

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

March 27, 2022

SPEAKER

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SERIES

Good King, Bad King, The King

PART

8

TITLE

A Vile King

SCRIPTURE

2 Chronicles 28



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Well, it's good to see you Providence family and I hope you've had a great week. If you're a guest with us, whether you're in the room or there at home, we're glad that you have also joined us. We, as a church, have received such grace over and over and over. And when we talk about receiving grace, what we're talking about is that God looks upon a people who is undeserving and chooses to do good things to them and kind things to them. And that's what's happened. God has not only sent his son to us and then he died for us. He rose from the dead. When he rose from the dead, he looks at us and he says, "I have a mission that's worth your life to go and make disciples of all nations." And so we care about our city, we also care about those people who are in this room right now, and we also care about people who are far away to hear the gospel, the good news that Jesus died, was buried in a grave, He rose from the dead so that we can be forgiven of our sin.

And sometimes that means we want to send people, teams overseas to take the gospel to them. Other times what it means is we identify partners in the world and we send them resources. And that's what has happened. Two weeks ago, I had said to you that as a result of the war, we've been praying for the people of Europe, in particular all over Ukraine. So many people have fled for their life and many of them have fled into the arms of partners that we have in Moldova and in Romania. And as a result of those partnerships and as a result of just God's kindness to you giving in a way that is just a special thing to watch, is that we just sent this week \$50,000 to Moldova and Romania to buy blankets and food and all kinds of needs for people who are desperately in need, as tangible expressions of the love of God, where then our partners have the privilege to be able to share the gospel with them.

And so I just want to say again, I'm just so thankful for you, for your faith, for your courage to give sometimes even when it hurts. And so I just thank God. I just thank God for you. So let me pray. Father in heaven we ask that you would take these resources that have been sent and that you would use them, that you would multiply them, and that literally thousands of people would be helped, and that they would hear of the gospel, and that they would receive hope. We do pray for the people of Ukraine and the surrounding areas and nations, Lord, where there's so many people who are grieved. So many people who are walking through a time in life when they've lost a loved one or they've lost their home or their place a business.

There's just so much tragedy in the world and we would just once again pray, God, would you bring peace. God, would you bring peace. And would you protect those people that are innocent and who are seeking to simply do what we do every day, wake up and have a dream about how to live in peace. Would you, please God, would you help? We ask, God, that as those resources are used, that people would hear the gospel. And yet we also know that right here in this room there are people who have never heard the amazing news of the gospel. And there's also people in this room just like myself who've heard it over and over and over again and we're simply still looking to you to be able to tell us and inform us of the implications of how we live out the rest of our days under the banner of your grace, what you've done, in Jesus Christ.

As we look at your word now, would you open our eyes, help us to see great things in your word, marvelous things in your son. Would you help us to see that Jesus Christ is not only a good king, but he's the perfect

king and the king that we need. And in doing so, God, would you help us to address the sin issue of our own heart. And would you help us, Lord, to believe the truest thing about us and even in a few moments to sing about that, that we're forgiven. We're forgiven. God, would you lead us to a place in a half hour that we can sing we're forgiven because we've not only gone down into the valley of the depths of a man's sin and seen our own reflection, but we have been risen and our eyes have been lifted as our faith is rest now in Christ. And so we look to you in faith. Would you help? We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

If you have a Bible in your hand, if you want to look with me, 2 Chronicles. We're in a series on the kings. If you're brand new, there's 43 kings in the Old Testament and they all play a part in the big story of the Bible that leads to the perfect king that we all need. And so week by week we've been looking at different kings and we're up to king Ahaz and Ahaz was a vile king. He was an evil king. In fact, there's nothing in the Bible that is written that is commendable in the life of Ahaz, that makes... Well, you're probably not going to go home and put 2 Chronicles on your wall or cross stitch it into a pillow, okay?

There's not a whole lot in the chapter. This is not going to be your favorite chapter of the Bible, okay? But it is going to lead us to a place of hope. You see, Ahaz had to deal with something called guilt and we do as well. The Bible says, "We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Well, when you were created by God in the womb, Romans 2 and 3 says that he literally wove or he wrote his law upon your heart. And what that means is that when we sin against God, we sin against the law written in our heart. And therefore, when we sin, we tear our heart and it causes pain. It feels shameful. It feels dark. It feels heavy.

