

Christ came to save sinners

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[0 : 00] Let us turn to the chapter we read, the first epistle of Paul to Timothy, chapter 1 and verse 15.

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.

I believe that there are some texts in the Bible which ministers make a practice of preaching from once every year.

I have to confess that if there is one text in the Bible that I would want to preach from at least once a year, it is this text.

Someone once told me that my predecessor here used to preach on the words from John 3 at least once a year. Unless a man accept a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

[1 : 17] And I think that's only why that these great and glorious truths which are embodied in some of the most precious texts in all the Bible ought to be aired as often as possible from the pulpit.

Because no matter how often we look at them, how often we preach from them, how often we hear sermons on them, there will always be something in them to meet our needs.

And that is why I turn without any apology to this text yet again this evening. Because this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.

Some of the children here tonight may know that there is an old legend, an old legend of a magic tent, which states that the tent could be expanded to shelter a whole army.

And yet it could also be contracted to cover a single man. And this text is something like that.

[2 : 47] It covers the whole gospel, the whole Bible. And yet it is applicable for every single sinner.

Alexander MacLaren, the great preacher in Manchester last century, said of this text that that great gospel which fills the Bible and overflows on the shelves of crowded libraries is here without harm to its power, folded up into one saying which the simplest can understand sufficiently to partake of the salvation which it offers.

Martin Luther called it one of the little binders. And C.H. Burton said that it was like the whole gospel compressed into one single verse.

Now notice how he puts it. Notice how Paul puts it. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. Now I don't know from what particular area of the island every person here tonight comes from or from what area where Scotland and other countries some of you may be from.

Is this possible that you may all be aware of certain sayings which are common to the village or the town or the country from which you come?

[4 : 36] Sayings which are always associated with a particular area. When Paul wrote the gospel about 30 years after the death of Jesus into the Christian church by that time had crept these sayings.

Short, pithy statements which embodied some of the great teachings of the Christian faith. There are five of them in the pastoral letters.

That is the letters written by Paul to Titus and to Timothy. You come across five of these sayings. This is one of them. Where you know they didn't have a Bible in those days.

You've got a Bible there tonight and you're cute. And if you wish you can read that Bible you can memorize as much of it as you care. But these people didn't have a Bible. They were dependent upon what they heard that was passed on from mouth to mouth by way of the teachings of the Bible.

And what they did was they would put together into short sayings short sentences short statements some of the great teachings of the Bible. In the same way as you have in the shorter catechism the great biblical teachings put together in such statements as these what is the chief end of man?

[6 : 04] Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. So by the time Paul wrote this letter he knew that this saying was commonly known in the Christian church.

So he writes to Timothée and he says you know the saying Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. That was the saying. And already says this it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.

Now when he uses the word faithful what he means is that this saying has stood the test of time.

Thirty years after the death of Jesus with the Christian church springing up in various places increasing apostles going abroad with the gospel to many areas and the gospel being blessed people being converted Jews and Gentiles people from heathen backgrounds being converted people with a great knowledge of the Bible being converted the Old Testament scripture being converted as the Christian church sprang up and developed there were many other people who were trying to destroy the Christian church.

There were people who had just spread at the gospel. Some enemies would follow Paul no matter where he went people followed him and then after a while when he preached they would stir up trouble and they would accuse him of being what he wasn't and of saying things that he hadn't said and many a time Paul was stunned and he was he was to run out of many cities that he went to and at one time he was left for dead see they were trying to destroy preachers they were trying to destroy the gospel they were trying to destroy the Christian church but 30 years on and Paul says the gospel is still faithful the gospel is still the same the gospel has stood the test of time we preached that Christ came from heaven that he took our name that he died in this world that he's alive from the dead that he reigns in heaven that he saved sinners he has saved me we preached that gospel and it is still the same and I suggest to you starting over here tonight nearly 2000 years after the history of this world is full of attempts by people to destroy the gospel you know in the culture of history that the soil of this land has run red with the blood of martyrs men and women who gave their lives for this gospel the enemy

[9 : 01]

