

The Triumph Over Death

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[0 : 00] Amen. Acts chapter 2 beginning at verse 22. It's only a few verses. Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst.

As you yourselves know, this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. You crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it. That is the word of the Lord. Please be seated. Amen, choir.

Thank you. Thank you. This does not count towards my time.

[1 : 14] It doesn't. Thank you, Daniel. I like criminal justice shows.

I don't know about you. And you learn a lot about our system, watching TV sometimes. And, of course, if you talk to real lawyers, you learn a lot. But our criminal justice system is based upon evidence.

First type of evidence is eyewitness testimony. We talk to people who saw or heard with their own ears what happened.

They're key. They're foundational. They're the most important. But on occasion, there is no eyewitness testimony, probably more than occasion. So we have to look at what is called circumstantial evidence to determine if a crime likely happened.

And we have to be convinced beyond a reasonable doubt. Say someone stole something from you and no one saw them do it.

[2 : 26] Your car just gone. No camera caught it. Nothing. Nobody saw it. But your belongings were found in this other guy's car.

Their car had been in the neighborhood. We can prove that. When you were robbed. And they do not have an alibi for their whereabouts at the time your car was stolen.

Likely that guy will be found guilty. Because the circumstantial evidence is pretty clear. But eyewitness evidence.

Oh yeah. That's the best. Death is the greatest thief there is. It robs us of life and a future.

It robs our family and friends of our presence and love. Wouldn't it be great if we had evidence?

Even some undeniable circumstantial evidence.

[3 : 28] But what if we had eyewitness evidence that someone had conquered death? Would you like that? Would you believe the evidence if we had it?

Here's the thing. The resurrection of Jesus has both. We have the most important eyewitness testimonies of people who saw and know for a fact.

And then we have. I'm not going to go into that so much today. But we also have plenty of circumstantial evidence. That also points to the fact that Jesus of Nazareth came back from the grave.

Easter says and even shouts that someone did triumph over death. That great thief. And his name and the only name is Jesus.

Keep in mind where we are. I always paint the context because the context is king. What's happening here in this passage? We're on the day of Pentecost. Pentecost comes 50 days after Passover.

[4 : 39] This year it would be May 23rd I believe. What we call. So keep that in mind. So Pentecost Sunday will be the 24th. It's a Jewish national holiday and all the Jews were especially the males were supposed to appear.

And it was to celebrate first of all the harvest. And it was an anticipation of God providing more in the coming months.

Here in our passage on this great day of Pentecost where Jerusalem is filled to overflowing with pilgrims from all over the Roman Empire.

They came Jews and those who have become converts to Judaism. They came to give God glory. To acknowledge his reality.

And the fact that their sustenance comes from him. On this great holiday. This great moment. As they celebrate the harvest. God is providing a new harvest.

[5 : 41] A harvest not of wheat. Or agricultural goods. But a harvest of people. Who will believe in his son. That he rose from the dead and follow him.

It's a new harvest. It's actually a new creation. For God is going to do something. Inside of people. That we cannot do for ourselves. To truly change us.

So that we can have eyes to see reality. And what is reality? That God exists. And that his son has come. And he's come for us. Peter the apostle.

One of the twelve. He who has the shoe sized mouth. Which you always stuck it in. Peter is giving. The spirit is poured out.

And Peter is giving the ability to preach his heart out. This is part of his great sermon. He preaches to all the pilgrims. And all the Gentile converts.

[6 : 40] Who had come from all over the empire. He is going to highlight the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Now keep in mind. He's doing something. That the very people who put Jesus to death.

Who are also present. Are not going to be happy about. I got three simple points. The first point is this. You all saw what he did.

Verse 22. That's what verse 22 is saying. He's talking to Israel. To the people there. Hear these words, men of Israel. Jesus of Nazareth. A man attested to you by God.

With mighty deeds and wonders and signs. That God did through him in your midst. As you yourselves know. This Jesus.

Is who we're talking about. The people of that day. Unlike some today. Could not deny the existence or the actions of Jesus.

[7 : 41] Jesus. They couldn't deny it. Peter makes sure. First of all. That they know which Jesus he's talking about. Because Jesus is a common name. It's a very common name in the Roman Empire of that day.