Well, what happens is this then, when we sin against God, sometimes we don't know. And so God in his grace has given us an alarm system. He's placed it within our conscience. And therefore, when we sin the alarm of guilt begins to echo on the walls of our conscience so that we can understand that what we're doing is not only destructive to ourselves, but it's alienating us from God himself so that we're missing out on blessings, so that we can repent and return back to God. And this alarm sounds until we respond. And there's really only two categories of response.

And what I'm about to say to you is so critically important. I hope that you'll listen to this. Well, the Bible says that if we will repent, if we will confess our behavior as sin and repent which means to turn from it, what happens is the alarm has done its job, it's brought us back to the Lord. And therefore what happens in our conscience is that guilt is replaced by peace. It protects our conscience for future days. But the other response is what we see in Ahaz and what we've seen in parts of our own life and that is that if we resist, what happens is our conscience becomes seared. It's almost like heat is applied so that it's burnt and it creates a callous and it grows over a period of time and as a result of that, a seared conscience is one whose alarm system has been so routinely suppressed and scalded that it becomes like spiritual scar tissue. And therefore it becomes insensitive to God's proddings and pokings and even silent when we go on sinning.

In other words, for most of us, there's been a time in our life when we sin against God and we felt it deeply. It felt like God was tightening the screws down upon our heart. We felt icky. We felt dark. We felt shameful. We felt like we wanted to hide. We felt like we needed to hide. And we thought, what do we do with that? But this is what happens is that if we intoxicate ourselves to it, if we try to run from it, if we try to outwork it instead of confessing it as sin and repenting and running to the Lord, what happens is the next time we do it and there will be a next time is we don't feel it quite so deeply. And eventually there can become such scar tissue over our heart that we do not recognize sin as sin anymore and our conscience can even begin to confirm and affirm our premeditated plans for evil.

And this is what we find in the king named Ahaz. So let me read a portion of it to you starting in verse one of chapter 28, it says, "Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord as his father had done, but he walked in the ways of the Kings of Israel. He even made metal images for the Baals, and he made offerings in the valley of the son of Hinnom and burned his sons as an offering, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel.

And he sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree. Therefore, the Lord his God gave him into the hand of the king of Syria, who defeated him and took captive a great number of his people and brought them to Damascus. He was also given into the hand of the king of Israel, who struck him with a great force. For Pekah the son of Remaliah as the king of Israel killed 120,000 from Judah in one day, all of them men of Valor because they had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers."

Verse eight, "The men of Israel took captive. Not only did they kill 120,000. It says that they took captive 200,000 of their relatives, women, sons, and daughters. And they also took much spoil for them and brought the spoil to Samaria. But a prophet of the Lord was there, whose name was Oded, and he went out to meet the army that came to Samaria and said to them, behold because the Lord, the God of your fathers was angry with Judah, he gave them into your hand, but you have killed them in a rage that has reached up to heaven. And now you intend to subjugate the people of Judah and Jerusalem, male and female, as your slaves. Have you not sins of your own against the Lord, your God? Now hear me and send back the captives from your relatives whom you have taken for the fierce wrath of the Lord is upon you."

Verse 16. "At that time, king Ahaz sent to the king of Assyria for help for the Edomites had again invaded and defeated Judah and carried away captives. And the Philistines had made raids on the cities." First 19 explains why, he says, "For the Lord humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had made Judah act sinfully and had been very unfaithful to the Lord. So Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him. For Ahaz took a portion of the house of the Lord and the house of the king and of the princess, and gave tribute to the king of Assyria, but it did not help him. In the time of his distress, he became yet more faithless to the Lord, this same king Ahaz. For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus that had defeated him and said, 'because the gods of the Kings of Syria have helped them I will sacrifice to them

that they may help me,' but they were the ruin of him and all Israel.

Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and he shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, and he made himself alters in every corner of Jerusalem. In every city of Judah, he made high places to make offerings to other gods provoking to anger, the Lord, the God of his fathers. Now the rest of his acts and all his ways from the first to last, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel." Today, we know those books as first and second Kings of the old Testament.

