

“The Savior and the Sinners”

(Luke 7:36-50)

Introduction

➤ The word “religious” can have two different meanings. On one hand, it can refer to those particular people who strive to live moral and/or spiritual lives. In this sense, religious people faithfully go to “church” (or a place of worship), worship “God” (or god[s]), believe doctrinal or ethical truths, read or study “sacred” texts, sing anthems or worship songs, fellowship in a community of likeminded people, and try to live according to their beliefs. Those who do not practice these things are considered immoral or irreligious.

On the other hand, it can be correctly stated that everyone is religious. For everyone lives by a particular (their own) set of morals and values. Every human being holds to a certain belief system that leads them to live the way they live. Even atheists, and the irreligious (or non-Christians), have places of “worship”, a god(s) to whom they worship, ethical “truths” and standards, “sacred” texts, songs of “worship”, a “community”, and try to live out their “morality.”

➤ The point is this: Everyone is worshipping something or someone! To put it simply, a person worships that which is most important to them – that to which they ascribe supreme worth. The object of one’s worship is fairly easy to identify. Simply find out what they are most passionate about, what they most talk and think about, what they spend most of their time, money, and energy on, what brings them the most fulfillment and joy, what sacrifices they are willing (or not willing) to make.

Common objects of worship, other than the one true God, are hobbies and recreation, fame and fortune, amusement and pleasure, culture and politics, secular psychology and worldly philosophy, relationships and family, and – I think the most prominent is – the worship of self. These, more than mere profession, are better indicators of one’s true religion. For example, the professing Christian who spends very little time, money, or energy on Christian things (i.e., ministry, prayer, Bible, church, etc.) is probably not a true Christian.

➤ Religion is not a bad word. Some object by saying, “Christianity isn’t a religion, it’s a relationship!” In reality, it’s both. Religion merely describes a system of beliefs and worship (Jms.1:27). There are moral religions and immoral religions. Just because a person lives an immoral life does not mean they are not religious, and just because a person is religious does not mean they are moral. And, as we will see today, religious people can be just as unsaved as irreligious people. For true salvation comes not through religion, but through faith in Jesus Christ alone (Jn.3:16-18, 36; 14:6; Acts 4:12).

Luke 7:36-50 ~ “One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table. ³⁷And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, ‘If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.’ ⁴⁰And Jesus answering said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’ And he answered, ‘Say it, Teacher.’ ⁴¹‘A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?’ ⁴³Simon answered, ‘The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.’ And he said to him, ‘You have judged rightly.’ ⁴⁴Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, ‘Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven – for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.’

⁴⁸And he said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ ⁴⁹Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, ‘Who is this, who even forgives sins?’ ⁵⁰And he said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you; go in peace.’”

➤ This biblical narrative, found only in Luke’s Gospel, reveals the truth about every sinner.

A. The Sinners (vs.36-47)

➤ This passage reveals two very different sinners – the immoral sinner and the moral sinner. Or, to put it another way, one who pursued the religion of immorality and one who pursued the religion of morality. In life, they could have hardly been more different: one was a woman, the other a man; one was likely a prostitute, the other was a Pharisee; one had no religious status, the other had a high religious status; one was likely despised in society, the other was likely praised in society; one had a hedonistic religion, the other a self-righteous religion.

➤ They did have one thing in common, however. At the outset of this narrative, they were both totally unsaved. This story took place at the home of a Pharisee named “*Simon*” (vs.40, 43, 44). Simon had “*asked [Jesus] to eat with him*” (vs.36) and so Jesus graciously “*went into the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table*” (vs.36). Simon’s motive for inviting Jesus is not recorded, but his heart toward the sinful woman is painted vividly for us to see.