Satan still has his emissaries to know there are people here in Jorneway and Lewis throughout the length and breadth of Scotland across the whole world who are still trying to discredit and destroy the gospel and the Christian church and if Paul could say 30 years after the death of Jesus this is a faithful saying how much more can we say tonight this is still a faithful saying it is still true it is still it has stood the test of time it is as relevant as vital as meaningful tonight as it was Christ Jesus came into the world to save him and you and I don't know how long this world will last but there is one thing we know for a certainty that it goes on for century after century after century we know that at the end of this world and the end of the world will surely come there will still be people preaching this gospel and they will still be able to say looking back over all the centuries this this is a faithful saying then he goes on to say it earlier but it is it is worthy of all acceptance being so trustworthy being so true being so meaningful being so relevant everyone ought to trust this message and to trust the pressure of the heart it is worthy of acceptance by every single individual who hears it there is nothing in all the world more worthy of our acceptance it has not been found wanting people have put it to the test and have found it to be told and what he is saying is this every single person who hears it ought to put this to the test of course some people will say to you well I tried it and it failed me

I remember walking out this church one night some years ago I met a young man walking down Tennis Street and I started talking to him I asked him where he was going so I said I'm going to the county of town and he told me why he was going there and I asked him had he been to church no I haven't been to church I thought I said you used to go to church I did matter of fact you used go to primitives and there was evidence that there was a change in his life many years some years of it and I also remember what he said to me I asked him why did you stop oh I said I tried that that's all a shame that's all a shame see he had come to his own conclusion that failed but the great question is this what that failed was it himself or was it

Christ and the gospel so of course I grant you that through and across the history of the Christian church and many evidence of people who made ship right people who to all intent and purposes believed what the gospel was saying and became followers of the Lord Jesus Christ now of course they are no longer in the Christian church I grant you that throughout history you have people like that but then the question is what happened was it Christ who failed did he fail to save the sinner oh no my friend Christ has never failed anyone the Bible has never failed the Bible has never been proved to be false Christ has never been proved to be a false friend one who befriends you today and is gone tomorrow he's not that type of saviour no one ever found him like that and no one can ever say that he was ever that to any individual he never fails the sinner fails therefore says

Paul the fact that Christ is our saviour is worthy to be accepted taken on board by every individual no matter who he or she may be very well then having introduced the thing to Paul like that this is our faithful saying worthy of all acceptance what is it that he directs Timothy's attention to and hope very simply this as his words put it Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners or if you were able to read it in the Greek New Testament this is the way to read Christ Jesus came into the world sinners to save and that's very very important because I've seen a minute you cannot divorce the coming of Jesus into the world from the people who constituted the world into which he came namely sinners because there was no one in the world to which he came but a sinner and there is no one in the world tonight but a sinner and that is why the gospel is relevant

Christ Jesus came into the world sinners to save and here's a message tonight for no one in this church but a sinner and if you're not a sinner it has nothing to say to you and I have nothing to offer but as we're all sinners it therefore has something to say to us what Christ Jesus came into the world how would you make a distinction between the two names that are given there of the

[16 : 04] Lord Christ Jesus might there be someone here tonight perhaps inadvertently from time to time uses the name of Christ only as anothron expletive you know how often you hear it switch on your television almost every second program the name of Christ is here walk the street you hear the name of Christ trips off the tongue so easy perhaps people never think of what they're saying and I would say this to you tonight of you young you who are young people here tonight as you're growing up in this world try at all costs to refrain from you in the name of Christ as an Lord or as an expletive do you know what it means he who was anointed by God for a special purpose in this world the saint the anointed of

God who did God anoint well in a most wonderful way you could put it like this he anointed or he sent himself it was the second passion that God had who came into this world this is what the Bible tells us you see we talk about the gospel and this is the heart of the gospel it was no ordinary man who was in the world Jesus it was the Christ the saint of God the second passion of the Trinity himself the eternal son of God this world as Robbie Duncan put it is a divinity visited world divinity came into the world God came Christ the saint the anointed anointed by the Holy Spirit equipped for the minutes that he had to accomplish for the work that he had to undertake and for the mission that he was sent to do

Christ the son of God sent Christ Jesus Jesus again people use the name of Jesus as though it meant no more than just a convenience for expressing their conviction about something when I want to assure some people that what they're saying is either true or something they use the word Jesus the name what does it mean well you ask a child here tonight Jesus what does Jesus mean oh that was the name that the angel told was to be given to him when he was born thou shalt conceive a son and Mary shall conceive a son when he is born thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins the name that was given to the scent of

