

JOHN 8:48-58

JESUS, THE GREAT “I AM”: THE ETERNAL GOD

“The Jews answered [Jesus], ‘Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?’ Jesus answered, ‘I do not have a demon, but I honour my Father, and you dishonour me. Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.’ The Jews said to him, ‘Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, “If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.” Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?’ Jesus answered, ‘If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, “He is our God.” But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.’ So the Jews said to him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’”¹

Jesus was not crucified because He was a good man; He was crucified because He claimed to be God. Unlike many of His current apologists, Jesus’ Jewish antagonists understood quite well what Jesus claimed about Himself. Christians worship Jesus as very God in human flesh. If He is not God, our practise is in grave error, and we are guilty of perpetuating a gross deception. However, since the Word of God presents Him as very God, and since He presented Himself as God, then we sin grievously against Him if we fail to receive Him as God.

The text before us records Jesus’ own words concerning His eternal nature. Both Christians and non-Christians will benefit from reviewing His words. Surely His Words will encourage us in our faith and give us strength to stand firm in the Faith in the face of a fallen world. Undoubtedly, His teaching will rebuke our timid response to the denial of those who denigrate Him as God. Above all, knowing the Saviour more completely will glorify His Name.

THE SETTING FOR THE ACCOUNT — It seems that every time Jesus spoke, there was a religious “Truth Squad” present that attempted to discredit whatever He said. This time was no different. This encounter took place during the Feast of Booths. In earlier sermons we explored two earlier pronouncements Jesus made during this Festival that was observed near the end of His ministry.² Following these statements concerning His Person and His ministry, Jesus taught those present of the freedom that is found in knowing Him. The “Truth Squad” took exception to His teaching and accused Him of being born as result of an immoral relationship [**JOHN 8:41**].

Jesus responded, not with vitriol and vituperation, but with reason. He exposed their ignorance concerning His words because of their lack of relationship to the True and Living God [**JOHN 8:42-45**]; and He exposed their inability to demonstrate that He was either imprecise or errant [**JOHN 8:46**]. Above all, their failure to heed His words was because they had no vital relationship to the Father of Lights [**JOHN 8:47**]. Jesus spoke a significant truth when He said, “Whoever is of God hears the words of God” [**JOHN 8:47a**].

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible, English Standard Version**, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² See Michael Stark, “Jesus, the Great ‘I Am’: ‘I Am the Bread of Life’” and “Jesus, the Great ‘I Am’: ‘I Am the Light of the World,’” <http://newbeginningsbaptist.ca/templates/System/details.asp?id=42652&PID=630598>

That day was now drawing to a close; the Master was still in the Temple. It seems reasonable to conclude that He was still in the Treasury. He had been teaching the crowds, and it is almost certain that many present had deliberately elected to linger in the Treasury because they wanted to hear what this Galilean would say. Some were undoubtedly curious, but others sought to know what was pleasing to the Lord, and therefore they wanted to hear what Jesus might say. When the "Truth Squad" increased the level of invective, and Jesus failed to rise to the bait, rather than driving people away, we can imagine that many were drawn to hear Him.

Whenever Jesus spoke, those who heard were not permitted the luxury of remaining neutral. Either they were stirred by the majestic glory unveiled in His words, or they were repelled by because He exposed their perfidy. In a similar manner, whenever His Word is declared in purity and power today, people are compelled to make a choice to either accept what is said as truth, or to reject it as unsuitable—too difficult or inconvenient—for their lives. Neutrality is not an option when the Word of the Lord is delivered.

Before moving deeper into the message, I want to draw your attention to a truth that is neglected, perhaps even ignored, within many evangelical churches in this day. The religious establishment—the Jewish theologians and those who were intimidated by them—were aggressively hostile to the message Jesus brought. Tragically, the same remains true even in this day. Many theologians, and far too many pastors, are more concerned with being "liked" or "accepted" than with being true to the message of life that is found in Christ the Lord.

Throughout the exchange during this feast, Jesus repeatedly claimed to possess "life" which He offered to all who were willing to come to Him. The theologians were utterly opposed to that message, rejecting it each time He brought the subject up. When you review the claims Jesus made about Himself—"Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water'" [JOHN 7:38], "I am the light of the world" [JOHN 8:12], "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and you will die in your sin" [JOHN 8:21], "if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" [JOHN 8:36], "if anyone keeps My Word, he will never see death" [JOHN 8:51]—you will realise His words have a quality that brooks no appeal. It is not that Jesus provides these desirable aspects of life—He possesses them in Himself. He is the refreshment we need, the light, the life, the freedom that each individual seeks. To embrace Him, submitting to Him as Master of life, ensures that these qualities of life are acquired because we are in Him.