So Peter wants to be clear that they know. He says Jesus of Nazareth. Nazareth. They all even knew where Nazareth was. It was in northern Israel.

And it wasn't well thought of. It was. For lack of a better term. It was the hood. And they weren't crazy about it. Matter of fact.

One of Jesus' early disciples. A man named Nathaniel. When his brother came and told him. We found the one we've been waiting for. We found the one. He's Jesus of Nazareth.

And his brother says. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? That shows you what they thought of Nazareth. Jesus preached his first sermon of sorts.

[8 : 44] In the synagogue. At Nazareth. And you could say. It didn't go well. Here's what the Bible says.

Luke 4. When they heard these things. All in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of town. And brought him to the brow of the hill.

On which the town was built. So that they could throw him down the cliff. This is a warning to all preachers of the gospel.

Sometimes people will not appreciate what you have to say from the book. That's an understatement here. They wanted the killing. And the Bible says he just walked right through the crowd.

Because of who he was. They knew where he came from. And Peter then says. They also saw with their own eyes what he did.

[9 : 42] Now he's referring. He's not referring to every single person in this crowd. He can't be. That's not. That wouldn't make sense. But he's referring to a large number of people. Who were there. Present at the service.

At the feast celebration. They had been there. And they had seen Jesus. They had seen his life. They had seen his works.

There was. They couldn't deny it. The Jewish leaders. Who were also present. Because they had to be present. To run this whole thing. They also saw and heard Jesus.

They were eyewitnesses to everything that he did. And to think about it. Is that his crucifixion. Would have only taken maybe.

Almost two months. From this point here. So less than two months ago. They. Jesus had been put to death. And executed. And now this crowd is there.

[10:43] There's still a buzz. There's still some people talking about. What happened. And there are people there. A lot of them. Who had seen it. They saw his works.

Look at what Peter highlights. They saw his powerful works. They saw the. In other words. They saw his miracles. They saw the mighty works. The wonders.

And the signs. That God did through him. This. You see. Here's the thing about Jesus. You got to not. You got to note this. What he did. Was not done in a cave. The things he did.

Were not done in secret. He did things publicly. So that there was no excuse. For people there. They saw. What he did.

And they could not be explained. Not even by modern science. You cannot explain. The things Jesus did. Raising people from the dead.

[11:42] In public. One time. At a funeral. Turning. Water into wine. It's easy to figure that one out.

Either it's water. Or it's wine. We saw water go in the jug. And wine came out the jug. Hello. Feeding thousands of people.

With a little boy's lunch. Now I don't know about you. But I don't know many kids. Who carry that much food around. In their pockets. Either. Either he did it.

Or he didn't. Now these people. Who were not stupid. Who were not easily manipulated.

Remember this is. We're at the height. Of Greco-Roman.

Philosophy. These people were pretty smart. And they were. And they were skeptical. They didn't just believe in anything. No. They were religious people.

[12:41] Just like us. And they believed in things. Just like we. Around the world today. People do. They had their belief systems. But here was one. Who showed up. And did stuff in front of them.

Right in their face. The evidence. First of all. Begins right here. I. Witness testimony. To the life. Of Jesus. Works of Jesus. The second thing. I want you to notice. Is this. Is. You did it. To him. Verse 23. This Jesus.

Delivered up. And according to the definite plan. And form knowledge of God. You crucified. He said. And killed. By the hands. Of lawless men. Again.

This Jesus. The Jesus. Who did such powerful works. That you all saw. You crucified. And killed. Peter says. The whole nation.

[13:40] Is guilty though. But it was particularly. The Jewish leaders. The religious. I'll say. The religious. Jewish leaders. Who incited. The Roman governor. Who was not a Jew.

A pot. He was a Gentile. Governor Pilate. To crucify. Jesus. Later. We know from history. That Pilate. Was recalled. By Caesar. Because. He got in trouble again.

So Pilate. Pilate knew. That he had to deal with Jesus. In a good way. Because. Rome. Caesar. Was always.

Watching. But here's the thing. Pilate didn't want to kill Jesus. He wanted to set him free. Luke chapter 23. Pilate addressed them.