✓ Illust: “This incident is not to be confused with the later anointing of Jesus by Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (Matt.26:6-13; Mk.14:3-9; Jn.12:1-8). The story recorded in this passage took place in Galilee, not Bethany; the unnamed woman was a sinner (most likely a prostitute, as noted below) not Mary; this anointing happened much earlier in the Lord’s ministry, not during Passion Week, at the house of Simon the Pharisee, not Simon the leper. The only superficial similarity is that the owners of both houses were named Simon. However, Simon was an extremely common name in Israel” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Luke*; 7:36-50).

Sinner #1 ~ “a woman of the city” (vs.37)

➤ The word “*behold*” (*idou*; interj.), in verse thirty-seven, is an interjection which places an emphasis on the following words as an exclamation or strong emotion. This serves to underscore the reality that this woman “*was a sinner*” (vs.37), which suggests her sin was either great or publicly known. Many suggest that she was a prostitute (or adulteress) – especially with the added description of her being “*of the city*” (vs.37), and Simon’s revulsion at “*who and what sort of woman this is who is touching [Jesus]*” (vs.39) – but that is not certain. What is certain is that this immoral and ungodly woman desperately wanted to see Jesus. She had undoubtedly heard about Jesus’ ministry – His miracles and His preaching – and courageously sought Him.

➤ When she “*learned that [Jesus] was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house*” (vs.37), she went to the house and possibly “crashed” the dinner party. Simon’s reaction to her makes it pretty clear that she was not (formally) invited. While her very presence at this dinner may have surprised all the guests, what she did next would have shocked them: she “*brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment*” (vs.37-38).

The “*alabaster flask*” (*alabastron*) was made from an expensive type of marble from Egypt. Even empty, this flask (or jar) would have been valuable. Typically, because the flask itself was so costly and best for preserving perfumes, what was stored in the flask was a very expensive ointment.

This particular “*ointment*” (vs.37, 38, 46; 23:56; *myron*) was “a precious, strongly scented liquid or gelatinous substance used in the ancient world for a variety of purposes, including burial” (William D. Mounce, *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*: “Ointment”). Though probably not the same quantity, or even quality, this is similar to the ointment Mary used to anoint Jesus before His crucifixion (similar but different story):

Mark 14:3-6 ~ “And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. ⁴There were some who said to themselves indignantly, ‘Why was the ointment wasted like that? ⁵For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii [note: typically, a “denarius” was a day’s wage for a common laborer] and given to the poor.’ And they scolded her. ⁶But Jesus said, ‘Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me.’” (see Matt.26:6-10; Jn.12:3-7 [vs.3 “a pound”; vs.4 “Judas”])

- One application for us is this: a true love for Christ is costly. What are you willing, and not willing, to sacrifice to the Lord? Is your love for Christ evident in how you live? Or is your “love” for Christ insincere and contrived? Does your faith in Christ pour out in a sacrifice of praise to God? Or is your “faith” in Christ self-oriented and self-serving. Nothing is too great a sacrifice for the Lord, and nothing that is truly done for Christ is wasted (1Cor.15:58)!

2 Sam 24:24 [Araunah offered to give the site and supplies for David to build an altar] ~“But the king said to Araunah, ‘No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God that cost me nothing. ...’”

- Those who are truly saved by Christ – those who truly understand the Gospel of Christ – are overwhelmed by God’s love and grace, and respond with an outpouring of adulation, affection, and devotion. The sinful woman at Simon’s (the Pharisee’s) house was *“weeping”* (vs.38; *klaioō*; mourning). Keep in mind that Jesus was reclining at the table (vs.36). The woman stood over Jesus’ feet, and the tears flowed out of her eyes and onto His feet. The Greek word translated *“wet”* (vs.38; *brechō*) can literally be translated as rain (see Matt.5:45; Lk.17:29; Jms.5:17; Rev.11:6). “The emotional dam had burst, and her tears flooded down on the feet of Jesus in a gentle rain” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Luke*; 7:37-38). This woman was crying “buckets” of tears, which seem to be genuine expression of repentance – the outpouring of tremendous guilt and shame.