God when he took our nature upon himself now my friend you're at the very heart of the gospel and you're at the heart you begin to think in terms of the words which are used theologically the incarnation the act by which God became man and when he became man that man was called Jesus and the man who was as John tells us who we saw whom we heard with whom we were that man was none other than God in our nature but he was known as Jesus in this world and as Jesus he was able to enter into our feelings and into our experiences he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief maybe you're here tonight you've got your own sorrows you've got your own grief you've got your own difficulty opposition to me within the world and so on don't you forget my friend that there was someone greater than you in the world who passed through exactly the same experiences

Jesus he had a human heart he had feelings like you and I have and therefore he is able to understand the problems that you encounter in the world this is one of the great threats of the New Testament right in the Hebrews the writer says remember he says to these poor persecuted Hebrew Christians you remember he says that in heaven there is one who has a fellow feeling with you in your infirmities one whose heart is touched a cord is struck in his heart when you have to endure difficulties in this world for his sake well that was who came Christ Jesus came into this world now there is one word

[21 : 42] I must say I must say that I always try to avoid when speaking about the mission of Jesus into this world and it's this word may seem very simple to you but I think it's quite significant I always try to avoid saying this Christ Jesus left heaven he didn't he came from heaven and the wonder of the gospel and the wonder of the person who came is this that as he said to Nicodemus no man has ended up into heaven but the son of man that came from heaven even the son of man who is in heaven and if you think tonight of the Trinity in glory father son and holy spirit if you think of it in terms of a circle father son and holy spirit then you think of

Jesus coming to the world as an extension of that circle without it being broken he didn't leave the circle he came in our nature into this world he came heaven was evocated by the son but the son who came took a nature in which it was possible for him to come into this world he came willingly sent by the father on this glorious mission where to who came Christ what did he become Jesus how did he come he was sent where did he come to into the world if I left this church night and you followed me and I made my way into every hotel and pub and stolen away

I'm sure that by the end of the night you'd be perplexed with one question what on earth was he doing in that place or in these places I would like to think that you wouldn't associate a person like me with that kind of frequenting place and you'd be entitled to ask why why and why should you ask the question because the office that is represented by my likes is so different and so alien to the atmosphere that you get there you could mention other places as well places I will repute so you see when Paul uses this term Christ Jesus came into the world you and I are meant to stop and ask where the world what do you mean by the world well the meaning of the word world in the

New Testament particularly as used by John is that the world is a evil place it's a place that is full of sin full of darkness full as Paul puts it of crookedness this perverse and evil generation and evil world the world is so alien to what God is God is light the world is darkness this world is evil Dr. Martynoy Jones wrote a book on the prophecy of Habakkuk which he called from fear to faith and there were lectures delivered at the beginning of the second world war and in course of delivering these lectures he was making a point that the great liberal theologians in Britain at the beginning of the 20th century were full of hope for this world this world was becoming wonderful it was great it was developing it was progressing it was getting far better it was a wonderful place to be in man was getting better and better becoming more friendly towards one another and then their illusion was shattered in 1914 with the outbreak of

World War One at the end of it they took up the cuddles again but there was only a hiccup the world was getting bad then their loose was shattered again with the outbreak of World War Two and you and I are here today in 1993 you switch on your television set to your radio you look at your papers trouble distress warfare conflict bomb outrages throughout the length and breadth of this world across the whole world evidence of what the goodness of man I know my friend but the evil of man the evil of humanity the sinful effects the effects of sin in the lives of individuals and governments and corporations and nations right across the world an evil world a dark world and you're part of it and if you're not a Christian tonight you're not making the world any lighter than it is you're making it darker you see

