

ARE YOU STUCK IN YOUR SINS?

Do you feel like you are "stuck" in the mud of your sins? Have you ever heard someone say, "I'm at the end of my rope!" That person means that he or she does not know what to do next! He or she is in despair! Are you stuck? Are you at the "end of your rope"? Do you not know what to do about your sins? Well, Jesus Christ has good news for you.

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I recently received a newsletter from the World Bible School. The newsletter told about a South Carolina man who was suffering from deep depression. He could see no way forward. There was no glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. There was no one who seemed to care for his life. There was no reason to live any longer. He was at "the end of his rope."

So he bought a gun for one use only: to end his life. He had a former friend who he happened to see, so the new gun-owner told his plan to his friend. His friend said, "John, you don't need a gun, you need Jesus!" That's all he said. But that got the depressed man to thinking. He had not thought about Jesus Christ in a long time! John decided to search the internet for a Bible study course. He found World Bible School. He enrolled online. A Christian lady from Decatur, AL became John's teacher.

After several studies, John sent a message saying he wanted to be baptized. John's teacher found a church of Christ near him, whose members assisted John with baptism and began a friendship with that local church. The members of that congregation came together to nurture that troubled soul. John is now a free Christian with a future; He found freedom from his past; he found a way forward; he found the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He found some friends in that local congregation.

Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) With Jesus, John found a sense of personal worth. John found a great purpose to live for, living for the sake of Christ. John found an eternal inheritance that, like a spring, keeps on gushing forth with hope.

But then, there are cases like Stephen Paddock who killed 58 and wounded 546 people on his way to suicide in Las Vegas, Nevada, USA. How sad and senseless!

How avoidable, if only Stephen could have trusted in the good shepherd of his soul!

What can Jesus do with a person who hates and wants to kill? Kill others; kill himself? Jesus apostle Paul said this to some Christians who were having trouble staying faithful to Christ: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

"Such were some of you!" Some of those Corinthian Christians once led lives that would send them to Hell. Along the way their sins would also cause them great heartache and bankruptcy of spirit. But those Corinthians were rescued. They were rescued when the good news about Jesus Christ came to Corinth Greece! That's right! They had heard and obeyed the gospel of Christ, the good news about salvation!

The Corinthians would not have known about the "washing" without the news of Jesus Christ. They would not have known about the "sanctification" without the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Sanctification is being set apart for a wonderful purpose, a wonderful future.) The Corinthians would never have known about being "justified" except through hearing and obeying the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Being "justified" means forgiveness, acquittal from the guilt and the penalty of sin.) Had Jesus' good news never been preached in Corinth Greece those people would have been lost eternally! But now, they had a chance to change their lives! They had an opportunity to live for God.

The apostle of Christ who brought the Corinthians the news of salvation was once himself a hateful, violent persecutor of the church of Christ. When Paul's name was Saul of Tarsus he persecuted God's church violently and tried to destroy it (Galatians 1:13) Paul said of himself, "I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me." (1 Corinthians 15:9-10) Furthermore, Paul said of those days, "I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me

faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life." (1Timothy 1:12-16)

Friends, is Jesus Christ exercising his "perfect patience" with you? How long will you wallow in the mire of sin? How long will you have heartache upon heartache caused by the sin in your life? How long will you be on the brink of suicide? When will you find acquittal from the law of sin and death? When will you turn your eyes upon Jesus and find hope for your future? The law of God is in force!

"We also know that the law is made **not** for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers--and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me." (1Timothy 1:9-11, NIV)

What does Christ think of you? "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save..." you! Does he think your soul is worth saving? Indeed, that is exactly what he thinks of you! Jesus said, "What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels." (Mark 8:36-38 NIV)

Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) Jesus likened himself to a shepherd who owns his sheep. He is not a hireling shepherd; someone hired to take care of someone else's sheep. No, these sheep belong to Jesus. Jesus said "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep

that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father." (John 10:14-18 ESV)

Are you a person who will listen to Jesus Christ? Jesus says that his sheep hear his voice. That is, Jesus' people will recognize the voice of their shepherd, the one who loves them. Jesus is calling to the world! Are you listening? Are you one of the Lord's sheep?

Jesus Christ can help you overcome your sins. He begins with forgiveness when you are repentant and obedient. Then Jesus gives grace or strength for the long journey. Paul, the hateful persecutor, finally learned that he could "...do all things through Christ" who strengthened him. (Philippians 4:13) Furthermore, Paul knew that he needed Christ all along the way! It wasn't just a one-time salvation, a one-time forgiveness, but Jesus makes a full commitment to carry us through even great suffering all the way to eternity. Paul once said about his goal, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:12-14 ESV)

Jesus said "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." (Matthew 7:24-27 ESV)

Friends, Jesus Christ invites you to hear His words and come to Him. Even today, Jesus is appealing to your heart. Are you stuck? Are you at the end of your rope? Jesus can help you find a new way forward. Jesus has hope for you! Visit a church of Christ near you and begin building on the solid rock of Christ.