

Sermon for Sunday, April 16, 1972 by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D., Pastor
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"NO SECRET DISCIPLES

Romans 10:5-13

Text: "For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved." Romans 10:10

The Bible says some rather disconcerting things. I want to quote a couple of disconcerting passages to you--"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Nobody here is excluded from that "all". The Bible says, "There is none righteous, no, not one." What those two passages mean is that you and I are sinners, all of us. That being the case, we need to ask ourselves what kind of sinners we are. There are all kinds of sinners--tall sinners, short sinners, thin sinners, fat sinners, happy sinners, sad sinners, young sinners, old sinners, rich sinners, and poor sinners. There are those who were baptized as infants and they are baptized sinners. There are those who are on the church rolls and they are church member sinners. There are those who have drifted out of the church and they are back sliding sinners. There are those who have never professed Jesus as their personal saviour and they are lost sinners. But there is one kind of sinner that I am, and I hope you are, and it is the best kind of sinner to be and that is a saved sinner. The best kind of sinner is the one who has surrendered his life to Jesus Christ and has been filled with the Holy Spirit. He is a saved sinner.

The question I want to ask you this morning is this: what kind of a sinner are you? If you are a saved sinner, if you have the assurance this morning that you have eternal life, if you know for a fact, if it is in your heart with assurance that if you fell over dead in your pew this moment, that you would go to be with Jesus and be in heaven, if you are that kind of a saved sinner, I just praise God with you for your salvation. If you are one of those other kinds of sinners, I would like to ask you why you are not a saved sinner? What is present in your life--or to play the flip side--what is absent in your life that you cannot say with absolute assurance that you are a saved sinner?

Because these are pertinent questions in our day, I would like for us to think together this morning about how one becomes a saved sinner. In order to be a saved sinner you must first of all reach the end of your own rope. We ought to be clear about that. God can't save us as long as we hang on to any idea that we can save ourselves. Some of us have the idea that by being good--by being morally upright, a sort of spiritual boy scout, we can save ourselves. Now if you live that way, if you are a moral, upright person, that makes you a good sinner but it will not make you a saved sinner. First of all you have got to reach the end of your own rope in the sense that you know and recognize and accept the fact that you cannot save yourself. The end of your rope is the beginning of God's.

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. He was a man at the end of his rope. He was a religious leader, a learned man, a devout man, a moral man, but he also knew he was a lost man. He was a man at the end of his rope. Jesus said to him, "Nicodemus, you are a man at the end of his rope. You must be born again." On the day of Pentecost, St. Peter preached to a large gathering of people. The Bible says that Peter preached and the Spirit moved upon them and they were cut to the heart and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They were people who were at the end of their ropes. The Philippian jailer was at the end of his rope. He thought his prisoners had escaped because a great earthquake had tumbled his prison walls and sprung his jail doors and he knew his prisoners were gone and all was lost. He pulled out his sword and was at the point of falling on it and committing suicide. He was at the end of his rope. St. Paul cried out to him, "Don't harm yourself.

We are all still here." And because he was at the end of his rope, the Philippian jailer cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" The Bible tells us that the disciple Philip attached himself to the chariot of an Ethiopian eunuch who was searching God's word. Apparently there was a desperate hunger in his heart. And when Philip told him about Jesus, being at the end of his rope, the eunuch cried out, "See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?"

Yes, the end of our rope is the beginning of God's. The first step in being a saved sinner is to recognize that you are at the end of your own rope. The story of the rich young ruler is a case in point. He came to Jesus asking what must he do to be saved. One would have thought he was at the end of his rope. But when Jesus told him it took total surrender, when Jesus told him it took giving up all he depended on and following Jesus totally, he suddenly realized that with all he stood to lose, maybe he was not at the end of his rope after all. On the other hand, there is the story of the prodigal son of whom Jesus spoke. His inheritance has been spent in riotous living until one sad day he awoke to find himself a keeper of pigs and they had more to eat than he did. He was a keeper of pigs and the man who owned the pigs thought more of the pigs than he did of the boy who was keeping them. There in the pig pen the boy came to the end of his rope. He said, "I will arise and go to my father..." The rich young ruler was a good man but he had a lot to lose--but he was not at the end of his rope--so he was still a lost sinner. The prodigal son had been a wicked person and had nothing to lose so when he reached the end of his rope he became a saved sinner.

