



The Jerusalem Council, Part 1

Series: Acts -- Worldwide Witness to the Worth of Jesus Christ

Acts 14:24-15:2

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There are some moments in church history, in the history of redemption, that echo throughout time. Moments, that from a human perspective, had they never happened, would have resulted in the loss of the gospel for all of eternity. Of course we know that God is the one who defends and preserves the gospel. He will ensure that the witness of the gospel will endure until the day that Jesus Christ comes to receive His church and to judge all rebels to His glorious reign as King. But God often preserves the gospel through human means, though His people standing faithful to the truth, despite the cost. We see it in the sermon of Peter on Pentecost, his bold declaration of the gospel. We see it in the bold response of the church to persecution and threats to remain silent about Christ. We see it in Peter's defense of his taking the gospel to the Gentiles – particularly Cornelius in chapter 10. More recently, we can see it in the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century that rescued and preserved the gospel from being lost in the ritualistic maze of Roman Catholicism, a false religious system that cannot save. And we will see it over the next couple of weeks in the Jerusalem Council, a council that settled once and for all the central truth of the gospel -- that salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ with no addition of human works. It is Christ alone who saves, through His righteous life and sacrificial death and resurrection from the dead. And by faith in Christ alone, anyone may be saved. Anyone.

This truth -- called justification by faith -- is at the very heart of the faithful preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When the article of justification has fallen, everything has fallen. This is the chief article from which all other doctrines have flowed. It alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the church of God. Without it the church of God cannot exist for one hour. It is the master and prince, the lord, the ruler, and the judge over all kinds of doctrine. (Martin Luther) Any church which puts in the place of justification by faith in Christ another method of salvation is a harlot church. (C.H. Spurgeon) Justification is the main hinge on which salvation turns. (John Calvin)

It is this doctrine that is at the very heart of what makes us the people of God. The doctrine of justification deals with this question: How can God, who is absolutely and thoroughly holy and who commands and requires moral perfection in His creatures, receive men and woman who are guilty of breaking His law into His presence and fellowship? How can a sinner be saved? This was the question that the Jerusalem Council faced and answered and we are going to look at what led up to it this morning. Go back with me to chapter 14 and pick it up in verse 24, the description of Paul and Barnabas' return to their home church, Antioch in Syria.

“Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia, and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they remained no little time with the disciples.” (Acts 14:24–28, ESV) Taking every opportunity to preach Christ that they can find along the way, specifically in Perga, Paul and Barnabas returned home to the church that had commissioned them, in obedience to the commands of the Holy Spirit, and sent them off to preach the Word. It is a great reunion, filled with joy and thanksgiving, as Paul and Barnabas recount all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. Notice the way that Luke describes this. Paul and Barnabas do not make themselves the stars of the story, do not put the focus on themselves and all that they have done, but instead they talk about what God had done with them and how God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. This may seem like a small thing, but it isn't. Paul and Barnabas did not think too highly of themselves. God was the one who deserved the praise and the honor, the one who deserved to be exalted and magnified – not them. They give evidence of a humble heart, a grace filled heart, a sense that they are simply servants to the God who deserves all praise. It is a heart that preachers and pastors would do well to imitate in this day of self-promotion and glory seeking. It is a joyous time of exulting in the Lord and in His faithfulness and power, but it does not last for long. Look at chapter 15 and verse 1...

“But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”” (Acts 15:1, ESV) Now, where did these guys come from? They were the holdovers from the confrontation that took place between Peter and those from the Jerusalem church back in Acts 11 over the Peter's preaching of the gospel to Gentiles in Caesarea. Remember that I told you back then that those that would not receive Peter's testimony to God's saving work among the Gentiles would later form the group known as the Judaizers, or the circumcision party, that would be such a pain to

Paul in the future? Well, these are those guys. From the way that we will see Paul describe them in a few moments, they are not real believers in Christ. Perhaps they were a part of the visible church, gathered with the church in Jerusalem, but they had a defective, erroneous and damning view of the gospel. They were outside the real family of faith, tares among wheat, but trying to present themselves as members of the church in Jerusalem, pretending to speak for them on this issue, all in an effort to overturn the ministry of the gospel.

