the Bible and seize biblical sites.

[34:48] However, this man has blatantly refused to believe in the Gospel and has refused to see his sin for the offense it is against God. So this man currently faces eternal damnation despite all of his earthly achievements.

This man is lost. Even sadder, he doesn't even realize how lost he is. I don't want to say his name, but if you don't mind at some point today just praying for this man, pray for his salvation that he come to understand the Gospel.

The second man is my close friend, Matt LePage, I met in seminary while in Los Angeles. I asked him to send me his unbelievable testimony and I'll read that now to you.

These are his words. Hi there, my name is Matt LePage. I am originally from Duluth, Minnesota, but currently reside in Arkansas. My childhood wasn't ideal.

My parents had my brother when I was young. While I was still young, they got divorced and abandoned us to be raised by my dad's mom. I was only nine months old when I went to go live with my grandma.

[35:53] Growing up, my grandma, who divorced my grandfather back in 1989, did not want anything to do with Christianity. So after their divorce, my grandfather was radically saved and he entered into the ministry.

Up until my conversion, my grandfather and a foster family were the only Christian influence upon my life. As I look back prior to my conversion, my grandfather's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is pivotal in God's plan to save me from my sin as well as others.

Through the corrupt nature I was born with, being of the first Adam, this only fueled my sin. At the age of 12, I entered into the foster care system and upon arrival in the foster care system, I fell into drug addiction.

After aging out of the foster care system with no place to live, I turned to the streets, i.e. dealing drugs as a means to live. This further aroused my sinful behavior that landed me in jail for various crimes, second degree burglary down to petty theft.

But through the providence of God, this would lead me to my Damascus moment. Entering into the Minnesota State Prison January 2014, a month later, I was saved.

[37:02] One morning, I was called out of myself for prison orientation. Upon walking down the stairs, I saw someone reading a Bible. The moment my eyes laid upon that person reading a Bible, my heart leaped and at that very moment, I repented of my sins.

And walking back to my cell after orientation, I wrote a letter to the prison chaplain to receive a Bible. The chaplain came back later that day and gave me a Bible and a devotional.

And upon conversion, my desires began to change. The things of darkness I began to hate and things of God I began to love. I started conducting Bible studies on the prison block and preaching and chapel services.

It was through these moments I began to sense the calling God placed on my life to be a teacher, preacher for God and to shepherd His people. And so after my release from prison in August 2014, I arrived at Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge.

Here, through certain seminary students, I was introduced to the doctrines of grace. The Lord was leading me by His Spirit towards doctrinal purity and the pursuit of holiness. And so after graduating teen college a year later, in pursuit of entering pastoral ministry, I decided to enroll at a missionary college in Minneapolis.

[38:14] At the same time, the Lord blessed me and meeting my wife, Jen there, who's from Southern California. We got married in February 2016. Wow. The marvelous grace of God.

God saved someone who was using, selling drugs, saved someone from a broken home, saved someone who was lost. And you should know, Matt is currently in the final interview process of becoming a pastor in the state of Washington.

Matt will be with the Lord for all of eternity in the kingdom of God, not because of anything he did, but solely by the grace of God. And this morning, you too can be with God.

Repent of your sins and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. With that, I'd like to close in prayer. Father, we just come before you this morning and we just say thank you for what you've done.

We thank you for sending your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to this earth and putting him on the cross, taking your wrath in our place. And Lord, I pray for those this morning who might not know you that they would turn to you and see you as the only way of salvation.

[39:28] And Lord, not only do you save us, but you actually desire a relationship with us. God, I just pray that you would give us lives that are pleasing to you, that you would help us love you more.

God, we just love you and we thank you. Thank you for your word and just thank you for making it so clear to us. We just pray this all in your Son's name. Amen. Amen.