If you are satisfied with your life, content with who and what you are, at ease with yourself, then you cannot be a saved sinner because you are not at the end of your rope. Jesus himself put it this way, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." If you are not spiritually ill, if you are not aware of the spiritual disease that eats away at people, then you cannot be a saved sinner. But if you are laboring and are heavy laden, if you seek rest unto your soul, if you are at the end of your own rope, then you are at the beginning of God's. The Pharisee stood in the temple and prayed, "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men..." He certainly was not at the end of his rope! Beside him stood a publican who smote his breast and daring not even to lift his eyes to heaven, cried out, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." He was at the end of his rope. It was of this man of whom Jesus said, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." Yes, the end of your rope is the beginning of God's.

The second thing I want to say to you this morning is that God is holding out his rope--his life line--to you this morning. The life line of God is Jesus Christ. God is holding out a life line to you who have been washed over board by life, who are floundering in the seas of tragedy and despair and failure, who are sinking beneath the waves of your own sin. That life line is Jesus Christ. If you want to catch hold of that life line this morning there are two things you must do. First, you must believe with your heart. They are in our text this morning. The first thing the Bible tells us we have to do is to believe with your heart. I want you to notice that the Bible does not simply say you must believe. Just to believe would involve only your intellect. Now, the intellect is important. As Dorothy Sayers puts it, the Christian faith is "first of all a rational explanation of the universe...it is...a hard, tough, exacting, and complex doctrine, steeped in a drastic and uncompromising realism." To believe is, indeed, part intellectual for the Christian faith offers a rational explanation of the very universe in which we live. It offers us a philosophy of life. But the Bible says we are to believe

with our hearts. We Presbyterians are too often guilty of having intellectual belief and what we need is a transplant. We need to get our intellectual commitment transplanted eighteen inches lower into our hearts because that kind of belief involves the total man. To believe with the heart involves a response of the emotions, the feelings, the sentiments, as well as the mind. It is the whole man responding in total faith and surrender to God.

One of my favorite religious pictures is the picture of Jesus standing at a door, a lantern in one hand and the other raised, knocking. If you will look closely at the picture you will discover that there is no handle on the door. That is the message of the picture. Jesus knocks, but the door has to be opened from the inside. It is one thing to hear a knock at your door, but it is quite another to open that door and let the caller in--to make him the welcomed and honored guest of your house. It is one thing to believe, but it is quite another thing to believe with your heart--that demands a surrender, that demands a response of the whole man. You must not only believe that it is Jesus, the very son of God, who knocks at the door of your heart. No, you must also open that door, you must receive him as the honored guest, the Lord of your heart. As the Bible puts it, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."

If you would grasp the life line of God this morning you must first of all believe with your heart--a response of the sum total of who and what you are--holding back nothing, giving your total self. You must receive Jesus Christ into your life; you must open the door from your side to let him in. A. J. Gordon tells us of a small vessel that was caught in a terrible storm just off the coast of New Jersey. Her bow struck a bar and she was made fast. The waves crashed down upon her, threatening to break her up and to sink her any moment. The people on the shore had seen the dilemma of the boat and the life saving crew had been called and from the shore they fired a gun that carried a line that fell across the ship. But the crew did not know that that life line would take them safely to shore. All night long, drenched, shivering, under dire peril, they cried out for help when the life line lay at hand. There are so many people today who are crumpled up and smashed by life who are crying out for help, who are crying out from their loneliness and desolation and sense of meaninglessness and the collapse of their lives and all the time their life line lays at hand. God's life line is in your reach this morning but you have to take it, to believe with your heart, to receive Christ into your life.

