

Why Do I Need Jesus Christ? Part 1

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Key Scripture

Romans 3:23-24 (ESV) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Sermon in One Sentence

Every human being fundamentally needs Jesus Christ because He alone addresses our universal problem of sin and offers the divine solution of grace and redemption.

Introduction

Imagine staring at a persistent check engine light in your car. It's not just an annoyance; it's a warning, hinting at a deeper problem under the hood that, left unaddressed, could lead to disaster. Spiritually speaking, many people today live with a similar "check engine light" flashing in their souls—a vague unease, a sense of incompleteness, a yearning for something more profound. They might try to ignore it, drown it out with distractions, or even attempt self-fixes, but the fundamental question lingers: "Why do I need anything beyond myself or my own efforts?" This isn't just an intellectual query; it is the most crucial existential question one can ask, pointing to the very core of our being and our relationship with the Creator.

Today, in the first part of our series, "Why Do I Need Jesus Christ?", we begin by exploring the foundational truth that undergirds all other reasons for needing Him. Before we can appreciate the solution, we must first understand the problem—a problem that is universal, profound, and utterly beyond our capacity to fix on our own. Our chosen passage from Romans, a cornerstone of Christian doctrine, will illuminate this fundamental human predicament and begin to unveil God's magnificent answer.

Historical & Biblical Context

The Epistle to the Romans, penned by the Apostle Paul, is arguably the most systematic theological treatise in the New Testament. Written around A.D. 57-58 from Corinth, it was addressed to the Christian community in Rome, a diverse congregation comprised of both Jewish and Gentile believers. Paul had not yet visited Rome, but he intended to, and he sought to lay a robust theological foundation for their faith, to unite them in truth, and to prepare them for his eventual arrival and mission to Spain. The first three chapters of Romans are dedicated to systematically demonstrating the universal depravity of humanity—that both Jew and Gentile are under the power of sin and justly condemned by God's holy law. This section, climaxing in chapter 3, serves as the dark backdrop against which the glorious light of God's righteousness, revealed in Christ, shines even brighter. It establishes the "why" before presenting the "how," setting the stage for the good news of salvation by grace through faith alone.

Main Point I — The Universal Stain: Everybody Sins

Scripture: Romans 3:23a — "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."

This powerful declaration from Paul cuts across every demographic, every culture, and every era. "All have sinned." Not some, not most, but every single human being born into this world, save for Christ Himself, bears the indelible mark of sin. To "sin" in the biblical sense is not merely to make a mistake or a misjudgment, but to "miss the mark"—to deviate from God's perfect standard of righteousness, to transgress His law, and to rebel against His holy nature. It means that our thoughts, our words, our actions, and even our inactions are inherently flawed and fall short of His divine glory. There isn't a person among us, regardless of their moral effort or perceived goodness, who can escape this universal indictment.

To "fall short of the glory of God" emphasizes the chasm created by sin. God is perfectly holy, radiant in His glory, which is His intrinsic excellence and perfect character. We, in our fallen state, are inherently incapable of reflecting that glory as we were designed to do, nor can we attain it through our own efforts. Our best attempts at goodness are tainted, our purest motives often mingled with self-interest, and our deepest moral aspirations inherently flawed by our sinful nature. This isn't just about individual acts; it's about a state of being, an inherited condition that permeates every aspect of human existence from birth. Our need for Jesus begins here, at the recognition of our collective and individual inability to measure up to God's standard.

Main Point II — The Unpayable Debt: Sin's Wages Are Death

Scripture: Romans 6:23a — "For the wages of sin is death..."

Beyond merely "missing the mark," sin carries a profound and devastating consequence: death. This isn't simply referring to physical death, though that is certainly one aspect of the curse of sin (Romans 5:12). More fundamentally, it speaks to spiritual death, which is separation from God, the source of all life. To be dead in sin means to be alienated from God, incapable of knowing Him or experiencing true life in Him, marked for eternal separation from His presence. Just as a wage is a payment earned for work performed, so too are the "wages of sin" an earned consequence—an inevitable outflow of our rebellion against a holy God. It's a just payment, not an arbitrary punishment, reflecting the infinite offense that sin commits against an infinitely holy Creator.

