

I started driving when I was 13.

Now this wouldn't have been a problem if I lived on a farm.

But I lived in good old suburban Penrith.

Now you should never drive until you've got a licence.

It's only going to end up in tears.

And this is especially true if you drive your parents' car without their permission.

And let me tell you, it gets even worse if you drive your parents' car without their permission... AND you crash the car.

I had driven with my dad in the car before up and down the driveway and stuff like that.

So, I thought that it would be fun when Dad went into the shops to drive his car around the carpark.

But it turned out that it wasn't fun after all when I ended up crashing it.

And when I crashed it, I couldn't quickly fix the problem.

Even if I had enough money to fix the car,

I couldn't drive to the panel beater to get it fixed before Dad found out...

and I couldn't have done it before Dad saw the damage.

But my story gets worse, because you see one of the car I smashed into... was an unmarked POLICE car.

Because I crashed my parents' car, it made them very upset with me.

The Bible reminds us time and time again that we have all done wrong things and have all upset God.

We all stand condemned, guilty and deserving the punishment of sin.

From the very beginning of the Bible in Gen 3 we learn the consequences of sin and our relationship with God.

Sin damages our relationship with God, Adam and Eve are cast out of the garden because of their sin.

In the Old Testament, God is separated from humanity because of sin.

Only the high priest is allowed to enter the Holy of Holies, the place where God dwelt, and this was only once a year.

The priest was not able to enter until he had offered all the sacrifices to make sure he was free from sin.

The priest was never 100% sure of the outcome so they used to tie a rope around their bodies so they could pull him out just in case he had not completed the sacrifices correctly and died because of his sin in the presence of God.

Sin is a big problem that needs to be fixed.

Now as humans we usually try and fix things ourselves don't we.

When it comes to relationships that we care about we especially try and fix things up when we have hurt someone we love.

We do things to try and restore the relationship.

We apologise for what we have done and then we do things to show how sorry we are.

We may go and buy chocolates and flowers to try and mend the relationship, give a back massage.

Or when you were a child and you upset your parents, what did you do?

Well of course you cleaned your room without being asked to, or washed the dishes, or did anything really to try and stop them being angry at you.

If it was really bad thing you may even clean the bathroom.

When someone's mad at us, we want to work to try and stop them being angry with us.

The same thing is true with our relationship with God.

We try and fix things with God ourselves don't we.

Who here has ever heard a person say, I just need to work out some stuff in my life before I come to God.

He can't possibly except me, I'm too bad, I need to be a better person before God will except me.

We try and fix it ourselves.

Well unfortunately not all things can be fixed by ourselves,

sometimes you need to call in professional help.

In the 80's who did you call if you had a problem with ghost? Ghostbusters

Well in the 1500's when you had a problem with relationship with God who did you call?

You called the church,

The church in the period of the reformation, was the place in which you could get help with your relationship with God.

The Church had set out seven sacraments as a means of dispensing God's grace which could only be administered by the Church.

Five of these sacraments could only be received once in your life

Baptism,
Confirmation,
Marriage,
Ordination and
Extreme unction or the last rights.

The final two sacraments Eucharist or mass and penance were sacraments which were continually required to ensure your grace.

The Church had stated correctly that all humans are subject to original sin.

At Baptism original sin is removed

But unfortunately we sin after our baptism and because baptism can only take place once the church needed to setup a way of dealing with sin.

So the church setup the confession system,

but it was not just simply confession because they believed sinner needed to pay for the penalty of sin.

So a four stage penitential system was introduced

- 1) Contrition – proper sorrow for sins
- 2) Confession – confess sins in detail to a priest
- 3) Absolution – a priest declaring God's forgiveness and absolving sins
- 4) Satisfaction – pay a penalty for sins either now or later in purgatory

Unfortunately, the Church had this very wrong,

the penance system was widely abused

including the abuse of the Mass for personal salvation of individuals.

King Henry 8 was reported to have left in his will enough money for daily masses to be said in the alter above his tomb by two priests as long as the world shall endure.

The church was pushing very hard for a works based faith,

A system in which the person who had committed the crime did the time.

They had completely misunderstood salvation by Christ alone.

How could they get this so wrong?

Well I want to suggest that it is very easy to get it wrong.

Like I said before it is a natural human instinct to want to fix things ourselves.

I also suggest that we too sometimes get it wrong and I'll give you example.

If I was to take a poll right now asking if you believe that God answers prayer, I guarantee that nearly everyone if not everyone would say yes God answers prayer.

But my second question on the poll is, do you always, in every situation that you come across, before trying to work out a solution yourself bring it to God in prayer?

I would guess that the number of yes would drop dramatically.

Why is this so?

It's not because we don't believe that God answers prayer; it must be something else.

I would suggest that it's because we want to work it out ourselves.

We want to make the cake and then let God ice it.