[27 : 34] Christ came into that kind of environment and people ask of Jesus I wonder if he's a happy man I wonder what kind of place he went to did he laugh from dawn to dusk there's no evidence in the New Testament that he ever did that but plenty of evidence that he cried that he wept that he sighed that he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and no wonder the holy son of God and a holy with a holy nature in the midst of this evil environment and Satan pouring his own dark suggestions and insinuations into the minds and hearts of people who came and conquered with Jesus and with the mind and the heart of man who was closer to him one man who was closer to him than most Judas Iscariot he was in this world but that doesn't answer the question why and the next word does he came into this world sinners to save you see my friend there was no one in the world that he came to but a sinner if he came into this building tonight if he came visibly personally corporately and stood in that aisle or stood here and he looked around there's no one here but a sinner no he came into this world sinners to save he has no dealings but with sinners and that was a great mistake the Pharisees made they stood up to him one day they thought they could untangle him and they accused him look at this man they said he's in this world he's here and he's eating and drinking with sinners as though they weren't as though they weren't and this very often is a problem with us all others are considered to be more sinful than we are perhaps even others are considered to be sinners whereas we're not my friend that was a mistake and a great mistake and a fatal mistake that these people made so Jesus turned to them and he said you're quite right you're quite right that's why

I'm in the world and he wanted to tell them three stories the lost sheep the lost coin and the lost son at the heart of these three stories was this great teaching I am come to seek and to save the lost the lost and he has no dealings with anyone but a sinner no business with anyone but a sinner in this world Christ has something to offer you tonight if you're not a sinner but because you're a sinner and nothing else but a sinner he comes to you with the offer of salvation now then I know that there are degrees of sin there are some people who are classed as great sinners and others just well they're not as bad as so and so there are maybe some poo down and out out in these streets tonight they're not capable of helping themselves the dregs of society so they're called lying in the gut what else can they do that's the kind of life they have sinners ah yes but passing by as a parable of the good samaritan makes very clear to us there are other people in this town in this land who are sinners as well they may be far more respectable far more upright they may be titi and so on they may not put a drop to their lips never been in the gutter never been in trouble highly respected members of the community and people around the community are very great and rightly so because the lives that they live and the interests that they have and the service that they render but my friend underneath the veneer be it ever so beautiful or ever so disgraceful underneath the cover whatever cover it is on your life tonight underneath a root large across your heart you're a sinner and nothing but a sinner what is it that makes that person a sinner is it the life that he lives is it the things that he does or the things that he doesn't do is it that he doesn't read his bible doesn't pray doesn't come to church doesn't care about God's day or anything else is that what makes you and me a sinner no my friend that is the outworking of sin in the life this is what makes us all a sinner and if you take nothing else with you and I take this with you because I'm going to quote Jesus to you he said this when the spirit has come he will convince the world of sin what sin they don't believe in me there is sin whether you're at where you're whether you're a wreck out on the pavement of 10th street or a respectable individual residing in your own luxurious home wherever it may be whoever you are tonight and whatever you are and whatever you've done and wherever you've been if it be the case that you do not believe in Jesus you're a sinner you are a sinner and Christ came into the world to that kind of passion what did he come with and this

is the final point he came into the world to save to save and whenever there was a word which ought to be well known in this congregation and throughout our land and throughout our land it is a word save Christ saves sinners if I was a modernist preacher or a liberal preacher if I was a type of man who didn't believe that Jesus rose physically from the dead and so on and lives in heaven physically and is going to come again at the second day at second coming if I was that to have a present to you tonight a saviour who perhaps would be able to help you perhaps able to teach you that there were some people in Paul's day for example to whom he wrote a letter in Colossae they were known as Gnostics they had a great interest in knowledge and there are many many unconverted people tonight who are dedicated in the Bible and in

Jesus of Nazareth and whose only interest in reading the Bible and studying is to amass knowledge we all need knowledge we all need light there are people who want guidance direction counsel Jesus presented to people of course this is a great cry isn't it Jesus is our example if you want to live a perfect life take Jesus your example and follow the guidelines given to you in the sermon that he preached on the mount that's what Jesus is all about what Jesus is all about he's a guide counselor teacher example and he's also the example for people who want to better the environment and we should all want to better the environment better home a better environment never way a cleaner environment better social conditions for people tonight who are downtrodden and people are deprived and Christian and Christian church have been engaged in these things helping to better the lot of people who are less fortunate than others and in respects in some respects every Christian should be a Christian socialist in the best here looking to better the circumstances of his neighbor but my friend if Jesus