Because of these claims, the Jewish theologians present that day were incensed, reacting with hostility to His Words. I believe the reason they were hostile was that He threatened beloved institutions; and they were more committed to those institutions than to the Living God. Blinded to His claims and to Who stood in their presence, they reacted instinctively.

Before you condemn the Jewish leaders who rejected the Master, ask yourself, If Jesus appeared in your church today, making these claims about Himself, how would He be received? If He challenged our use of a beloved religious symbol—an altar cloth, a communion set, a cross, a hymnal—as He did during the Feast of Booths, would we be enthusiastic about His words, or would we be inclined to fight? Put on the defensive to defend Christendom, our denomination, or our own congregation, instead of the Christian Faith, would we respond to Him with choler, outrage or vehemence? Would we be able to explain the meaning of beloved forms of worship—the hymns and choruses, or the liturgies that mean so much to us? Would we thoughtfully consider the claims that He made, or would we react instinctively to reject His teaching? If Jesus persisted in challenging our beloved institutions, we would be forced either to yield to His claim or argue and resist Him. This was the situation in which the Jewish theologians found themselves; and they responded much as we would respond, I fear.

Unable to answer His logic, they resorted to ad hominem arguments. They first used a racial slur—Jesus was a Samaritan; the second, that Jesus was demonised, required a response. Since Jesus is Lord of all, He did not accept the slander implied when they called Him a Samaritan. In an earlier chapter, He made it evident that He was lord even for the Samaritans [JOHN 4:1-42]. He answered the second charge, which would have been more serious were He to ignore it, by pointing out that if He were demonised He would not seek the Father's glory. However, since He consistently sought honour for the Living God, how could He be demonised? They, on the other hand, by dishonouring Him dishonoured the Father! To dishonour one representing the Father was to dishonour the Father. Jesus draws an emphatic contrast between the two in the original language. What we accomplish through inflection of our voice is performed through the location of the pronouns in the text.

Jesus calmly asserted that He never sought glory for Himself. In fact, He attested that if glory were to be ascribed to Him, it would be because God chose to confer such glory—and He is ultimately the Judge of every action [JOHN 8:50]. Here is a significant truth that we do well to ponder—Jesus sought humility for Himself, leaving glory up to the Father. This is the theme of the hymn Paul cited in his letter to the Philippians. Jesus, “in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” [PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11].

Jesus instructed the disciples, “Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave” [MATTHEW 20:26, 27]. This accords with His commentary, “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” [MATTHEW 20:28]. The threats of the theologians, and the fact that they endeavoured to kill Jesus [JOHN 7:1; 8:37, 40], meant nothing—all that mattered was God's assessment of His service. If Jesus did not seek His own glory, and God honoured Him, then His claim would be upheld. On the other hand, there is an implied warning to the theologians who were accusing Him, for if they promote themselves and God does not agree with their assessment of their own work, then when God judges they will stand condemned. Jesus' statement is that when the Father Judges, He will be vindicated and they will be rejected—He, because He glorified the Father; and they, because they sought their own glory and failed to honour the One whom the Father sent.

JESUS, THE SAVIOUR OF ALL WHO RECEIVE HIS WORD — “Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” This is the Good News that we present: All who believe on Jesus have eternal life. The Master continued by turning immediately, as do all who declare the glorious message of life, to eternal life through knowledge of the Living God. “Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death” [JOHN 8:51].

This raises an issue that is vital for anyone who claims to follow the Master—belief that fails to transform cannot be saving faith. Moments before the events of our text, in JOHN 8:30, we read, “As He was saying these things, many believed in Him.” Yet, when the theologians attacked, many of these “believers” reverted to “wild type,” taking sides with the Jewish leaders. Underscore in your mind the truth that *faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is never alone*. In other words, those who believe and are saved reveal the perfect work of the Master through a righteous life. Those that are unrighteous demonstrate that they have never believed.

Perhaps you will recall the teaching that is presented in John's first Letter. He writes, "No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practises righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practise of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother" [1 JOHN 3:6-10].