Look, beloved, Satan is always at work to attempt to destroy the church, to unsettle the people of God, to cast doubt on the sufficiency of the saving work of Christ as declared in the gospel, to bring fear into the hearts of the faithful and to shake the faith of the redeemed. That is exactly what we see taking place here as these men who come down from Judea say in effect, “You Gentiles are deceived. You are not saved because you are not circumcised and you do not keep all the Law of Moses as we interpret it. Faith in Jesus is not enough. You have to be circumcised. You have to follow our rules. You have to add to what Christ has done on the cross. Jesus is a good start, but He is only a start.” That is what these guys were peddling. I’ll say more about them in a minute.

What we need to see right now is that this is a watershed moment in salvation history. Now, Luke does not explain all that takes place here. He is concerned with relating the story of the Jerusalem Council so he does not give all of the background here, but I want for you to understand it and in understanding it, you can see how serious this all is. Between verses 1 and 2, is some serious stuff that takes place in the church in Antioch that Paul describes for us in his letter to the Galatians.

You know, or if you don’t let me tell you, that the letter to the Galatians deals with this very issue – is salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone or is it by faith plus works, faith plus circumcision, faith plus something else? It’s that question that causes Paul to write the letter to the Galatians. Now I need to get a little technical with you here so stay with me because this is important. Theologians are sort of split on when the letter to the Galatians was written and who was the audience for the letter. Some say that it was written around 55 AD and that it was written to the entire region of Galatia. But others, and I am in this camp, believe that this letter was written in 48 AD, the very year that the Jerusalem council took place, and that the intended recipients of this letter were the specific churches that Paul and Barnabas had planted in Galatia – Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Let me show you why.

I believe that Paul wrote it as he was going up to Jerusalem for the Council, which would have been his third visit to Jerusalem. He mentions his first visit to Jerusalem in Galatians 1:18 which would correspond to Acts 9. Then he mentions a second visit to Jerusalem in Galatians 2:1, which would correspond to his visit at the end of Acts 11. When he goes to Jerusalem for this Council, it will be his third visit, one that he does not mention in the letter to the Galatians because it has not happened yet.

Here's something else. If the Jerusalem Council had already happened, Paul would have said so in the letter to the Galatians – something along the lines of “the issue of salvation by grace through faith alone has already been decided, so ignore the false teachers that are bothering you.” But he doesn't say that in the letter, because the council has yet to happen. Now this is important to understand, because if this letter was written in 48 and not 55 then the situation that Luke describes in Acts 15 is the same as that which Paul describes in Galatians 2:11-16. Turn there with me and let me set this up for you once more.

Paul and Barnabas have just returned from their first missionary journey. They come back to Antioch and they are rejoicing in all that God has done in saving Gentiles by the preaching of the gospel. They are excited and rejoicing in the Lord with the church at Antioch, when these men come down from Judea, claiming to be representatives of the church in Jerusalem, men that we call Judaizers, and they tell the church in Antioch, the Gentile believers there, that they are not actually saved because they had not been circumcised. Their faith in Christ was not enough; Jesus and His cross were not sufficient for salvation. Keeping the law, as they interpreted it, must complete the gospel, complete what Jesus had begun. The issue was huge; it was a matter of salvation, of spiritual life and death. The gospel and salvation were at stake. As you can imagine, the peace and unity of the church in Antioch, a mixed church of Gentiles and Jews, was absolutely shattered and thrown into chaos. But it wasn't only in Antioch. These Judaizers had also dispatched men to the churches in Galatia that Paul and Barnabas had planted, to try to overthrow the work of the gospel there and they were having success. That is why Paul writes the letter to the Galatian churches – in order to hold them together ahead of the meeting of the Jerusalem Council. And in the letter he tells them what happened in Antioch when these men came down to stir up trouble recorded for us here in verse 1. Look at Galatians 2:11-16.