Christ is nothing but that he is nothing for the sinner because what the sinner needs above all us is someone who will deal with his sin with his sin how can he believe in the Lord Jesus Christ if sin is unbelief how then can I believe if sin paralyzes how can I be empowered and look at the meaning of the word he saves think of a man tonight drowning what does he need he needs someone to save someone to reach down grab him and pull him out of the world take him out of his danger and into a condition of salvation the Bible speaks of sin not only as an evil which and dangerous but also speaks of sin as that which paralyzes it's a disease a fatal disease and the

[38 : 08] Bible tells that if we're not saved from the power and from the evil and the disease of sin we will ultimately perish there is something working in us leading us to destruction just like a fatal disease in the experience in the life of an individual disease has to be treated without passion to recover health that which causes his ill health has to be dealt with and that's what Jesus does to him he comes into the life of the sinner empowers him to believe comes into the life of the sinner and shows him where there is forgiveness for his guilt where there is cleansing for the power and the evil insidious influence of sin in his life Jesus comes I am come he said to seek and to save that which was lost

I'm going to quote to you what a hymn writer the way the hymn writer put it once I know I've quoted these words before doesn't matter worth quoting again someone who was trying to use Jesus as a teacher and a guide and was missing the mark until one day she came face to face with him as her saviour and received him as her saviour this is what she put it I saw thee weeping high and low I found thee not I did not know I was a sinner even so I missed thee for my saviour I saw thee sweetly condescend of humble men to be the friend I chose thee for my way my end but found thee not my saviour until upon the cross I saw my God who died to meet the law that man had broken then

I saw my sin and then my saviour what seek I longer let me be a sinner all my days to thee yet more and more and thee to me yet more and more my saviour be thou to me my lord and this is the way now she sums it up be thou to me my lord my guide my friend yea everything beside but first last best whate'er betide be thou to me my saviour and this is what you and I need tonight we are all sinners and we need the saviour and Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and remember this of whom I am chief you know that I don't know if there are any prospective ministers in this congregation tonight who knows who knows

I hope there are you young men boys even I know that you may laugh at this but oh if God converts you and saves you by his grace and you ever become a preacher of the gospel see that you become involved in the message that you preach look at this man Paul whenever he spoke about the gospel his heart burnt he became he was afraid this means something to me he says I was one of the ones that Christ saved I was the worst sinner that this world has ever known that's the context in which this verse is placed for this cause I obtained mercy he says that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering for a pattern to them which would hereafter believe in his name to everlasting life

I am as he put it the prototype this is what he was saying this if he saved me he can't save anybody that's what Paul is saying and he tells us he the kind of man he was he went about you know he was a religious man and this is a point about sin Paul was a religious man he knew the Bible inside out he could quote it from beginning to end and Jewish religion he went about persecuting every Christian he wanted to obliterate the name of Christ and Christianity from the face of the earth concerning the righteous of the law I was blimless and I lived a life a religious life full of zeal for the glory of the God of Israel and Jesus was a threat to this God one day I was going about my business and I met him I met him on the road of

[43 : 22] Damascus and I discovered I was a sinner I didn't believe in Jesus for all my religion I didn't believe what about you here tonight for all your privileges for all that you hoped to be for all that you have been and all that you have heard are you still an unbeliever in the Lord Jesus Christ well my friend Christ saves such and when he saves you you will discover this that no matter what you may think of other people I know that you probably think that there are worse sinners than you in the world tonight but if Christ saves you you will discover that there's no one in the world worse than you no one a greater unbeliever than you no one more rebellious and more resistant than you and this is something else you'll discover you won't become better in your own eyes the older you get you will become worse in your own eyes

Paul doesn't use the past tense of whom I was chief he says of whom I am chief you see a saved sinner needs a savior every day of his life he sees his need greater today than it was yesterday but then you see he's got a savior greater than all his needs and this is what the gospel commends and this is the gospel Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners that's what you need and there is no other savior for you under the sun on the face of God you take him and you will discover the faithfulness and the trust worthiness of the gospel it is praying oh lord god do thou become our savior and enable us to cast our cares upon thy sin take us as we are and thank thee that that is the glory of thy grace that we are encouraged to come as we are without a single plea but that

Christ Jesus came into the world to die for sinners granted for thy name sake amen