If you will look at our text there is a second thing the Bible says we must do. If you want to be a saved sinner, you must believe with your heart but you must also confess Jesus with your lips. There are no secret disciples! It is not enough to surrender your life to Jesus in private, for you must confess him before men. Do you remember how Jesus put it? He said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Or again, as the writer of I John says, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." I wish sometimes that I could let my life be my testimony to the world that I am a believer. I have people say to me, "I don't know how to share my faith. I don't know how to tell anybody about Jesus. I am going to let my life speak for me." But I want to tell you that won't work and there are two reasons that it won't work. The first reason it won't work is that every night when I go to bed, I have to get down on the side of my bed on my knees and say to Jesus "Jesus, there are so many things I did today I wish I had not done. There are many things I should have done but never got around to." So my good life is not all that good. The second reason it won't work is because I am pointing to me and my life rather than to Jesus Christ.

Jesus wants all to live a good life as an example to him but he says that isn't enough. You must also confess with your lips to others what Jesus has done for you. Ultimately, the most important thing I can say to you or you can say to me is this, "Let me tell you what Jesus has done for me."

There are no secret disciples. When I was a pastor in Dallas I had one of my Deacons get converted under my ministry and become a Christian. That is a good thing to happen to have officers become Christians. I even know a few preachers who could stand a little Christianity. He got filled with Jesus and he decided to give up drinking as a testimony to his faith in Jesus. I said, "If that is what God is leading you to do, that's fine. You do what God leads you to do." Soon after he went to an office Christmas party where there was a great deal of drinking. Later he was telling me about it and I asked him how he made out. "Just fine," he said, "I put enough coke in some water that nobody knew I wasn't drinking." I tell you, there are no secret disciples. I remember reading a story about a Christian who spent a winter in a logging camp with the lumber jacks. A friend asked him later how the men reacted when they knew he was a Christian. The man replied, "Why, I never let them find it out." I tell you there are no secret disciples. If you want to be a saved sinner then you must confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead and then you will be saved. If you will not confess him before men, he will not confess you before the Father. If you are ashamed of him here, he will be ashamed of you there.

No, there are no secret disciples. Listen to Simon Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Listen to Nathanael, "Rabbi, thou art the son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Listen to the woman of Samaria, "Is not this the Christ?" Listen to Martha, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." Listen to Thomas, "My Lord and my God." Listen to the Ethiopian eunuch, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Listen to Martin Luther, "My Lord has confessed me before men; I will not shrink from confessing Him before kings."

I want to say to you business men, you lawyers, you doctors, you teachers, you housewives--who ever you are--there are no secret disciples. I want to say to you college students--in your class rooms, your dorms, your campus, your dates--there are no secret disciples. I want to say to you young people at school, at home, at the football game, in the car, or on a date, there are no secret disciples. As St. Paul puts it, "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Let me say this one final thing to you this morning. St. Paul writes, "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." I want you to notice the words, "raised him from the dead." You are not asked to believe in some remote figure of the past. You are not asked to believe in some historical memory. You are not asked to believe in some dead hero. You are asked to surrender your life and confess the Lordship of a Living Saviour raised from the dead. You are asked to believe in a living Lord who is made real through the Holy Spirit. You can have that Holy Spirit this morning. You can have the presence, you can have the power of God in your life. You can have a new source of strength, a peace, a joy, the Holy Spirit to fill you and to help you meet every adversity that life brings to you. You can have the resource to meet whatever God sends to you. You can have it if you will believe with your heart and confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord.

Over in the book of Revelation the Bible says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him..." There is no outside handle to the door of your heart. It can only be opened from the inside. Christ wants in your life. God wants to fill your heart with the Holy Spirit. But it can only be opened from the inside. God wants to give you himself, He wants to give you peace and joy, he wants to give you power to live life triumphantly. He wants to fill you with His Holy Spirit but the latch is on your side.