Once more. The crowd. Desiring. To release Jesus. But they kept shouting. Crucify him. Crucify him. A third time.

[14:34] He said. A third. A third time. He said to them. Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him. No guilt. Deserving death.

I will therefore. Punish. And release him. Now keep in mind. When he says. Punish. He means. Beat. To near death. That's the kind of punishment.

The Romans. It's meant. They didn't just. You didn't get a ticket. You didn't get a citation. You didn't get a fine. You got beat. And Pilate said.

I'll release him. And he'll still be allowed. We won't kill him. And we'll. And I'll let him. And let him go. Now Pilate didn't care about God's law. The Jews are trying to quote God's law. Though they did a horrible job.

The Jewish leaders. They just were. They just were lying. But he did want to administer justice to some extent. But here's the thing. He knew that the Jewish leaders wanted Jesus gone out of

jealousy.

[15:31] And so they. And so the only way they could get this done. Was they had to bully Pilate. That doesn't happen today. Do we? We don't bully our political leaders.

Do we? Hmm. No. No. It can't happen. It's America. John 19.

From then on Pilate sought to release him. But the Jews cried out. If you release this man. You are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king.

Opposes Caesar. Caesar. Now you got to keep in mind here. Okay. Caesar was total king. He was ruler, emperor.

Nobody. Nobody could ever stand up and say. I'm running against you. Or I want to be. That person better have an army.

[16:27] And a huge one. Because you'd be wiped out. Now. Roman emperors did not tolerate. Any other kings. In their territory. Unless they were.

What we call vassal kings. Under my authority. I'm letting you be king. Over there. But you know. You owe everything to me. And so what they're saying.

To Pilate. This Jesus. Claimed to be a king. Actually. He is. King of kings.

And lord of lords. He's the king of the kingdom of God. He's the. He's the reason we can. He's the reason we're here today. He's everything. Yes. He is king. And so they were right about that.

He was. But he wasn't Caesar's rival. He was over Caesar. Jesus has no rivals. No one even comes close. Amen. But for political reasons.

[17:28] Hello. Stay with me. Because of politics. Pilate says. Okay. Because Pilate didn't want to be removed. If it got back to Caesar. Hey.

You got it. You tolerating the Jews having another king. Did I did not appoint? What's up with that? Come here. You know. Now Pilate understood too. When Caesar said.

Come here. You might not go back. So Pilate said. Okay. I want to be Caesar's friend. I want to stay tight with the man.

But. Okay. So Caesar allows Jesus. To be crucified. Even though he saw no reason. For it. He was crucified.

Peter says. You folk. Now he says. Listen. Keep in mind. It's not just the Jewish leaders. He's saying. All of you. Help me out here. All of. Us.

[18:26] Because we're the Gentiles. Both for the most part in this room. I'm not. Anybody here Jewish. But you guilty too. It was our sins. It was our iniquity. It was our iniquity. The mess in our hearts.

That made it necessary. For Jesus to come. I'll talk about that in a minute. But the point is. All guilty. And it's funny that Peter says.

You call. You guys call the Gentiles. Non-Jews lawless. And yet the Jewish leaders are behaving more lawlessly. Than the Gentiles. And that's the nature of.

See that's the problem with religion. Religion doesn't. Religion. What I mean religion. Religion. It's humanity. Invention. To try and earn its way to God.

Or paradise. And make sense of our world. It's something we create. To try to understand what's happening. I said.

[19:27] It's a good idea. To try to understand what's happening in the world. You know. Where do we come from? What happens when we die? What's the meaning of existence? Those are good philosophical and religious questions.

And human beings. Have since the beginning. Invented ways to understand these things. We've invented religion. And philosophy. To help us work it out.

But. We create. Therefore our own laws. Within that system. And ceremonies. And rituals. To try to get a sense.

Of the divine. Sometimes. We say. The divine is inside of us. We are divine. But either way. It's our way of trying to figure things out. But here's the difference between.

Religion. And Christianity. Biblical Christianity. You see. In Jesus. What we have is God.

[20:23] Coming to reveal himself to us. To show us. What God is like. To show us. Our place. In the universe. Not us.

Working our way to God. But God. Coming down. To us. To be even. Become one of us. To speak. I like to say. He came to speak.