“But when Cephas came to Antioch -- Peter had joined them in Antioch and was continuing the work with the Gentiles he had begun in Caesarea, preaching and teaching the truth

I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned – Paul called Peter out, admonished him and corrected him and why? Here’s why...

For before certain men came from James, (these men who came from Judea, who claimed to have the blessing and support of James though they did not) he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party – After Peter heard them declare that Gentiles could not be saved apart from circumcision, he bought into their lie. He fell under their spell. They had to be incredibly convincing. Think about it. These were the men whom Peter had successfully shut up when he defended his taking of the gospel to the Gentiles in Caesarea, specifically to Cornelius. Now, here was Peter falling under their spell and refusing to eat with the Gentiles, refusing to fellowship with them, refusing to worship with them, and refusing to take the Lord’s Supper with them, treating them, not as believers, but as unclean – as unsaved, unregenerate unbelievers. Can you imagine the confusion, the hurt, the chaos, the beldlam and the disunity this caused? Out of fear of what the Judaizers would think, Peter was compromising the gospel, being untrue to what he, himself, had preached and defended before the Jerusalem church. And it caused a ripple effect through the congregation.

And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. Even Barnabas, the guy who had come to Antioch and seen the evidences of God’s grace there, the man who commended the Antioch church to the Jerusalem church, the man who had just come back with Paul from preaching the gospel to Gentiles, the gospel of justification by grace through faith in Christ – this Barnabas – was led astray, casting doubt upon the validity of the very missionary work that he and Paul had just accomplished in the power of God, the missionary work that he had just given testimony to before the entire church. This is a mess but it is in this mess we see one of Paul’s finest hours.

Everyone seems to have lost their minds. Peter and Barnabas are all messed up. The only one who sees this clearly is Paul. Paul understood what was really at stake – the gospel itself, the very worth of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and the power of grace. Paul is angry, with a

righteous anger, and praise God he is. He sees this situation and the Judaizers for what they are. They are not “confused brethren,” they are not “mistaken brothers,” nor are they “good hearted but misguided teachers .” In the letter to the Galatians, he calls them “trouble makers,” distorters of the gospel,” “false brothers,” “bewitchers and hinderers of the church,” and even expresses his desire that these false teachers who deliberately confuse and distort the gospel and trouble the Galatian church by insisting on circumcision in order to be saved and coming back under the yoke of the law as the means of earning salvation, would “emasculate themselves!” (cf, Galatians 5:12, ESV) Paul is angry – not for himself but for Christ, for the gospel, for the well-being of the church. In fact, it is of these men that Paul writes: “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.” (Galatians 1:8–9, ESV) He curses these men to hell. Paul is righteously angry and at first he was the only one who understood the seriousness of what was taking place, the only one who opposed these false teachers. First he dealt with Peter and Barnabas.

But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?” Peter and Barnabas were out of step and so Paul confronts them forcefully. He rebukes them both, particularly Peter, for his disgraceful contradiction of the gospel that he preached and by which he, himself, was saved. He said to him...We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know (you and I both know, we are agreed in the Lord in this fact) that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.” (Galatians 2:11–16, ESV) You and I have been saved by the same gospel as the Gentiles. We cannot be justified by keeping the law; that was never the purpose of the law. The purpose of the law was to show our sin and point us to Christ, the only one who has ever kept the law and who died rose again for our forgiveness and salvation, in whose righteousness we now stand before God by faith! How, then, can we preach another gospel, a false gospel, to the Gentiles? If God has accepted them by faith, just as he did us, how can you break fellowship with them who have been saved just as we have been? How dare you go back on what you have preached and believed with all your heart? Paul is bold.