Now, anytime we're talking about the kings, as we have, we've recognized that there's good kings and there's bad kings, but even the good kings have really bad days. Ahaz was not only a bad king, he started bad and he just got worse. There's not a single word of commendation in the entire Bible. There's not a noble act that's recorded from his entire life. We have looked at kings where there was a little bit of both, a little good and a little bad, but most of the kings were actually all bad. They did evil in the eyes of the Lord. And so I felt that incumbent for us to at least examine one of them to see what we can learn. But it's interesting as you think about a puzzle and you pick up one individual piece and you look at that one individual piece, there's things that you see and yet unless you understand the entire puzzle, it's really uncertain as to what you're looking at. How to interpret that one piece, you need the whole and the same thing is true of these kings.

The intent is not simply to study 43 dead men, their lives and what they did and learn some life lessons. Now, each these Kings is actually part of a bigger story that begins in the beginning. When God created the world and suddenly we sinned against the Lord, we broke fellowship with him and he made a promise of grace and he comes to us and he says, I promise you, I'm going to send to you a son that is born of a woman. And that son is going to crush the head of evil. And that son is going to restore the possibility of you having a relationship with God once again. And so the Bible is meant to be read looking for that son, every new son that's introduced in the story we're supposed to ask the question, is this the one? Is this the one? It begins with Abraham, is this the one? It's not the one, but it's going to come from his line. He gets to his grandson, Jacob and God says, from your line, there will come kings.

And so we know that the one is going to become a king. And he eventually have a line of Kings. We have Saul, he's a bad king, David, he's a good king. We have Solomon who started good and he went bad. We had Rehoboam and Rehoboam was a fool and divided the kingdom that had been United for 80 years. And he did so in three days. So now there's a Southern kingdom called Judah, Northern kingdom called Israel, and Ahaz is one of the kings in the Southern kingdom. He's tragic. His grandfather, his father, and his son are three of the most godly in the line. And here Ahaz he's like, I'm going to chart my own path. And that's exactly what he did. He's total disaster. He refused to hear from the Lord.

So what do we learn from him? What do we learn from him? This is really important because in a few moments we're going to sing a song called Written, that God has written upon our heart, a declaration. And that

is that when we trust in Christ that we are forgiven and it's the truest thing about us, but you're not going to want to sing that with all of your heart unless you agree with the first principles here, the first two things that are granted, they're devastating. You're going to wish it would just skip to the third because the third is really good news, but good news is only good when it's set upon the backdrop of reality. And so this is reality. The first thing I want you to see is that God declares a chilling verdict to those who reject him. Nearly every one of the accounts of the kings we find a sentence near the beginning of the account that says something like he did what was evil on the side of the Lord. He did what was right in the side of the Lord.

Well, for Ahaz, it says that he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord. Now you need to feel the weight of this because this is part of your story as well. The Lord's eyes are on you and me as well. There's a verdict over our life as well. Ahaz was a man, when it says he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord. This was a man who, like you and me, was made in the image of God, for God, to be with God, to relate to God, and be held accountable to God or to this Lord. And it says that of this Lord, he did not do what was right in his eyes. This is to fail at the deepest part of life. This is the banner over his life. If you can imagine what he's doing is there's a banner that simply is the summation, it's the final grade of Ahaz's life and it's simply a big F. You failed.

And what happens for the rest of the chapter is simply the evidence of this summary. And what he does is he shows us five areas of how he rejected the Lord. And what I want you to try to do is instead of simply going, man, what a terrible man, is to try as best as you can to see your own reflection. Maybe not in the same way, the same gravity, the same depth of what he did, but to imagine maybe what the Lord has to do to save you. These categories are true in some way in each one of us. The first thing we see that he did is he rejected God's authority. The 10 commandments, they begin, you show up no other God's before me and you shall not create for yourself idols. And what does he do? In verse two, "He made metal images for the Baals." That's idols.

"He sacrificed and he made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree and he made Judah act sinfully." We live in God's world. This Bible and the one in your hand, it's revelation from God of who he is, who we are and how to live in his world. What Ahaz did is he closed the book and he says, I don't care about his summary of my life. I don't care of his evaluation or his plans of my life. I don't care of his authority over my life. And as a result of that, he chose his own path, a path that was devastating. What happens when we reject God's authority is we begin to mistreat people who are made in his image. And this is the second thing that we learn is that he rejected the sanctity of human life. This is one of the scariest things that is written of him. In verse three it says, "He made offerings in the valley of the son of Hinnom and he burned his sons as an offering."