Baby talk. So we can understand. Amen. Because he's. Because. If God exists. And I know he does. He is way far and above. We call him.

Transcendent. He's above. We can ask. Or think. Or imagine. He blows the categories. Off of our thoughts. We can't even imagine. Fully him. So God. Has to reveal himself.

So that humanity. Can understand. And that's what he did. In Jesus. He didn't say to you. Figure it out. He says. Let me show you. Let me show you. Let me show you. Let me show you. And so this Jesus shows up.

[21 : 23] And the people of that day. Couldn't handle it. Not all of them. Thank God. There was some. Whom he had chosen.

To be with him. Who he exploded. The whole universe. With their lives. Afterwards. But they didn't get it. The cross.

Shows us. How far this God will go. To show us. His glory. His magnificence. And his matchless love. In order to save those.

Who will trust him. The resurrection shows us. This God who exists. Cannot be stopped. Not even by the greatest enemy.

Which is death. They did it to him. And they. Peter is saying. Y'all know y'all killed him. Y'all know he was dead.

[22 : 20] I can imagine when Jesus was executed. And that's what it was. It wasn't execution. It was by the state. When he was executed. I can imagine. They asked two questions.

And you. We do too. Whenever we face tragedy. Like 9-11. COVID deaths. Or loss of a cherished friend. A loved one. The wars. We asked two questions.

In particular. Where was God? How could God. Let this atrocity. Happen. See. They thought he was the one. They thought he was the one.

Who was going to kick. The Romans out of their land. They were occupied people. They wanted to be free. They were oppressed. By the Roman boot. And they wanted Rome out. And they thought that their Messiah.

It was called the Messiah. The. The. The. In Hebrew. It's Messiah. In the Greek language. The Bible was. The New Testament was written in. He's called Christ. The Messiah. Or the Christ. The anointed one.

[23 : 16] They were one who would come. And set them all free. And get Rome out of their lives. They thought he was the one. And now he's dead.

How could God. Let this happen. Where was God. God. Because the Bible said. And Peter. But Peter.

Peter knows they're thinking this way. And so he drops. A theological bomb on him. He says. Jesus was delivered up. According to the definite plan.

And foreknowledge of God. Definite means God determined. Or decreed. Back in eternity.

That Jesus of Nazareth. Would die in this way. Meaning. It had to happen. Just as it happened. Foreknowledge doesn't mean.

[24 : 13] He looked. God looked down through the ages. And saw what people would do. And based upon seeing what they would do. He said. I'm going to let it happen.

That's not what happened. That's not foreknowledge. Foreknowledge. When God foreknows something. It means it has to happen. If he foreknew it.

It's because he determined it. It must happen. He decrees it will happen. It's not dependent on the will of any human being.

Because God is sovereign. Meaning he's in control. He's in control. Not our free will. Not our free will. But look at the text.

We are still responsible. For the evil. That we do. Peter says. The Jewish people. God determined. God was at work.

[25 : 10] Where was God? Right there. Where was God? That was the plan. Could Jesus have done something different? No. That was the plan.

And he says. But lawless people. And you. Jewish people. The Jewish leaders in particular. Put Jesus to death. God's plan.

Humanity's action. All right there. Side by side. No one made them do the things they did. That's why they're being held accountable. But at the same time.

God's plan was at work. Because humanity's efforts. Can never overrule. The plan of God. God. It's like this. If you have children.

And you are a parent. Do your children have free will? You bet the little rascals do. And they will exercise their free will.

[26 : 15] In your face. Yes they have free will. But in that case. You're sovereign. Because you're the parent. When their free will.

Bumps up against your free will. Your free will better win. Or you're not a parent. You got teenagers. Listen to me.

I'm trying to help somebody right now. You got teenagers. They got free will. Yeah. But their free will. Had never override yours. Or you are no longer the parent.

You are now the peer. That's not parenting. That's chicken. No charge for that. I'm going to go back to my text here. So yes.

Free will. Free will. Yeah. We got free will. But God's plan always wins. It's the big plan. Our free will is only the little part.

[27 : 12] But there's a bigger plan at work. I don't know why. He doesn't stop by my house and tell me why he allows things in your life. Frankly, I couldn't take it.

