

## STOP TRYING AND START TRUSTING

After a Sunday morning service a lady came up to me with tears in her eyes. She had heard the sermon and wanted to talk about God and her soul. I asked her if she was a Christian, and she replied that for some time she had been trying to be a Christian. Gently I told her that she needed to stop trying and start trusting Christ to save her.

She was genuinely concerned about her spiritual condition, but, like many in her position, she was making a serious mistake. Trying to be a Christian never works because the best we could achieve would not be enough. Trying might appear to be a worthwhile exercise, but it will inevitably end in delusion and failure. We do not become Christians by trying, but by trusting in what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us.

The first step in becoming a Christian is to realize that there is nothing at all we can do to achieve this aim by our own efforts. That might sound like a recipe for despair, but it is not. We are never so near to knowing God as when we realize that we are helpless and have nothing to offer him.

The great question the Bible answers is, 'How can a man or woman be right with God?' It asks the question because it accepts the fact that we are not right with God. We are sinners and God is holy. There is, therefore, a great barrier between us. The Bible also teaches that the wages of sin is death, and this means an eternity in hell. This question, then, has great urgency. It's not just for academic interest, but our eternal destiny rests upon it.

So what is the answer? Basically, there are two answers we could find—law or grace. Law includes just about every system of religion or morals that says you must do this or go there in order to be saved. It teaches that man's salvation is in his own hands. Grace is what the Bible teaches. It says that man is helpless and can do nothing to save himself. Salvation, therefore, has to be all of God, and is a gift from him.

The two answers are irreconcilable. They have nothing in common, and both can't be right. So which is correct?

Are you confused by the gospel? If so, it's because you are allowing man's theories to distract you from the basically simple message of God, which is:

- We are sinners.
- We cannot save ourselves.
- Jesus is the only Saviour and we need him alone to save us.

There's nothing confusing about that. So believe it and act upon it.

I was once given for Christmas some watercolour paints. I had never painted before, but I gave it a try. I soon discovered that I had no artistic talent whatsoever, but I still enjoyed it. My first efforts looked as if a five-year-old had done them! But I soon improved, and then my paintings looked as if a six-year-old had done them. So I went to the library and borrowed a video called *Watercolouring for Beginners*. As I watched the expert at work it all looked so easy—it always does when you watch experts.

What has this got to do with salvation? We need to know that in the matter of salvation there are no experts. We're all like children groping around, and all our efforts are pathetic. But this is exactly how it should be. Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it' (Mark 10:15).

We need to see that there is nothing we can do to save ourselves, but that Jesus has done all that is needed.

This brings us back to the question, 'How do we become Christians?' It is by faith in Christ who loved us and died for us. It is by faith in what the grace of God has accomplished for us. Grace, all the time, points us to Christ.

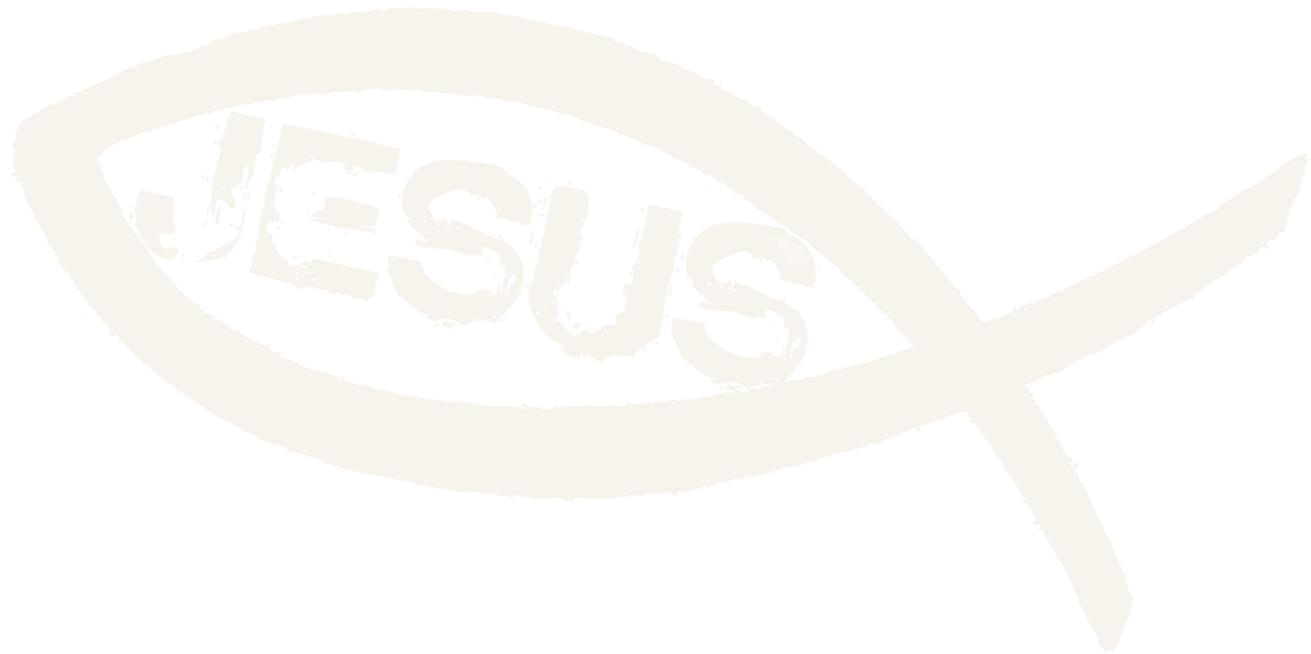
The apostle Paul never got over the amazing fact that Christ loved him. His whole past life had been dedicated to destroying the work of Christ, yet still Christ loved him. This had to be an act of grace because it was certainly not earned or deserved. Grace is always free and undeserved and given to guilty sinners.

To say that God loves sinners is a tremendous thing, but it is not the whole gospel. The gospel is that Christ loved me *and gave himself for me*. The gospel erupts in its full majestic splendour at the cross. There is no gospel message that does not include the substitutionary atoning death of Jesus; this means that Christ gave himself for us, dying instead of us and paying the price of our sin.

Christ loving sinners does not change anything by itself. Sin still had to be dealt with and love finds the only way of doing this by Jesus dying in our place—Jesus bearing our sin, our curse, our judgement and purchasing salvation for us.

There's nothing that you can do that can, in any way, match what Christ has done. So it is futile to try. Just come in faith to the Lord Jesus as a helpless sinner, and asking for mercy and forgiveness.

*This is enough. God says so.*



TRUST IN THE LORD

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