Noticing that her tears *“began to wet his feet”* (vs.38), the woman stooped down and *“wiped them with the hair of her head”* (vs.38). In ancient times, washing someone’s feet was one of the lowliest tasks of a slave (see Jn.13:3-15). To wash someone’s feet with your own tears, and your own hair, would have been viewed as unthinkable degrading. But the woman did not care. She willfully humbled herself before the Lord. Her tears flowed from genuine sorrow for sin (2Cor.7:10).

And she did not stop there. While at Jesus’ feet, she *“kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment”* (vs.38). These kisses were affectionate, not romantic. It [“kissed” (*kataphileō*)] means “to kiss earnestly.” This was the kiss of the father to the prodigal son when he returned (Lk.15:20), and the farewell kiss from the Ephesian elders to the apostle (Acts 20:37), and the hypocritical kiss from Jesus as he betrayed Jesus in the garden (Matt.26:49; Mk.14:45).

The woman not only kissed Jesus’ feet but repeatedly kissed them: *“she has not ceased to kiss my feet”* (vs.45). This was a holy expression of affection and adoration. She realized she was a sinner, and recognized Jesus as the (her) only Savior (vs.50). With a repentant heart, and without words, she humbly and desperately pled for Jesus’ mercy. She knew that she was a great sinner, and she believed that Jesus was a great Savior!

- ✓ Illust: Maria’s husband died not long after the birth of their daughter, Christina. She was forced to raise the girl on her own. When Christina came of age, Maria expected her to help carry the load. But Christina was fixated on life in the big city. Maria did everything she could to warn her daughter. But one morning, she woke up to find Christina and her belongings missing. Maria went to the big city to find Christina. Before she left, she took pictures of herself and placed them everywhere she could in the city. One day, Christina saw a posted picture of her mother. The note on the back read: “Wherever you are, whatever you’ve done, it doesn’t matter. I love you. Come home. Christina did.”

Sinner #2 ~ “the Pharisee” (vs.39)

- In stark contrast is sinner #2 – Simon, the Pharisee: *“Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, ‘If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner’”* (vs.39). With a heart hardened by the religion of self-righteousness, Simon mentally renounced Jesus as the Messiah (or even *“a prophet”*) simply because He appeared to not know that this woman was a sinner. Simon wrongly thought that truly righteous people have nothing to do with sinners. Jesus is clearly more than a prophet, for He not only knew that this woman was a sinner but also knew that Simon was a sinner – and even knew what Simon was thinking (Lk.5:22; 6:8; 11:17)!
- Of course, Simon was unaware that Jesus knew his thoughts, so when Jesus said, *“Simon, I have something to say to you”* (vs.40) Simon quickly answered, *“Say it, teacher”* (vs.40). Simon’s calling Jesus *“teacher”* (*didaskalos*) reveals that, while being respectful, Simon did not regard Jesus as Lord (or even a rabbi). The fact that Jesus knew what he was thinking reveals that Jesus was much more than merely a religious teacher.

Jesus then told him a short and simple parable: *“A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both”* (vs.41-42). The point of the parable is obvious – both are *“debtors”* (*chreopheiletēs*) but the amount of the debts is grossly different. One “denarius” (a silver Roman coin) was equivalent to a day’s wage for a common laborer. Therefore, assuming a six-day workweek, *“five hundred denarii”* would amount to twenty months of wages (almost two years), and *“fifty”* denarii would only amount to about two months wages. The money lender (i.e., God) was gracious and merciful to both debtors (i.e., sinners) even though the first debtor owed ten times more than the second, but the one who owed more money received more forgiveness.

- To see if Simon understood the parable, Jesus asked him, *“Now which of them will love him more?”* (vs.42). Simon knew the answer but seemed to give his answer reluctantly: *“The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt”* (vs.43). Perhaps he did not like where this was going. The point is not that some people are worse sinners, or that others are more righteous (less sinners). While sins vary in severity and number, every sinner is equally deserving of God’s condemnation (even if he is only guilty of *“little”* sins; vs.47; see Gal.3:10; 5:3; Jms.2:10). Absolutely no one merits any righteousness apart from Christ.