This is all about the core of the gospel – justification by faith -- that work of God whereby He declares or counts as absolutely righteous any and all who take shelter in the work of Christ by

faith as their only hope for salvation -- the justification by which we receive the complete pardon for our sins and the granting to us of the righteousness of Christ through faith in Him. Justification changes the believing sinner's standing before God, declaring us to be acquitted, forgiven, and accepted by God, with the guilt and penalty of his sins put away forever by the sacrificial atoning death of Jesus Christ, made completely righteous as regarding the law -- all of the commands of the law fulfilled for us on our behalf by Jesus Christ. God not only declares us "Not guilty!" He also declares us "Righteous!"

The way this justification can take place is because of the doctrine of imputation. Imputation is the work of God whereby God credits Christ's righteousness to our account, just as He credited our sins to Christ's account on the cross. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2Co 5:21 ESV) Just as our sin was reckoned to the account of Christ, and He was punished for it, so His righteousness is reckoned to our account, and we are rewarded for it. We stand before God clothed in a perfect righteousness, so that in the estimation of the heavenly Judge, it is as if we were the embodiment of righteousness itself. This is a double imputation -- God the Father treats Christ as if He had lived our sinful, rebellious, law-breaking life and He treats us as if we lived His perfectly pleasing and holy life. We never stand before God in our own righteousness...we don't have any. We stand before God clothed with the alien righteousness of Christ and we cannot add to that in any way.

We are justified by God's grace, not because of our works, but because of Christ's work. Justification by faith, because of the blood sacrifice of Christ, is the basis for our secure, eternal righteous standing before God. And it is all by grace, not human works. It is not that good works have no place in a Christian's life. Good works will follow. Make no mistake, grace saves us and it also changes us, right?

That is part of the promise of the power of the gospel, the new covenant in Christ's blood. The OT speaks of this in the prophet Jeremiah, when he writes: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.'" (Jeremiah 31:33-34, ESV)

And Ezekiel, in chapter 11, records these words: “And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.” (Ezekiel 11:19–20, ESV)

The promise of justification by faith also brings with it the promise of a transformed life, because the same grace by which God delivers us as justified sinners from the penalty of sin, also renews our entire nature according to the moral image of God, and enables us to live lives pleasing to Him. Good works will follow real salvation but they are never the basis of our salvation, not even in the least bit. It is all Christ. Only Christ and what He has done.

I love Charles Spurgeon’s words here: There is none other plan by which sinners can be made at one with God, except by Jesus’ precious blood. I may make sacrifices; I may mortify my body; I may be baptized; I may receive sacraments; I may pray until my knees grow hard with kneeling; I may read devout words until I know them by heart...I may worship in one language or in fifty languages; but I can never be at one with God, except by blood; and that blood, the precious blood of Christ. Remember, sinner, it is not thy hold of Christ that saves thee--it is Christ; it is not thy joy in Christ that saves thee--it is Christ; it is not even faith in Christ, though that is the instrument--it is Christ's blood and merits; therefore, look not to thy hope, but to Christ, the source of thy hope; look not to thy faith, but to Christ the author and finisher of thy faith; and if thou doest that, ten thousand devils cannot throw thee down.”

This truth was what was at stake in Antioch and what would be dealt with at the Jerusalem Council. The false gospel that these Judaizers were peddling was nothing more than the same old false gospel that has plagued man forever – that we must do something more than trust in Christ to be made right with God, to be forgiven by God. The hardest thing for fallen men to accept is salvation by grace because we always want to add something to it, we want to earn it, we want to merit it on our own, want to be able to say that we have done something to deserve it. And yet if we persist in trying to add anything to the work of Christ for salvation, we are not saved. To add baptism, church membership, a specific denomination to which we must belong, some specific religious works that must be done in order to be saved, some rules to follow is deadening legalism. And it was this yoke of legalism -- the principle of salvation by works, or merit, that these men were trying to put on the church in Antioch, not the true