Now let me try to explain what's happening here. First of all, you notice this word sons is plural. So I'm just going to go with two, okay? Maybe more than two, but here's the reality, sometimes we make a devastating decision in our life and suddenly the guilt begins to sound we're like, oh, man, I'll never do that again and we don't because we learn. He killed one of his sons and then he killed another. Well, how would he kill them?

What it says that he offered them, there's an idol. It was called Moloch. And what the idol was, it was literally this cast iron like animal that held a great big cast iron bowl and they would put a fire underneath it and light it so that it was just red hot. And how you sacrificed or paid homage to this idol is you would place your living infant in the bowl and burn them to death, an abomination.

You notice that it says that he did this in a place called the valley of son of Hinnom. Hinnom is a Hebrew word. In the Greek it's the word Gehenna. You may have heard that word before. It's translated many times such as in Matthew 5: 30 as the word hell. So let me give you just a little bit of history, help you feel the way even today of a geographic spot in Israel that no one wants to live. You see all of this sin was taking place in a specific place. All this idle worship, this worship to Moloch, it took place in one particular place. And so in history, because these people eventually didn't repent and wouldn't repent, eventually God sent them into exile in order to prove to the people that their worship of these idols was insufficient for them and the idols could not help them when they actually got into a place of peril.

And as a result of that, when they're finally brought back to their homeland, they looked at this geographic spot where all this absolute abominable practices were all taking place and they say, what do we do with that space? And so they made it the city dump outside of Jerusalem. Well, they didn't have excavators and bulldozers where they buried the trash, instead they burned the trash. And as a result of that, you could always see ash and you could always see smoke when you're in Jerusalem. And so when Jesus just was walking around Jerusalem talking about the realities of life and godliness in heaven and hell and he needed a word picture, something that not just a word picture, an illustration, he can say, this is what a hell is like. It's like Gehenna where you always see smoke and there's always suffering and there's always abomination and there's always guilt and shame and where the warm never dies.

Even to this day, you can literally go on Google today, type in valley of Hinnom, today in modern Israel, they've built all around the valley, but nobody wants to live there. It's a geographic confession of sin. The third thing we see in Ahaz is he rejected repentance. Verse 22 it says, "In his distress he became yet more faithless to the Lord." Have you ever gone to a place in your life to where you're like, man, that was a bad path. And so what do you do? You turn. You're like, let me try a different path. Let me try a different way. Well, he just became more resolute said, no, this is the half I'm going to take. I'm not going to turn back. I'm not going to turn to the Lord even in his distress. This is the picture of a lack of repentance. A hardness of heart and unwillingness to bend and yield.

The fourth thing we see of him is that he rejected God's holy things. In verse 24, it says that, "Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God." So this house is the temple. And so God had created this system of atonement, a sacrificial system where an animal could be brought in and there was different ceremonies that were all fulfilled in the sacrifice and in the person of Jesus Christ which is why we don't do them today. But in that moment, there were things such as spoon and pictures of water and bowls and these vessels is what they called them that were holy, means set apart. They

were special. Meaning the priest wouldn't bring an old picture that was used at the house in order to... They had one use, they were holy, they were special. And he went into the place that was holy, took the things that were holy and cut them in pieces.

Now because Jesus rose from the dead, there's a lot of things that we don't have around here that we call holy vessels, right? We don't have spoons and bowls and things where we carry out sacrifices because the Lord is our sacrifice and he's made our heart the temple of the holy spirit. And yet, if you can imagine, some of us still would be appalled if I began to take my Bible and take out pieces and burn them in front of you, wouldn't you? You'd go, wait a minute. That's a holy book. That's a special book. It's set apart. Or if we were about to have a baptism and someone went over and contaminated the water or the Lord's supper elements, the bread and the cup.

It's hard to connect necessarily the two because we don't have these pictures that are especially holy that we only use them for one purpose. And yet each one of us can probably recognize that even a time in our culture, not necessarily we should go back to it, but you remember when you had your Sunday best, you didn't wear it on the farm and you didn't wear it throughout the week because it was set apart whether it was clothing, whether it was a book, whether it was things that we came with. Well, the fact is Ahaz went in and he had no regard for holy things.