The point here is a matter of the sinner’s perspective. Do you think of yourself as less of a sinner than others? Do you think that you deserve salvation more than others? A person’s love for and devotion to Christ – their faith in and faithfulness to Christ – can reveal their true sense of their own sinfulness. Those who think they have been forgiven “little” will have little or no love for God.

- Many of the religious leaders thought they were deserving of God’s grace (at least in part), and that others were not. They believed that others needed God’s grace but did not deserve it, and that they deserved God’s grace but did not need it. They would not repent because they thought they were righteous (apart from Christ). They believed that their ancestry (ethnicity), their observance to the law, their good works – their religion – merited them salvation from God.

Luke 5:29-32 ~ “And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. ³⁰And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, ‘Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’ ³¹And Jesus answered them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ³²I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.’”

Luke 18:9-14 ~ “He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt [*exoutheneō*; lit. to make nothing of; to despise]: ¹⁰‘Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’”

¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.'"

Matt 20:8-16 ~ "And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' ⁹And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹And on receiving it they grumbled [*gongyzō*] at the master of the house, ¹²saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' ¹³But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong [*ou adikeō*]. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. ¹⁵Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge [*ponēros*] my generosity [*agathos*]?' ¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first last."

Matt 20:15 ~ "... Or is your eye evil [i.e., jealous] because I am good?" (NKJV)

- "The ground is level at the foot of the cross." No one deserves God's grace; no one deserves God's mercy; no one deserves God's love. By the grace and power of God, Christians are all equally saved by the righteousness of Jesus Christ (Rom.3:24; 5:21; 2Cor.5:21; Eph.2:8-9).
- To whatever degree, Simon understood the point of Jesus' parable (even though he may not of understood its application to his life). Jesus said to Simon, "*You have judged rightly*" (vs.43). The one who comes to Christ knowing he is utterly depraved and undeserving of God's grace will love God more than the one who thinks he is righteous apart from Christ.

Jesus then showed Simon that the woman's outpouring of love for Christ demonstrated that she knew she needed much forgiveness, and Simon's lack of love for Christ demonstrated that he believed he did not. "*Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven – for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little*'"

- Simon portrays the religiously unsaved. As a Pharisee (vs.36), he would have been devoutly religious, but his rejection of Jesus as the Christ meant that he was utterly condemned. Every Christless religion, and Christless religious pursuit, does not get a people closer to heaven it damns them to hell.

B. The Savior (vs.48-50)

- This becomes obvious as the narrative shifts away from the sinners and onto the Savior. Jesus is done talking with Simon, and turns His attention to the woman. "*And he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.'* ⁴⁹*Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, 'Who is this, who even forgives sins?'* ⁵⁰*And he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace'*" (vs.48-50). In these three verses, we see both the divine authority of Christ and the divine grace of Christ.

His authority ~ "*Your sins are forgiven*" (vs.48)

- When Jesus told the woman, "*Your sins are forgiven*" (vs.48) He was reassuring her that all of her sins have already been completely forgiven ["*forgiven*" (*aphiēmi*; per., pass., ind.)]. He did not say, "May God forgive you" or "I hope you find forgiveness someday." With the divine authority as God, the incarnate Son of God, Jesus had actually forgiven her of all her sins against God.

- All the dinner guests at Simon's house understood exactly what Jesus was saying. *"Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, 'Who is this, who even forgives sins?'"* (vs.49). They knew that Jesus pronounced divine forgiveness. They understood that Jesus was saying, "I forgive you of your sins against God."

Luke 5:20-26 [Jesus healed the paralytic] ~ "And when he saw their faith, he said, 'Man, your sins are forgiven [*aphiēmi*; per., pass., ind.] you.' ²¹And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, 'Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?' ²²When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, 'Why do you question in your hearts? ²³Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven [*aphiēmi*; per., pass., ind.] you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? ²⁴But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins' – he said to the man who was paralyzed – 'I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.' ²⁵And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. ²⁶And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, 'We have seen extraordinary things today.'"

