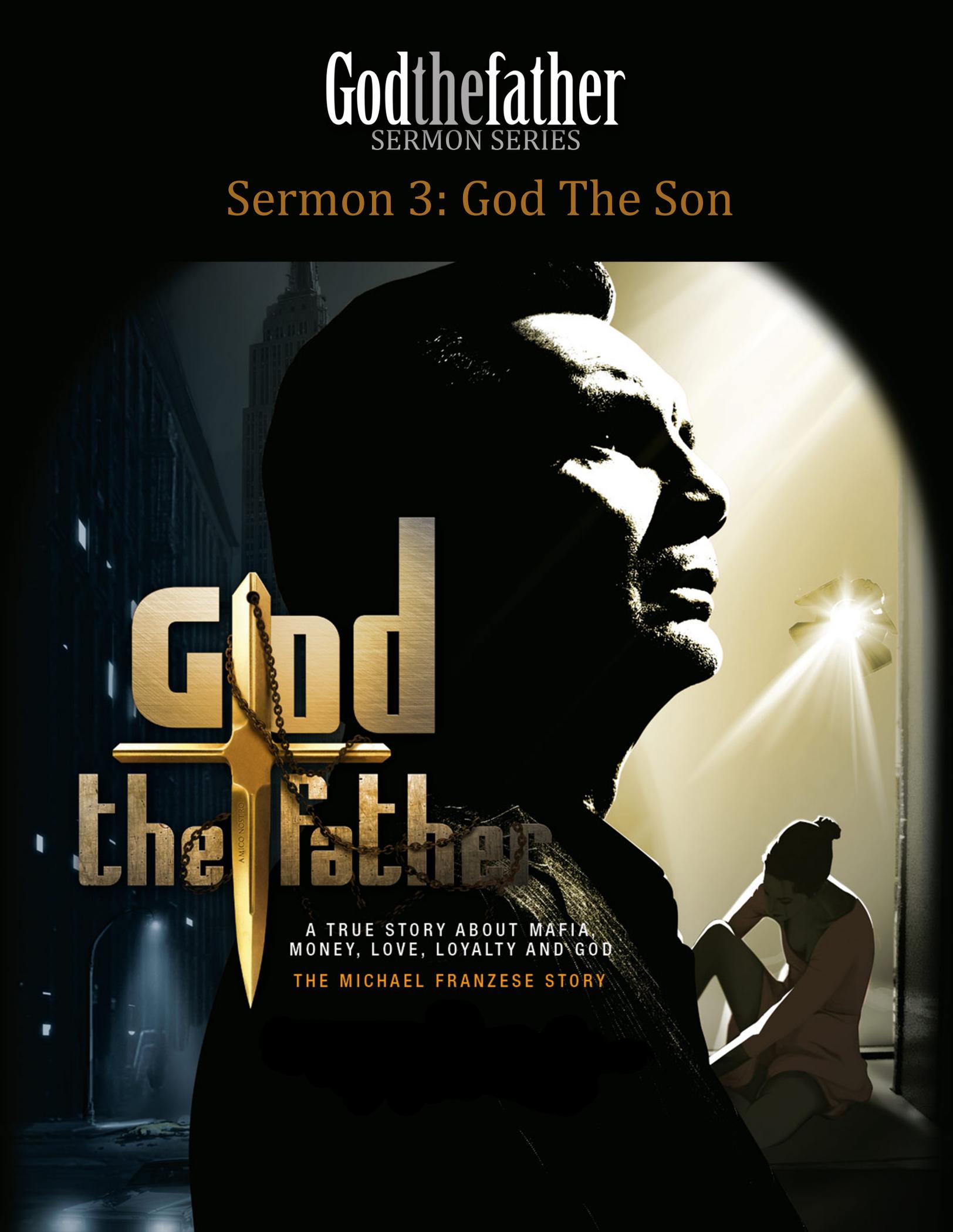


# God the father

SERMON SERIES

## Sermon 3: God The Son



# God the father

A TRUE STORY ABOUT MAFIA,  
MONEY, LOVE, LOYALTY AND GOD

THE MICHAEL FRANZESE STORY

## ***God the Father: The Son***

Good morning!

We're finishing our three-part series today on the Trinity, and we're doing that by looking at a new film called ***God the Father***.

It's pretty unique; it's about a real-life mobster named Michael Franzese who miraculously came to faith in Jesus Christ. Perhaps some of you have heard of him or read his books.

For the last two weeks we've been talking about the Trinity, how the Godhead is three-in-one, analogies of that truth, and verses about the Triune God we see in the Bible.

So how does this mob movie relate to the Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit?