And then the last thing is he rejected God's grace. It says that, "He shut up the doors of the house of the Lord and he made himself alters." Now think about what's happening here, right? Throughout the Bible, there's this clear tension between works and grace, meaning we have to work for salvation or does God give us grace and that's why we're saved. And so what he did was he literally went to the temple and he locked the doors so that sacrifices could not be made. Now you have to understand what's happening here, right? Ahaz closed the doors on the one place and all of the world at that time that God had provided means to make atonement for their sin and in place of it, he built a bunch of altars, his own work, his own imagination instead of God's beautiful, gracious provision. He tried to be creative by saying, we don't need grace. We don't need to make atonement for our sin, we'll do it our way.

So he had no regard for the Lord, no regard for his word, no regard for God's people, and no regard for God's justice. Now, if you're walking down the street and you see in the broken up pieces of concrete, a puddle, and you look into that puddle and in that puddle, you see a reflection of other things around you that are over your head. It's very natural as in this picture to look into the puddle and go, oh, look, there happens to be an airplane flying overhead and there's also these buildings. And why I say this and why I use this pictures for this reason, many times when we study somebody like king Ahaz, we begin to think about institutions and leaders and we think, oh, that's like that president. That's like that political party. That's like that culture. That's like that evil institution. And although it's wise for us to learn to see similarities so that we don't repeat the patterns of disaster upon our culture, one of the last things that we see when we look at Ahaz is us.

And I want to encourage you while it may be absolutely fitting that you see parallels between modern leaders in our country and outside of our country where you see modern parallels of institutions of injustice, you see abortion, you see the lack of sanity of human life. You see the lack of regard for holy things. You see the lack of regard for God's authority, taking him out of schools, taking him out of courthouses. We first must look and see, what do I see in king Ahaz that I also see in my life. And this is so important for this reason that we need to remember that we too we'll we receive a final verdict.

We live in God's world and we live before his eyes and there will come a day when there will be a banner that's hung over your life that is spoken by God almighty. And those words will be final. And those words will be just. And you can't hide from his eyes, we're told in Hebrews, "No creatures hidden from the side, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account." There will be a day when we give an accounting of our life. And there are some people who imagine on that day that when they hear that final verdict over their life, that God is going to give them the opportunity to give a rebuttal.

Many times we think, oh, I have some things I'd like to say to him. There was once a man named Job who said that. In Job, chapter 23, he says, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him, talking God, that I might come even to his seat, his throne, and I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments." And in a rare moment in biblical history, God chose to answer the bell. In Job chapter 38, God says to Job, "Dress for action like a man." In other words, you better suit up because I'm about out to throw fast balls. "I will question you." You have questions for me? I have some questions for you as well. And you make it known to me. And what happens next is God ask job 77 questions. And by the end of his questionnaire, God, not God, Job is in the fetal position underneath the weight of God's sovereignty, his justice, and his holiness.

Sometime when we imagine that day when we stand before the Lord, we imagine that it's going to be a moment for us to open up our mouth. Romans chapter three says, "On our verdict day, every mouth will be stopped and the whole world will be held accountable to God." That doesn't mean that someone's going to go over and hold your lip so you don't talk. It means that when you see the perfection of God standing before you, you won't want to talk. Everything that you see will be just and perfect and righteous.

And what he says to you, you will not be able to rebut because when you see perfection, if he calls upon you and he says, I see a lack of perfection in you, you know you won't be able to argue against this. We have so little regard for the wholeness of God in our day. But one day he is going to give us our final grade. Before I tell you how to make that day a good day, let me drive you a little lower, okay? The second thing, God removes his protection from those who resist him or those who reject him. God is our creator. And as our creator, he has creator rights, that means he's our owner. Psalm 24 says, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world, and those who dwell therein." Which means that you are the possession of God. He can keep you, he can give you away. He can protect you and he can remove his protection from you and me.

This is why in verse five and seven it says, “The Lord, his God gave him into the hand of the king of Syria and he was also given into the hand of the king of Israel because they had forsaken the Lord.” All of God’s permissions have a purpose. And this is why when the Edomites and the Philistines invaded in the second half of his reign, we’re told in verse 19 that, “The Lord humbled Judah because of Ahaz for he had made Judah act sinfully.” And while it is absolutely clear within the Bible that it teaches that not all calamity is a direct consequence of our sin. Let me just restate that. If you have cancer, the Bible is very clear to talk about situations to where not all problems, not all calamities, not all heart disease, not all bereavement, not all things is because you did something that caused that, but what it does say in the scriptures is that to live a life of committed unrepentance is very dangerous.