I don't even know why he allows some things in my own life. But I know one thing. He has the plan. He's overriding and overlooking everything.

So stuff that happens in my life that I don't even like. Tragedies that occur in my life that I don't like and would not have wanted. I can rest assured. I can go to sleep at night knowing that I'm still wrapped in the arms of an almighty sovereign God.

My life is not out of control. I have hope, therefore, that he's got me. We can't blame God for the evil that we do.

And we can't even say the devil made me do it. They were eyewitnesses to the death of Jesus.

[28 : 19] Because they did it. Eyewitnesses still. Was Jesus dead? Yep, he was. They did it. The last thing is, I want you to know what Peter is saying.

We saw what God did, what he did. We saw it. Now, again, remember, you know, we began with the fact that they all saw Jesus and saw what he did.

Now we've come to a place where Jesus is dead. And they know he's dead because they saw it because they did it. Eyewitnesses. Now Peter comes back and says, were eyewitnesses too?

Verses 24 and I didn't read verse 32. I forgot to read that last time, so I'll read it now. Verse 24 first. Peter says, God raised him up, losing the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

Verse 32. This Jesus God raised up. And of that we are all witnesses. When Peter was preaching, he wasn't preaching by himself.

[29 : 25] There was a group of people who had been with him. All the other disciples who were still with him and others had been in the upper room, what was the prayer room. They had been praying before this event took place.

And all of them stood up as the spirit of God came upon them and they began talking about Jesus. Now Peter takes center stage with this sermon. And so keep in mind what's going on.

They did not expect or even pray that Jesus would rise from the dead. You got to stop there for a minute. Who are these disciples? These guys were not religious geniuses.

They were philosophers. They were everyday Irish Joes. And James, because there were women present in the upper room. They weren't the elite.

They didn't create some system. They wouldn't know how to do it. They didn't expect Jesus to rise from the dead because dead people stay dead.

[30 : 23] And Jesus was definitely dead. The Roman execution squad knew how to do their job. Crucifixion was common in the Roman Empire. They got it from the Persians who invented it.

And they took it from the Persians and they perfected it. These guys knew how to kill you. And they were experts. And so they knew for sure that they had killed Jesus.

This is why the Quran is wrong. The Quran insists that someone was substituted for Jesus. Made to look like him on the cross. Because God would never allow one of his messengers to die like that.

That's not true. Here's the eyewitness account of the death of Jesus. They saw it. This shows that people and religions don't understand why Jesus came.

Because if Jesus didn't die, you don't understand why he came. He came to die. But why? He came to die because our sins against God and humanity bring judgment.

[31 : 34] We all want good judges. And human speaking, we want judges who do their job.

If you elect a judge in this city, you expect that judge then to go forth and administer justice. If someone comes before his court or her court and this person is guilty, you expect the judge to pronounce the sentence.

Not let him go. And say, oh, there was circumstance. Oh, I see. Yeah. You murdered five people. Yeah. That was, you know, you didn't really mean it, did you?

No. I mean, you were just shooting in the air and it happened to hit these guys. I don't know. I mean, no. You want the judge to say, no, you're going away. But yet we want God to be different. We want God to look at our sins and say, oh, I understand. You just, you know, you just, you know, you have problems, you know. You know, you didn't have a mother. You didn't have a father. You, you know, they made you do it.

[32 : 40] I know. And, you know, we want God to excuse us. We want him to be a bad judge. But yet we insist on having good judges. God's the judge of all the earth and he's the prototype of all judges.

We expect that there will be justice at the end. That evil will be dealt with. See, evil isn't always dealt with right now. But God has promised he will deal with evil.

It will not win. It will not have the last word. He will judge evil. That should encourage us. But here's the problem.

All human beings have thought, spoken, and done evil. All of us have sinned against God. So we're all guilty. So if God is the judge and we're all guilty, things don't look too good.

We all must face that judgment. God's only way by his own choice to save some of us is for someone who never did evil, who never sinned against him, to take the punishment we deserve.

[33 : 52] That's the only way. If there was another way, it would have been done. This is God's plan. This is his way. This is it. Jesus, why did Jesus have to die? Why did he come?