What is the Word of Jesus that must be kept? It is to receive the promise of life by believing in the Living Son of God. This is a consistent message throughout John's Gospel. From the earliest chapter we read of Christ's purpose in coming in human flesh. We read that Jesus "came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" [JOHN 1:11-13].

Again, in John's Gospel we are taught, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" [JOHN 3:16]. Believing in Jesus, the only Son of God, secures "eternal life"—a new quality of life that ensures that the one believing will forever be alive in God.

Soon after these words are written, we are told, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" [JOHN 3:36]. Here, believing is equated to obedience. Belief that does not lead to obedience is unbelief. The Word of God warns that disobedience to the truth leads to divine wrath and fury [ROMANS 2:8]. A life that is not transformed brings death, as is testified in Paul's Letter to Ephesian Christians. "Sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" [EPHESIANS 5:3-6].

Returning once more to the words of Jesus' as recorded in John's Gospel, we witness the Master saying, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" [JOHN 5:24]. Believing Jesus' Word is equated with believing God the Father.

We cannot escape the truth that believing Jesus corresponds to obedience to His will. The disobedient—by their disobedience—demonstrate that they never believed. The rebellious—by their rebellion—prove that they never believed. This truth receives a further testimony when the Apostle to the Gentiles wrote, "We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified" [ROMANS 8:28-30]. Faith in the Son of God initiates a journey that leads to glory. For this reason, it is vital that as Christians we avoid being "conformed to this world," but rather that we seek to be "transformed by the renewal of the mind" [ROMANS 12:2].

We are treading on delicate ground in making this assertion. There are many people who are inclined to argue that faith and righteousness are unrelated. They believe one must believe and also make a commitment to Christ's reign—the two actions being separate and unrelated. However, such a contention is foreign to the command of God's Word that teaches of salvation, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved" [ROMANS 10:9, 10].

Those who argue that salvation and commitment are two separate acts are confident that a person may continue to live as a disobedient Christian—often without consequence. But what shall they do with Scripture that says, "These enemies of Christ were in our fellowship, but they left us. They never really belonged to us; if they had been a part of us, they would have stayed with us. But they left, and this shows that none of them really belonged to us" [1 JOHN 2:19].³

A child of God cannot ignore his or her relationship with the Master. To attempt to do so displays ignorance of God's discipline for His own children. The Word of God challenges, "Have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said,

‘My child, don’t make light of the LORD’s discipline,
and don’t give up when he corrects you.
For the LORD disciplines those he loves,
and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.’

As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all" [HEBREWS 12:6-8].⁴

There are other, equally confident individuals, who believe that one may believe only to be lost again, requiring that they again be saved. Though these individuals are not necessarily inclined to teach an infinite series of incidents wherein one is saved and then lost, the practical effect of their teaching is what can only be described as "yo-yo faith." It creates uncertainty in the life of the one who endeavours to follow the Saviour. However, Jesus said that those who keep His Word will "never see death." We dare not quibble with the Saviour, for He is quite clear in presenting life as residing in Him, and those who are born from above cannot be unborn.

As we have witnessed from the Word, there is no segregation of saving faith from commitment to Him as Master over life. He is Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all. There is great news for all who are willing to receive it, and that great news is that Christ Jesus the Lord "is the Saviour of all people, especially of those who believe" [1 TIMOTHY 4:10].

WHEN DID ABRAHAM SEE JESUS' DAY — "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." The Jewish leaders revered Abraham, and he was undoubtedly worthy of their admiration. He was called "the friend of God" [JAMES 2:23; ISAIAH 41:8]. His obedience to God is an inspiration to all who seek to honour the Lord—He truly was "the father of many nations" [GENESIS 17:4] and "the father of all who believe" [ROMANS 4:11]. However, the theologians had transformed Abraham from an inspiration to a talisman, and their descent from Abraham was more important in their estimate than their relationship to the God of Abraham.

³ **The Everyday Bible: New Century Version** (Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, TN 2005)

⁴ **Holy Bible: New Living Translation** (Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, IL 2004)

The question remains, "When did Abraham rejoice to see Jesus' day?" Let's take time to analyse what Jesus said. Jesus uses the aorist tense to inform us of an action that was completed when He says, Abraham "saw [Messiah's Day] and was glad" [JOHN 8:56b]. Abraham rejoiced, so the joy Abraham experienced occurred during his earthly life.