Paul says that, “This way do not be deceive. God is not mocked, for what everyone sows, that will he also reap.” In other words, there’s a law of the harvest. The law of harvest is this is, if you drive near a farm and you see a bunch of wheat you don’t make the conclusion that someone planted orange trees, you know that there’s a direct corresponding link between the seed that you put into the ground and what you do harvest. And so while it’s true that some of the harvest of life that we experience is not because of our sin, if at any given time we plant sin, we can guarantee that there is a harmful fruit that is coming.

And this is why Paul goes on to say that those who sow to the flesh, sin, will reap destruction, but those who so to the spirit of God will reap eternal life. And so let me encourage you to fear the Lord enough to run to him. You see the ultimate removal of God’s protection is his sentence of eternal separation and the Bible calls that hell. And for those who reject God’s provision in Jesus Christ, that the ultimate giving over is when God gives us over at the end of our life for eternity. There’s lots of passages in the Bible that explain this. One of them is 2 Thessalonians 1:9 where it’s says that, “They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord.” And sometimes when you hear somebody like me, a pastor or the Bible, and you’re talking about something like hell it causes fear. And typically when we’re afraid of something, we run away from it which is why some of you want to get up right now and leave.

We don’t want to hear that. But what I hope that you’ll see right now is that the only safe place to run from God’s justice is to run to God’s mercy and the person of his son. You see, if there’s somebody over here and they’re frightening to me, I can run over there and then I’m not near them, but where are you going to run from the justice of God? The only place you can run to find safety from the justice of God is to run into the merciful arms of God in his son. And this is where the story turns next and that is that God extends his mercy even to those who have rejected him.

You see, every time in the Bible where you find a man and God are in need of being reconciled, it’s always God who makes the first move. And this is exact what happens with Ahaz, oh, he sent Oded, he sent a prophet, but even at the end, there was a time when he sent Isaiah. Now sometimes we read different stories and we don’t know which prophet was at the same time. Well, if you’ve ever read the Bible and there’s the book called Isaiah, what’s a really long book of the Bible. Well, Isaiah lived at the same time of king Ahaz. In fact,

he was the prophet that would sometimes come to Ahaz and speak to him words of correction welcoming him, inviting him to repent of his sin.

Well, in Isaiah chapter seven, he actually talks about the same account that when God gave the people into the hands of Syria and Israel, Isaiah talks about that exact a moment. In chapter seven, verse two, he says everyone was pretty terrified about what was going on. He says, "Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind." Well, God tells Isaiah. He says, look, I want to come and I want aha to know that I'm not going to allow Israel to be utterly destroyed, but he's going to really want to sign. He's going to want to sign because it looks pretty perilous. It looks like everyone's going to die. And so go and tell him, go talk to him about a sign. And this is what we find.

Verse 11, Isaiah comes to Ahaz and says, "Ask a sign of the Lord your God, let it be as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask and I will not put the Lord to the test." Now, sometimes you hear those words, you think, oh, what a noble person, because there's other places where they're like, oh, I'm not going to put the Lord to the test. Jesus said that. What he's saying here is I don't want anything to do with the Lord. You can take your signs in the Lord and you can leave.

"And he said, hear then, O house of David, is it too little for you to weary men you weary my God also? Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign." You don't want to ask for a sign. He's going to give you one anyway. "Behold, the Virgin shall conceive and bear his son. And she'll call his name Immanuel." What this means is that the very first years to ever hear the promise, that the promised son would be born of a Virgin and it wouldn't just be another man, but it would be Immanuel which means God with us, means that the son of God was going to take on flesh that this son of David, this one who's coming, he would be born of a virgin. The very first set of ears to hear this Christmas news was one of the worst characters in biblical history.

Now do you know what that means for you and me? It means there's hope. It means there's hope. It means that Jesus is a friend of sinners. See, no matter your past there's hope because God sent the king and any king would not suffice. We didn't need just a not bad one or a good one, we needed a perfect one. And the reason is because we had a perfect problem. You say what's their perfect problem. Well, the Bible tells us this. It says that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And then when Jesus was on the earth, he says, let me tell you who gets to go to heaven? He says, be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect. This is the ground rules from the son of God of who gets to go to heaven. Your banner, your final verdict will be based on perfection. You say, well, I guess I should just go and eat and watch the Carolina game because this is not going to go well.