religion of Moses, not the true law of God that leads us to grace in Christ, but the legalistic and dead religion of the Jews. That was what had created Pharisaism and that is what was threatening the new church, not the true religion of God's covenant with Israel fulfilled and accomplished in Christ, but human religion of human merit. These Judaizers did not understand the role of the law. The Law of Moses was never intended to be kept as a means to merit salvation – we cannot do it. It was never given as a way to earn eternal life. It was given to us to show our sin, to show us what true righteousness is, to show us our need for grace and mercy, to lead us to Christ alone as our only hope for salvation. They did not understand the law nor did they understand the gospel of grace. They tried to mix the two and created a false gospel.

It is like RCH Lenski has written -- "To add anything to Christ as being necessary to salvation, say circumcision or any human work of any kind, is to deny that Christ is the complete Savior, it is to put something human on par with Him, it is to make it the crowning point. That is fatal. A bridge to heaven that is built of 99/100 of Christ and even only 1/100 of anything human breaks down at the joint and ceases to be a bridge. Even if Christ be thought of as carrying us 999 miles of the way, and something merely human be required for the last mile, this would leave us hanging in the air with heaven being still far away."

Is the sinner saved by the sheer grace of God in and through Jesus Christ crucified, when he or she believes and runs to Christ for salvation and refuge or not? Has Jesus Christ, by His life, death and resurrection done everything necessary for salvation or not? Or are we saved partly through the grace of God and partly through our own human works and religious performance, in this case by obedience to the law of God? Is salvation laid hold of by faith alone, or through a mixture of faith and works, grace and law, Jesus and Moses? Is grace sufficient to purify a sinful heart and transform a sinful life – yes or no? These are the great questions.

Thankfully Paul, stood faithful by saying without fear and with absolute confidence – YES! Christ is enough. He is more than enough. He is the author and finisher of our salvation and for all who are saved by faith...PERIOD.

Paul's courageous and bold confrontation of Peter and Barnabas had its desired result. After this confrontation, Peter returned to Jerusalem with his head screwed on straight again and will

have a vital role in the Jerusalem Council, and, in Barnabas, Paul won back a brother-in-arms for the truth. We see that in verse 2.

“And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.” (Acts 15:2, ESV) No small dissension and debate – that’s an understatement. The sense here is that the confrontation is heated, intense, demonstrative and passionate – these men claiming that they came with sanction and the approval of James, trying to set Paul and the Jerusalem church at odds, attempting to undermine and confuse the gospel, disgracing the worth of Christ, rejecting the power of His death and resurrection – saying that the atonement of Jesus was not enough, denying the very principle of grace – that salvation is a gift from God through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Paul was having none of it – hammering them with the truth, not giving in for a moment, not backing off at all. It was a battle he was willing to fight to the death. It is so heated, with neither side backing down, that Paul and Barnabas are appointed by the church in Antioch to go to Jerusalem and get this settled once and for all, and they will, as we will see next week.

I hope you can see why Paul so vigorously fought this fight, why it is that the doctrine of justification by faith is so important. As Calvin said, “Christianity would have come to nothing if Paul had yielded.” He’s right. I want to close this morning with just a few thoughts on

Why the Doctrine of Justification by Faith Is So Important

1. This truth of justification by faith is vital because it holds out the only real hope that real sinners have of finding real acceptance with the real God. There is an ingrained human tendency to want to think less of God than we should, in hopes that a less holy God will be more willing to accept less than perfect people. A God of strict justice and holiness is a fearful Being and God is strict in His justice and holiness. In fact, He is a consuming fire who is angry with the wicked every day (Hebrews 12:29; Psalm 7:11). It is amazing, then, to find this God coming to sinners in Jesus Christ and providing the very righteousness that He demands. How could sinners ever hope to be accepted by such a God? Only in this way: For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. The good news for sinners who say, "I can't meet God's standard," is that Christ has, that he has

satisfied every demand of the law in the believing sinner's place, including the judgment our sins deserve. Since Christ has satisfied God, all you need is to trust in Christ with all of your heart and you shall be saved. A sinner does not have to pretend to be good enough for God. Nor does anyone have to wait until he is better before he can go to God for salvation. Are you ungodly? Then you qualify for the kind of salvation that God gives, because He justifies real sinners through a real Savior.