See we too try and do things ourselves,

but the problem is we need professional help,

not help from the Church, but help from God.

So let's look at God's help guide: the Bible.

The writer of the Hebrews in chapter 9 explains the repetitive nature of Old Testament sacrificial system.

A mediator being the priest offers sacrifices for himself and on behalf of the nation of Israel.

A payment for the sins committed.

The system required ongoing sacrifices for ongoing sins.

But the writer explains that this system was never meant to be the sufficient and final means of salvation.

This system was instead meant to show the cost of our salvation and point to something more perfect.

The writer states in verse 9 that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper.

Instead they were meant to be an illustration of the sacrifice to come.

The True Sacrifice.

The Unrepeated Sacrifice

The True High Priest himself, Jesus.

Verse 15 reminds us

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

The Bible tells us time and time again that we have all upset God,

Just like I had upset my parents when I broke their trust and crashed their car.

We have all sinned, we all stand guilty before God.

But the good thing is that God has done something for us.

God has done something to fix our broken relationship with him.

God sent a mediator, but unlike the high priest of past.

This mediator, Jesus, was able to act as a true mediator because he was innocent,

He didn't need to offer a sacrifice for his own sins.

And verse 12 shows us that he didn't enter the Most Holy Place by the means of the blood of goats and calves no he entered by his own blood, obtaining an external redemption.

He offered himself as a ransomed for us.

We have been ransomed.

We have been bought at a great cost.

We have been saved from God's anger that we rightfully deserve.

But notice how we are cleansed.

We are cleansed 100% by Jesus' work.

We are not cleaned by 80% Jesus and 20% our works

We aren't even cleaned 99.99% by Jesus work and 0.01% our work.

No. It's 100% Jesus work.

The writer of Hebrews in verse 26 says Jesus has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

See it's impossible for us to do works that will fix up our relationship with God.

We can't do good works to try and make God forgive us.

We can't clean up his dishes or buy him chocolates or flowers

We can't even clean his toilet.

and going to church and keeping special religious rules and things... they won't work either.

It's only when God gives us the free gift of grace that he gives us a way to have our relationship with him fixed up.

Let me give you an example.

Let's say that this lovely new white t-shirt I'm wearing represents my relationship with God.

No matter how hard I've tried in life, I've done things to hurt God's feelings and make him angry with me, I have sinned.

And those sins make my pure-white shirt get all stained.

It's like I've got the word SIN all over the front of my nice, clean shirt.

[draw 'sin' on your shirt]

Now, this is a problem. I need to get rid of that sin from my shirt.

How will I do that?

I might try and cover up that sin by doing good works to try and please God.

So I might think that if I go to church at each week, or cross myself in a special way, or give some money to the poor that this will somehow cover over my sins so that God will be happy with me.

And those good deeds are like us trying to cover the word 'sin' with lots and lots of ink.

But no matter what we do we can't ever get rid of the sin even if we cover it completely so others cant see it.

God can still see the sin in our lives no matter how many good works we do.

And so there is only one way we can fix our relationship with God and that is through the work of Christ.

By expecting God's Grace through Faith in what Jesus has done for us.

And what Jesus has done for us is taken our dirty shirt and given us a new shirt.

Jesus has taken the punishment for Sin by his death on the cross.

He has taken my dirty shirt and nailed it to the cross.

Paid the debt I couldn't pay.

Now, you might wonder what happened with my parents and the car?

Well just like God and what he has done for us, someone needed to pay for the car to be fixed.

I couldn't pay for the car. I couldn't afford it.

So, my parents showed me grace.

They paid the money for the car to be fixed.

They paid my debt that I couldn't pay.

But that wasn't the biggest problem that needed fixing.

See the car could be repaired or even replaced,

But remember how one of those cars I hit was a police car?

Well, my dad also needed to front up to the police station and pay for the fact that an unlicensed driver crashed his car.

See I had broken the law and that demanded a punishment be paid.

And the person to take that punishment was my father.

My parents were upset with me but their love for me outweighed how upset they were.

And, God loves me even more than my parents do.

And the way he paid for our sin was even more costly than some panel beating and a fine to the police.

God paid for our sin by sending his son to die on the cross for us.

Romans 5 says

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

These verse should shock us, but shock us in a good way.

God doesn't choose to love us when we were being loving towards him.

No God chooses us while we were absolutely appalling to him.

And God's choosing cost him greatly,

So we need to make sure we don't try and limit this awesome act of kindness and love by trying to add to it our own works.

We are only ever saved by Christ work.

So we have seen throughout this series from the bible alone is where we get our authority, not the church not priests.

If anyone teaches us something we need to test it against what the bible says.

We learn from the bible alone that salvation is Christ's work alone, not your work, not the churches work, not the priest's work no it's all Christ work.

We are saved by grace alone by faith alone.

I'll leave you with these encouraging words from Ephesians 2, showing us we can have complete assurance of our salvation.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.