It's so that he could receive the justice of God for those who will trust in him. Because if we receive God's justice, we're toast. It's over.

Eternity is before us and it's bleak. So Jesus comes. That's the good news. The gospel. Jesus comes. Who did no evil.

Who did everything right. And keep in mind, he came for this purpose. He's not a victim. He's a victor. He completed the mission. He completed the tax.

The eternal son of God, who was with the father from all eternity past, comes, takes up on our humanity, becomes one of us. Not changing the fact that he's still God, but he becomes one of us.

[34 : 53] Takes up our frailty and our weakness, but not our sin. He didn't do anything wrong. Because if he had, he couldn't represent us. But he did it all right. He kept the law of God that you broke, that you break every day.

And thought, word, or deed. He kept it perfectly. And then he represents us on the cross and pays the price that we should pay.

There were no, no one else could do it because there was no other perfect human beings who loved God with all their heart and loved their neighbor as themselves. Nobody else could do it. So God said in love, matchless, incredible love, that I will do it for them. I will satisfy my own justice. I will save my people.

He had to die. Disciples didn't understand that. It puzzled them. They thought Jesus, he kept telling them he was going to die. And they kept thinking, oh, is he depressed?

[36 : 01] Maybe we should get him some Prozac. You know, some Wellbutrin. He'll feel better. They didn't get it. They thought he was being melancholy, having a moment.

He kept telling them, I'm going to die. In three days, I'll rise. They didn't get it. Now they do. God the Father raised Jesus from the dead by loosening the pains of death, loosening the anguish, the pain of death.

If you picture death as wrapping up Jesus, God pulled those wrappings off of him. Notice the reason death had to let him go. Oh, here's my favorite part. Why did death have to let Jesus go? Because it was not possible for him to be held by it. Hallelujah. It was impossible. It was impossible. Death is one of the greatest powers in the universe.

No one escapes death. Yet as powerful as death is, it was not powerful enough to keep his grip on Jesus of Nazareth. You can't get...

[37 : 05] Find me a power greater than death among us, as human beings. You can't... It always wins. 100%. It wins every time. You can slow it down, maybe.

But it always wins. Jesus could not be held by it. Why? Because he never sinned. The wages of sin is death.

Jesus never sinned. He don't have to... He died... He took our sins on him, but he never committed sin. So the wages of sin is death, and he never committed sin.

How can death hold him? The second thing is most obvious. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him. Without him was nothing made that had been made.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. Listen, Jesus was the Word made flesh, and he is life. In him is life. He's the creator of life, the author of life, the giver of life.

[38 : 07] How can you keep life dead? You can't keep life down. Talk about you can't keep a good man down. This is ridiculous right here.

Now, and they were eyewitnesses too. I can't turn to it right now, but read it in your Bible. In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, over 500 people saw Jesus alive.

Over 500 people. We have eyewitness testimony to the reality and resurrection of Jesus. Scotty Smith said this, I came across this this morning.

Because Jesus has risen, living hope, my quote, not a dead man, living hope, claims today and defines our future.

Living hope, claims our today, defines our future. Peace, not panic, is our daily bread. Worship, not worry, is the air we breathe.

[39 : 13] In Christ, not stressed out, is our current and permanent address. In Christ. On mission, on mission, not checked out, is how we live.

The resurrection of Jesus transforms everything, gives us life, gives us strength, gives us energy, gives us hope. We can get up in the morning, no matter what's happened yesterday, we can get up in the morning. Put our feet on the floor.

And we don't have any theology, the sun will come out tomorrow. No, the sun is already shining. He's never stopped shining. I can get up because Jesus got up.