The Rabbis had speculated that Abraham saw the coming Messianic Age. Among the Rabbis, some held that Abraham saw the reign of Messiah. For instance, Rabbi Akiba, in a debate with Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai, held that Abraham had been shown not this world only but the world to come, including the days of Messiah.⁵ While that may be interesting speculation, we need a more realistic explanation of Jesus' words. Likely, we should seek the answer in the *Akedah*, the "Binding," as the Rabbis referred to it, as recorded in Genesis.

You will recall that in GENESIS 22:1, 2, God directed Abraham to sacrifice his son. Early in the morning, Abraham arose, saddled his donkey, and taking two of his servants together with Isaac, he set out for the place where God had appointed that he was to offer up Isaac, his son. After a three-day journey, the little troop arrived at the mount appointed by God for the sacrifice of Isaac. Abraham directed his servants to remain with the donkey while he and Isaac began the trek up the mountain—Isaac carrying the wood, and Abraham carrying the fire and a knife.

Trudging up the mountain, Isaac queried his father, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering" [GENESIS 22:7]? It was at this point that Abraham uttered one of the great statements of faith that marks him as a spiritual giant. He responded to Isaac, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son" [GENESIS 22:8].

When Abraham and Isaac came to the place where the sacrifice was to be offered, Abraham built the altar, arranged the wood on the altar, bound Isaac and placed him on the altar. Then, lifting the knife to offer Isaac's life, Abraham was restrained at the last moment by the intervention of "the angel of the LORD." That angel was likely none other than the preincarnate Son of God, for He speaks as God when He says, "I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me" [GENESIS 22:12].

Looking up, Abraham saw "a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns." So, Abraham took the ram that God had indeed provided for Himself, and "offered it up as a burnt offering" [GENESIS 22:13]. Because of this, Abraham would thereafter refer to the place as *Yahweh Yir'eh*, "the LORD will provide" [GENESIS 22:14]. Older translations of the Bible transliterated the name, *Jehovah Jireh*. Ever after, the site would be a reminder to all who pursue God, seeking His will, that He will provide all that is necessary to honour Him. It is an axiom of the Faith that if God calls, God will provide; if God appoints, God will supply.

Then, "the angel of the LORD" spoke a second time to Abraham, again revealing His identification as the Living God, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of His enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" [GENESIS 22:16-18].

This incident is one of the references in the chapter concerning faith found in Hebrews. "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back" [HEBREWS 11:17-19]. In obedience to God and by faith, Abraham saw that God would provide a Saviour—the lamb Who was to be slain.

⁵ See marginal notes on the verse in **The NET Bible** (Biblical Studies Press, 2006)

Jesus was speaking to the Jewish theologians, presenting Himself as the source of life. "If anyone keeps My Word, he will never see death" [JOHN 8:51]. "If anyone keeps My Word, he will never taste death" [JOHN 8:52b]. His focus was life, though the focus of the leaders was personal power. It is consistent with the flow of His teaching that He was referring back to Abraham's witness of such a vivid demonstration what God had planned through the Messiah. Christ came to provide His life as a sacrifice for sinful man, and all who believe in Him receive life. Abraham saw this, and he rejoiced.

We, also, rejoice in the knowledge that sins are forgiven and life is provided in Christ the Lord. Yes, it is through believing Him and embracing His Word that we have life in the Saviour. As we submit to His rule in our life that we receive joy as well. Let me say, before moving toward a conclusion, that whenever a professing Christian says she has no joy in her service, she has lost touch with Christ who is life. For when we live in Him, obeying His Word and doing those things that honour Him, we enjoy His power and His peace and real joy.

JESUS, THE ETERNAL GOD — "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." Jesus boldly and patently claimed to be the Living God, as is evident from the response of those who heard Him but did not believe Him. When we unpack His words, Jesus said, "Before Abraham ever existed, I AM." He was making no mere claim as to His age; rather, He was presenting Himself as the True and Living God. Jesus, the True and Living God, has no beginning and shall have no end, for He is.

The reason Jesus can make the claim that those who keep His Word will never see death, is that He is Master over death. He is Master over death because He is the eternal God. Though there are a plethora of theologians who question His deity, and though there are even more who live as though He were not God, the Bible is quite clear that Jesus is God. Certainly, the Jewish theologians that heard Him that day understood that He was claiming to be the Eternal God.

Though cultists deny the divinity of Jesus, those who wrote of Him had no hesitation in ascribing to Him the qualities of deity. As John began the Gospel that bears his name, he wrote, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men" [JOHN 1:1-4].