Understanding the depth of this "death" is crucial for comprehending our need for Christ. It means that we are spiritually bankrupt, unable to generate any spiritual life or merit on our own. Our moral ledger is not just balanced at zero; it is deeply in the red, with an unpayable debt owed to divine justice. No amount of good deeds, no religious rituals, no philosophical enlightenment can reverse this verdict or pay this infinite cost. This inescapable consequence highlights the gravity of our lost condition and underscores the utter impossibility of self-salvation.

Main Point III — The Unattainable Righteousness: We Cannot Justify Ourselves

Scripture: Romans 3:20 — "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."

This verse directly confronts the human tendency to believe that we can earn God's favor or make ourselves right with Him through our actions, our adherence to rules, or our moral striving. Paul emphatically states that "by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight." To be "justified" means to be declared righteous, to be acquitted of guilt, and to stand righteous before a holy God. The law—whether the Mosaic Law given to Israel or the inherent moral law written on every human heart—serves a vital purpose, but it is not a means of justification. Its purpose, as Paul explains, is to bring "knowledge of sin." The law acts like a mirror, reflecting our imperfections and revealing just how far we fall short of God's perfect standard. It exposes our guilt; it does not remove it.

If we cannot justify ourselves by our own efforts, then we are in a truly desperate situation. Our attempts at self-righteousness are as "filthy rags" in God's sight (Isaiah 64:6). This inability to achieve righteousness on our own is precisely why we need an external, divine solution. We need someone who can pay the debt we owe, bridge the chasm we created, and provide the righteousness we lack. This understanding is foundational to grasping why Jesus Christ is not merely a good teacher or a moral example, but the essential Savior, uniquely qualified to address our profound and universal need.

Illustration

Consider the story of the Titanic. Unsinkable, they said. Yet, on a cold April night, despite its massive size, luxurious appointments, and human ingenuity, it struck an iceberg. The problem wasn't a minor leak; it was a fundamental breach below the waterline, critically compromising its structural integrity. No amount of bailing with buckets, no rearrangement of deck chairs, no amount of positive thinking on the part of the passengers could save it. The ship, once heralded as a marvel, was fundamentally flawed in that moment, and its course was set towards the bottom of the ocean. Humanity, in our sinful state, is much like that Titanic. We may possess great intelligence, build impressive civilizations, and even achieve remarkable feats of morality, but beneath the surface, sin has created a catastrophic breach. We are "all have sinned" (Rom 3:23), and the trajectory of our lives, apart from divine intervention, is towards spiritual death and separation from God. No amount of human effort can repair this fundamental flaw and change our spiritual destination. We desperately need a rescue.

Practical Application

- 1. Honestly assess your own heart:** Spend time this week reflecting on Romans 3:23. Do you truly believe you have sinned and fall short of God's glory? Ask God to reveal any areas of self-righteousness or denial in your life.
- 2. Confess specific sins:** Rather than a general acknowledgement, confess specific thoughts, words, and actions that have missed God's mark. Acknowledge your inability to fix these on your own.
- 3. Meditate on the gravity of sin:** Read Romans 6:23 again. Allow the truth that "the wages of sin is death" to sink in, fostering a holy fear of God and a deeper understanding of sin's seriousness.

4. Resist self-justification: When you feel the urge to compare yourself to others or rely on your good deeds for assurance, remind yourself of Romans 3:20. Reject the notion that you can earn God's favor.

5. Begin to ponder the "solution": While we focused on the problem today, spend a few moments considering what a divine solution might look like. How might a just God both punish sin and offer grace? This prepares your heart for next week's message.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the concept of "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23) challenge common perceptions about human goodness and self-worth?
2. What does it mean to "fall short of the glory of God," and how does understanding this impact your view of yourself and your need for God?
3. In what ways do people commonly try to justify themselves or earn God's favor, consciously or unconsciously?
4. If "the wages of sin is death," how does this truth create an urgency in understanding and responding to the Gospel?

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You acknowledging the profound truth of Your Word. We confess that we have all sinned and fallen short of Your glorious standard. We are undone apart from Your divine intervention, justly deserving of the wages of our rebellion. Soften our hearts to fully grasp the depth of our predicament, not to despair, but to eagerly seek the salvation You offer. Prepare our spirits to receive the good news of Christ, our only hope. Amen.

Benediction

Now, may the light of God's truth illuminate your understanding of your desperate need, that you might turn with open hands and heart to the Savior He has provided.