- Only God can forgive sins against God. Jesus pronouncing God's forgiveness would indeed have been blasphemous if He were not Himself God – the incarnate Son of God. He did not merely dismiss her sin – as "no big deal" – He, in effect, said to her: "I will pay the full penalty for your sin!"

2 Cor 5:21 ~ "For our sake [God] made [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (Is.53:4-6; Rom.5:8)

- No one can out-sin God's saving grace (not in nature or in number). This woman was a notoriously sinful woman. And yet Jesus forgave her instantly and completely.

Rom 5:20 ~ "Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more"

1 John 1:9 ~ "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

His grace ~ *"Your faith has saved you"* (vs.50)

- It is also clear that the basis of Jesus' (God's) forgiveness was not works. Jesus did not forgive the woman because of her tears, or her washing, kissing, and anointing His feet. Those were the expression of true repentance, and love for Christ. Jesus clearly stated that it was her *"faith"* (*pistis*) that *"saved"* (*sōzō*; per., act., ind.) her (vs.50). He did not say, "Your tears have saved you" or "Your sacrifice has saved you."

✓Illust: In my opinion, one of the greatest songs ever written is the hymn "Rock of Ages" (written by Augustus Montague Toplady in 1776). The second verse of this hymn poetically addresses the fact that no degree or works or remorse can warrant or merit God's saving grace.

Not the labor of my hands Can fulfill Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know, Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou alone.

- Everyone who is truly saved is saved by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone!

Eph 2:8-9 ~ "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Titus 3:5-6 ~ "he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior"

Gal 2:16 ~ “yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

2 Tim 1:9 ~ “who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began”

- Jesus graciously saved her because of her faith. The woman’s actions did not merit God’s saving grace but revealed that she understood her need for God’s grace and was grateful for God’s saving grace. Her love was the consequence, not the cause, of her salvation.
- He then exhorted her to *“go in peace”* (vs.50; pres., mid., imp.). This is (sneakily) one of the greatest commands a person can ever hear from God! Jesus was not merely saying, “You may go now”, “Don’t worry”, or “Have a nice day.” In this context, Jesus was assuring her that she was reconciled to God.

Jesus assured her that she was no longer under God’s wrath and condemnation; she was no longer at enmity with God and God was no longer at enmity with her. She had been forgiven of both the penalty and the power of sin, by Jesus the *“Prince of Peace”* (Is.9:6). She was no longer guilty, and therefore she no longer needed to be ashamed. While others may still accuse her, God has forgiven her (Rom.8:33).

Christians not only have the peace of God (Jn.14:27; 16:33; Phil.4:4-7), but they also are at peace with God. In fact, no one can truly have the peace of God until they first have been reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Rom 5:1 ~ “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom.5:9-11; 8:7; Col.1:21-22; Jms.4:4)

Conclusion

- The story of the sinful woman, and the Pharisee, is one of many such stories in the Gospel of Luke (see Lk.5:29-32; 15:11-32; 18:9-14; 19:1-10). Such stories dramatically highlight the contrast between Christianity and every other religion or religious pursuit – between the religion of “divine accomplishment” (salvation by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone) and the religion of “human achievement” (the folly of a self-righteous pursuit of salvation, whether by merit or by works).

There are only two kinds of people in the world: 1) Repentant sinners, and 2) Unrepentant sinners. Truly repentant sinners receive Jesus Christ – the one and only Son of God and one and only Savior from God – as their Lord and Savior. The repentant sinner recognizes the depravity of their sinful condition, and the eternal condemnation they justly deserve from God, and they desperately seek God’s forgiveness in and through Christ.

The unrepentant sinner, however, will not truly receive Christ Jesus as the one and only Lord and Savior. They either refuse to believe in the one true God, or they wrongly believe that they are good enough or have done enough good to be saved (forgiven).