Well, in a small way we see that Michael Franzese is a Trinity analogy himself...a son to one of the worst criminals in prison today, Sonny Franzese...a father to his three daughters...and a husband to his wife Cammy, who we learned last week had a mother named Irma who prayed for Michael's salvation.

But more than that simple illustration of one man being a son, a father, and a husband, we saw over the last two weeks how each part of the Trinity played a powerful role in his conversion.

We looked at God the Father...a natural fit for Michael's occupation in the Mafia and the title of his movie, and then God the Holy Spirit...how He (not an "It") convicted Michael of his sin while locked away in prison.

Today we will look at God the Son, Jesus Christ, and how He got Michael's attention and, like the Apostle Paul, turned his life around to where his ministry is now reaching thousands of people with the gospel.

Before we get started, let's take a closer look at this man who actually lived ***The Godfather*** movie that I'm sure we've all seen with Al Pacino and Marlon Brando. For Michael, it was not Hollywood and cameras; it was his daily routine to actually live the movie.

So here's the trailer for this remarkable and true story about Michael Franzese, ***God the Father***:

[God The Father Trailer](#)

Isn't that something? If you liked the Oscar-winning movie from the 70's, then this movie will be right up your alley because, as I said, it's not fiction. ***God the Father*** is the real deal. And it's all the better because it's a tribute to what Jesus Christ can do to anyone who believes in Him.

And I mean anyone...your parents, your kids, your boss, even your crusty old grandpa who's lost in a works-based religion. If Jesus can save Michael Franzese, then you have reason to hope, pray, and believe for those you love, too.

And now, let's take a look at our final Person of the Trinity: God-in-the-flesh, Jesus the Nazarene.

## **His Move**

Jesus' first move was from Heaven to Earth, on the very first Christmas, predicted by Micah (5:2), but after He grew up He headed back to His hometown. Luke picks up the story:

*“He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’”*

*Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, ‘Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing (Luke 4:16-21).’”*

This reading launched the ministry of Jesus to his hometown...and also finished it. All in one day. In that single reading, just eight words, He claimed to be the Messiah, Immanuel, God with us, God-in-the flesh—and those who knew Him just lost it. They ran Him out of town!

*“‘Truly I tell you,’ he continued, ‘no prophet is accepted in his hometown. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.’”*

*All the people in the synagogue were **furious** when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way (Luke 4:24-30).’”*

Have you ever wondered why it's so hard to speak with your family and friends about the gospel? Take heart; even Jesus was rejected by those who knew Him best.

And what can we learn from this rejection?

Perhaps that "*familiarity breeds contempt*," an old adage that means the more you know someone, the less impressed you are with them because you think you know them...and all their weaknesses and warts.

Those who thought they knew Jesus were first impressed by His teaching and miracles (Mark 6), then were offended when He was critical of them citing Elijah and Elisha's stories that bypassed the Jews. They thought they knew Him so well, they dismissed Him with scorn for His brazen claim of deity.

You might think, "How stupid of them", but we all need to heed this warning, because many of us have heard about Jesus so much and for so long that we may disregard what Jesus has to say this morning. This message may change your life, depending on your faith.

I pray that He will not be amazed at you. One of the most astounding verses in the Gospels, in my opinion, says in Mark 6:6, "*He was amazed at their **lack** of faith.*"

I wonder what it was like to approach Your creation, tell them the truth, and then be driven away? God-in-the-flesh, the second person in the Trinity, rejected before He could even begin His ministry to them. How sad. And what was that ministry exactly?

## Why He Came

*"Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.*

*When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.' So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.*

*All the people saw this and began to mutter, 'He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.'*

*But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.'*

*Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. **For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost** (Luke 19:1-10).'*"

Jesus came looking for lost sheep to rescue, as the Good Shepherd, to lay down His life for us.

Like Michael Franzese, Zacchaeus was a crook, a tax collector, and tax collectors were known for skimming off the top what was due to Rome, their employer. In a very prosperous trade route city like Jericho, there was a lot of money to be made.

Everyone came through Jericho, and Zacchaeus had a good thing going. It was his scheme, just like Michael Franzese had his scheme with big oil, which brought in hundreds of millions of dollars for the Mafia.

So this was how tax collectors made their money, but when Zacchaeus heard Jesus' words, he was moved inside and repented by returning quadruple the amount he stole from people! That is true repentance...a change of heart in actions.

What grabbed Zacchaeus' heart like that? It was Jesus' words, words of life that we have recorded now in the Bible to show us what He did for us. He "*came to seek and to save the lost.*" And how did He do that exactly?