2. Justification by faith also holds out the only real hope that real Christians have of maintaining real acceptance with the real God. Even as believers we must admit that sin is mixed with all we do. Even though we are justified believers, we still stumble and fall. What will keep a believer pressing on and fighting the good fight of faith despite the sin we still commit? Just this: the knowledge that the righteousness that makes us acceptable to God is not our own personal achievement. It is Christ's righteousness accomplished for us and counted as our own by faith. What do we do when we stumble and fall into sin? We must keep looking to Christ by humbly repenting and returning to Jesus and renewing our walk with Him, pursuing obedience again and relying on His grace as the power to walk in a manner that pleases Him. This is how we battle discouragement. This is what keeps us from losing hope. On the believer's worst day this thought can keep him from utter despair: Jesus Christ is my righteousness. To see, remember and believe that God has credited Christ's righteousness to us and has on that basis accepted us once and for all, is to find the strength to fight against every form of discouragement and temptation and frustration in life. It let's us deal honestly and completely with sin, knowing that God will not cast us off. We can confess sin to the Lord honestly since admitting it does not change the foundation of our righteousness – Jesus Christ our Lord.

3. Justification by grace through faith is the chief encouragement to our assurance of heaven. Our confidence that we will be received by God into heaven is in the perfection of the One Who has already died for us and perfectly obeyed the law for us. Our confidence is not in our own righteousness, our own religious performance, but in Christ's.

4. It promotes vibrant and real worship and love: When we believe the truth about justification, our worship is not polluted with the charade that we somehow by our own power meet God's holy standards and have earned his favor, nor is it paralyzed by the thought of our remaining sin, rather true worship finds its source and strength in what Christ has done for us. We rest in Christ's finished work and praise Him for His exceedingly great grace. We submit ourselves to God, confessing our need for Him, repenting of sin; we rejoice in Christ's

righteousness given to us, we rely on the Spirit's work in us to sanctify us as we abide in Christ. And we do it because we love Him because He loved us and gave Himself up to death so we would be saved.

Here's the thing, beloved – and this is really the biggest thing for me -- the degree to which you think you orchestrated your salvation, the degree to which you think you deserved salvation, the degree to which you had something to do with it...it is to that degree that you will esteem and exalt yourself and you will rob Christ of His glory and your love. I had nothing to offer God, nothing to give Him – nothing. I brought nothing to the table except my sin and yet He justified me, saved me, He forgave my wickedness, He freed me from the shackles of my sin, He redeemed me from my pitiable life, blessed me, has sustained me in temptation and in trial, comforted me in my mourning, matured me in the midst of my failures, disciplined me when I went astray, delivered me from evil, renewed a right Spirit in me...all by grace through faith in Jesus Christ that he created in my heart. That is why I love Him deeply. The more I see the truth about my salvation, the more I fall in love with Jesus in a deeper, more profound, and more personal way.

That's why the doctrine of justification by faith matters – because it is the only true gospel.

For those of you who today are still stopping short of full trust in Christ for your salvation, here are the words of Jesus to you. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Mat 11:28-29 ESV) Come, repent, believe, follow Christ and live. Why would anyone refuse such a gracious invitation? Whether you are rich or poor, strong or weak, a socially defined sinner or saint, sick or well, if you know your need for mercy, if you are ready to repent of your sin and to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, to know the hope of eternal life, to live for God's glory and not your own, then come to Christ today, trust in all that He has done to save sinners apart from your own works and join the throng of those who have found in Christ all they could ever need.

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