Some individuals are so disturbed by John's clear statement that they reject what is written without thinking. I worked in one laboratory under the tutelage of a professor who wanted to discuss religious issues. However, he attempted to impose the condition that I could not quote from the Gospel of John, because he said it was so biased against the deity of Jesus. Actually, he was quite ignorant of the Bible, and so I frequently quoted what John wrote whenever we conducted our conversations.

That professor was not unlike many cultists who reject the initial verses of John's Gospel. Some wish to transform "the Word" into a demigod, perhaps even allowing that He is an "exalted being," but they deny that John is making such a strong statement as to claim deity for the Son of God. However, biblical scholars are unanimous in asserting that John here makes the bold, unapologetic claim of full deity for Jesus. That first verse, provided in one newer translation with supporting marginal notes for the translation, reads, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God."⁶ John is not claiming mere divinity, as modern English understands the term; He is pointedly making the affirmation that Jesus is very God in human form.

⁶ The NET Bible

Evidence of John's intent is given a few verses later, "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. We gazed on his glory, the kind of glory that belongs to the Father's unique Son, full of grace and truth. John told the truth about him when he cried out, 'This is the person about whom I said, 'The one who comes after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.'" From his fullness we have all received one gracious gift after another. For while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The unique God, who is close to the Father's side, has revealed him" [JOHN 1:14-18].⁷

In strongest terms, John claims that Jesus is God the Son. This was a claim that Jesus would make repeatedly. Certainly, in the text before us, the Jewish theologians understood Jesus' claim, because when He had spoken, "They picked up stones to throw at Him" [JOHN 8:59], but Jesus masked Himself from their sight, because it was not yet time to give His life in sacrifice. On another occasion, he again presented Himself as God, with the same response from the Jewish theologians. "The Jews gathered around him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.'

"The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, 'I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?' The Jews answered him, 'It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.' Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your Law, "I said, you are gods"? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, "You are blaspheming," because I said, "I am the Son of God"? If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father'" [JOHN 10:24-38].

Listen to Paul's assessment of Jesus. Writing Roman Christians, the Apostle says of Jesus, "To [the Jews] belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is *God over all*, blessed forever. Amen" [ROMANS 9:5]. Again, writing to Titus, Paul states that "The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. It trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, as we wait for the happy fulfillment of our hope in the glorious appearing of *our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ*. He gave himself for us to set us free from every kind of lawlessness and to purify for himself a people who are truly his, who are eager to do good" [TITUS 2:11-14].⁸

In verse 13, when Paul speaks of "our great God and Saviour," both terms refer to the same person, Jesus Christ. In the Greek language, the construction adheres to what is known among Greek scholars as the Granville Sharpe rule. That rule states that when two nouns are singular, personal and common, they always have the same referent. In other words, Paul makes one of the strongest possible affirmations that Jesus is God and Saviour.

⁷ International Standard Version New Testament; Version 1.1, Print on Demand ed. (The Learning Foundation, Yorba Linda, CA 2000)

⁸ The NET Bible

The same construction is found when Peter opens his second letter to Jewish Christians. "Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

"To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of *our God and Saviour Jesus Christ*" [2 PETER 1:1].

Peter could not have made the case more positive for the deity of Jesus. He is our God, and He is our Saviour. Without apology, Jesus is God.

So what? It is this simple. God the Son loves you, and gave His life because of your sinful, helpless condition. Jesus provided the infinite sacrifice to make atonement for your sin. There is no sin so great that you could be excluded from the grace of God. He provided a perfect sacrifice, and no one need be condemned on that basis. In fact, the only reason anyone will be excluded from the grace of God is because they refuse to accept the sacrifice that was provided. This is the reason Paul says of Jesus' sacrifice and the salvation offered through faith in Him, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" [2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-21].

The invitation of God is extended to all who are willing to receive this Jesus as Master and Saviour. "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and if you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you will be saved. We believe with our hearts, and so we are made right with God. And we declare with our mouths that we believe, and so we are saved. As the Scripture says, 'Anyone who trusts in him will never be disappointed.' That Scripture says 'anyone' because there is no difference between those who are Jews and those who are not. The same Lord is the Lord of all and gives many blessings to all who trust in him, as the Scripture says, 'Anyone who calls on the Lord will be saved'" [ROMANS 10:9-13].⁹

May God grant His mercy and His great salvation to all who seek Him this day. Amen.

⁹ New Century Version