This great problem needed a great savior and that's exactly what we got. Paul says, "Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness. He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, and taken up in glory." You see what he's saying here? He says, "Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness." I know you have questions in your life that

you want answered. Some of them are important. Some of them are not important. And what I want you to know is by comparison, none of them are important as this, is that if you are suspended over eternal separation held only by the hand of God that you have offended, you have not esteemed and you have not honored and obeyed. And his standard is perfection, then how do we become godly enough to escape that peril and to go to heaven? That's the great question.

I know some of you really care about the basketball game tonight. Are they going to win? Are they going to win? In comparison to your eternal destiny, I promise you, I promise you, there will be people one day they're going to die and they're going to be separated from God for eternity. And they will not care who won the game tonight. It is the question. And what's interesting is this, the mystery is revealed. God revealed the how we can become godly enough. And what he does is he doesn't give us a to-do list, he gave us a person, a, he.

He was manifested in the flesh. He was vindicated. He was seen by angels. What does all this mean? It means this king that was promised came in the person of Christ. He took on flesh. He lived without sin and then he went to a cross and on the cross, he was vindicated, not only his perfect life in his death and in his resurrection angels attest to his birth, to his baptism, to his resurrection. He was proclaimed, believed on and taken. And Jesus comes to us and he says, you've not lived as you ought, but I have. But if you will put your faith and your trust in me, then all you deserve and your sin will fall upon me and the cross. And all I deserve in my righteousness will fall upon you for eternity.

This is how someone becomes morally perfect who is already a sinner as we trust in Jesus Christ. And this is what we find, he say, show me, I'll show you one last scripture, Romans chapter eight. This is what he says. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." And then he tells us how we get to this place. He says, "By sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh." Meaning he looked like a human being, and he came for sin. "He condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled or perfected in us." This is what this means. When you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, he takes away your sin, he gives you his righteousness. It's the ultimate exchange. And as a result of that, God looks upon your life and all of the righteous requirements of the law are perfected in you, they're fulfilled in you.

And so God looks at you and he says, you've done only rights in my eyes. You see your righteous can never be based upon your own effort because on your bad days you feel bad about your account, on your good days you feel like it's elevated, but here's the good news, for those of us who are in Jesus Christ there is absolutely no condemnation who are in Christ. And the reason is because his righteousness is the same yesterday, today, and forever more and it has become our righteousness. Is it your righteousness? It's the only one that matters. It's the only one that counts because it's the only one that's perfect.

So let me encourage you to put your trust in Jesus Christ. For those of you here, you've never put your trust in Christ, confess your sin. Say, God, I believe I am a sinner. I cannot save myself, but I believe Jesus did come. I believe he did live without sin. I believe he did die for my sin and he rose from the dead and I confess him as Lord. The Bible says you will be forgiven, forgiven of all of your sin, given his righteousness. And the banner over your life, no matter how you stumble tomorrow, will be this person did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. It's available to you. And for those of you who are already in Christ, let me encourage you.

In a moment we're going to sing about forgiveness, but before we do, I just want to give you a moment. You heard all of this. You've probably looked in your life at somewhere and said that probably needs to change. And so let me encourage you to do just what we read. He says, confess your sins and if you do, he's faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So let's pray together.

Father in heaven, we bow before you and as a church family, we come and when we read Ahaz, we clearly do not want to emulate his life. And yet maybe not at the same scale, we see things in our life where we have rejected your authority. And we've not always treated people who are made in your image with respect or with dignity. We've not honored people as honorably as they are. We've not always seen and recognized and regarded holy things. We've treated sometimes grace with contempt. There's been seasons of our life where we refuse to quickly repent. And so we come before you and ask that you would forgive us for pride, greed and lust, immorality, envy, jealousy, rivalry, fits of anger and rage.

We come before you ask that you would forgive us for irritability, impatience. We ask God that you would forgive us of our sin and we believe your word is true that if we confess our sin, that you're faithful and just to forgive us of our sin. And so we believe the truest thing about us is that we're forgiven. And we want to sing about that now. And so God, for those of us who are in Christ which you give us the confidence to go on living in response to this amazing grace and for those who are considering trusting Christ or maybe who just have, would you incline their hearts Lord, would you lean their hearts to trust Jesus, to see that they need a perfect savior. So we love you and we sing to you now and we pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Would you stand? Let's sing together.



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