Amen. and just as he rose from the dead he promised that we will follow him Tim Keller said it this way rather than living in fear of death we should see death as spiritual smelling salts that will awaken us out of our false belief that we will live forever when you're at a funeral especially one for a friend or a loved one listen to God speaking to you telling you that everything in this life is temporary except for his love it's the one thing you can't lose without God's love to embrace us we will always be radically insecure and we ought to be this is reality the cross and the resurrection shout the love of God to us don't reject the love it's a love that's better than the love of people and love love of people is good don't get me wrong we want to be we need to be loved but sometimes all the time it's not enough you need some you need divine love that gives meaning and definition and hope to your life and even to your last breath the love of God will go with you forever death is humanity's greatest fear and our greatest enemy and all religions having to have a way of dealing with it to one way or another some even deny exists but not but that's not reality we know death exists but we also know one defeated death here's our problem so many of us are like James Ryan James Ryan was the subject of the moving movie

Saving Private Ryan you know you remember the movie World War II flick broke my heart many ways I don't like to watch those kinds of movies they they're too real for me for some reason I just have hard time but I did watch this one and I never forget it these this true this group of soldiers led by Captain Miller who Tom Hanks plays is sent into combat into the war zone to rescue one private why because his three brothers had already been killed in the war his he was the only son left and his mother requested he returned and so the government said that's a good idea we don't want this woman to be reft of all be reft of all four of our sons so they send the squad in to get him Tom Hanks and about I don't know six or seven other guys they go in to look for him and they find him and they rescue him but they pay for it with their lives they die rescuing him and and Tom Hanks as he's lays dying Private Ryan is over him and Tom and Captain

[42 : 56] Miller looks at him and says earn this what did he mean by that he meant you be you earn our sacrifice to save you you earn it we are dying to save you you gotta earn this man so fast

forward you find Private Ryan now he's an old man and he's in probably 80s or so he's an older man and now he's at the he's at the cemetery the American cemetery in Normandy which is a tribute to these soldiers he speaks to the cross uh Captain Miller's as a cross marking his grave and he's standing there his family is behind him they gave him space he goes to the cross he nails down and he's talking to Captain Miller as it were he says these words every day I think about what you said to me on that bridge I've tried to live my life the best I could I hope that was enough I hope that in your eyes I've earned what you have done for me he stood up and said to his wife tell me I have lived a good life tell me I'm a good man can you imagine living with that burden can you imagine living with that kind of guilt on your soul trying to live these men died to save you and now you gotta earn their sacrifice how do you do that yeah that's how so many people think about God they think that they have to earn the goodness of God earn the sacrifice of Christ they have to be good enough so God will elect them into heaven family that's death that is death that is death Jesus came that we don't have to do that the good news of the gospel is that Jesus came and died in our place so that we don't have to earn anything from God just received the gift that he gave us in Christ and receiving the gift means confessing that you're a screw-up confessing your sins before him admitting man I'm messed up I've been trying to do right things like

I can't get it right you gotta admit that because guess what you're part of my family now because I'm one of them can't get it right thank God for Jesus you admit to God you can't do it you can't be good enough you can't fix everything you've messed up and you're gonna mess up but you say Lord forgive me have mercy on me a sinner forgive me and here's the thing here's the thing you know you know you connected with God because your life changes and now you want to follow Jesus you see you can't say Lord forgive me and walk away and go back and do your thing no you haven't touched God at all you haven't seen God at all when you see God you fall before him you say Lord Jesus I see the cross I see you dying for my sins you I see there's no hope except in you you're the only name the only one who can save me I could be I turn my life over to you I forgive me and now when you get up off your face and your knees you open your Bible you join a church and you get I'll come follow Jesus I'm following Jesus because he will he transforms you he does the work he transforms you you don't make yourself good enough for him so Savior Provener Ryan to me breaks my heart because it reminds me of what religion is like and religion always says you gotta earn it and you can't who's the greatest who's the greatest thief of all time is not death is Jesus because Jesus is the ultimate grave robber and he even promised that he will raise us up with him who do you believe in who you're trusting in is it Jesus or your own thoughts and ideas is it humanity's beautiful thoughts and great ideas or you're trusting in God

I hope you will find that Jesus is waiting right here for you today and if you already believe in Jesus be encouraged your faith is based upon eyewitness accounts not fables not hearsay your faith is based upon what people actually saw and now you get to be eyewitnesses and you get to bear witness to the reality of the death resurrection of Jesus amen father help us help us please help us to see help us to grasp what Jesus did for us and the reality of that of that death and resurrection and ascension into heaven to be with you lord help us to grasp it and see it and may it transform our living our hope our believing our may it transform our mood may it transform our actions may the reality of Christ living and breathing may it transform our destiny help us give us all ears to hear and eyes to see amen amen

Thank you.