## **What He Did**

*"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. **God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God** (2 Corinthians 5:18-21)."*

Jesus entered a world that was separated from God. It was broken. He came to bridge that gap caused by our sin. And for that reconciliation to happen, a righteous God had to punish sin, or He wouldn't be righteous. He'd be "on the take," to use a mob term.

So God, in the greatest love display ever seen, made Jesus become sin, and then punished Him instead of us and in our place, so that we could then be holy, as righteous as God Himself. Let's read that INCREDIBLE verse again.

*"God made him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*

This may be the most astonishing truth in the New Testament! God-the Son became sin in order to make us as righteous as God-the Father.

If that were not true, it would sound cultish or blasphemous. Imagine...you can be as righteous and holy as the God of the universe, as Jesus Himself. WOW!

We call this theological term **imputation**, which is defined as “*designating any action or word or thing as reckoned to a person. Thus, in doctrinal language (1) the sin of Adam is imputed to all his descendants, i.e., it is reckoned as theirs, and they are dealt with therefore as guilty; (2) the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them that believe in him, or so attributed to them as to be considered their own; and (3) our sins are imputed to Christ, i.e., he assumed our 'law-place,' undertook to answer the demands of justice for our sins.*”

This is most clearly explained by Paul in his letter to the Romans (5:12-19),

*“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone’s account where there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.*

*But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man’s sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!”*

*Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made **righteous.**”*

That is what He did, my friends. He imputed His righteousness to us. The Holy One of God took upon Himself all the wretched sin that ever was—past, present, and future—and then took God’s righteous wrath for it all so that we could become holy and perfect in His sight.

What was it like for Jesus to be separated from His Father and experience our Hell in those three hours on the cross? Thankfully, we will never know. And that’s what Michael discovered, too.

Alone in his prison cell, Michael Franzese realized his hopeless condition. Let's take another look at the film, *God the Father*:

**Film Clip 1:15:37 to 1:19:38 (Michael meets the Son)**

What did it take for Jesus to get Michael's attention? It took complete and utter brokenness. I hope the symbolism of that broken mirror wasn't missed by you in that scene. That was Michael, a broken image. When we are flat on our back, totally without any hope, the only place to look is up.

Friends, if you have it all right now, you don't need Jesus. That's what Michael thought. He had everything the world could offer. That may be what you're thinking now if you are not a Christian. Who needs religion? That's for real criminals. I'm good enough.

You're wrong. No one is good. As Jesus said in Matthew 19:16-24,

*"Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, 'Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?'*

*'Why do you ask me about what is good?' Jesus replied. 'There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.'*

*'Which ones?' he inquired.*

*Jesus replied, 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'*

*'All these I have kept,' the young man said. 'What do I still lack?'*

*Jesus answered, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'*

*When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.*

*Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, **it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.**'"*

Now remember Zacchaeus was wealthy and he believed, so Jesus doesn't mean that being rich means you won't get saved. It just means that if you have everything, it's much harder to see your need. Who needs help or a Savior when you have everything you need and more?

Jesus calls you a fool.

*"And he told them this parable: 'The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant*

harvest. He thought to himself, “What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.”

‘Then he said, “This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’”

‘But God said to him, “**You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?** (Luke 12:16-20)”’”

## Your Move

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve (1 Corinthians 15:3-5).”

Sometimes we miss the simplicity of the message Jesus brought in the gospel. It gets muddy when so many religions have so many sacraments, rules, and systems, but just look at it from His perspective.

If Jesus went to so much trouble to burst into our world and then let Himself be murdered on a cross for our sins, would He complicate the message...the gospel...that saves us? Would He make it hard to understand?

I think He would make it so simple, even a child could understand it, don’t you?

Consider Thabiti Anyabwile, senior pastor at First Baptist Church in Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands, who explains the gospel as simply as you can.

### [The Gospel](#)

Pretty simple, isn’t it? You don’t have to do anything; no work or effort is required. Paul said as much to the churches in Galatia.

“For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for **if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!** (Galatians 2:19-21)”

Think about that. If we can be good enough for a holy God by what we do—works of righteousness like charity and service—then Jesus was wrong. He came for no purpose. His beatings, torture, and death were of no consequence. He died for nothing!

Look at Isaiah 64:6:

*“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and **all** our righteous acts are like **filthy rags** (to a holy God). . .”*

The Hebrew word for “*filthy rags*” means our very best effort is a woman’s menstrual cloth to a holy God, bloody and soiled beyond any use for righteousness.

If you do not know for sure you’re going to Heaven, my prayer today is that you will find the deliverance made available to you in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If He can forgive Michael Franzese and turn his life around, surely He can do the same for you.

And He can do that today, right now, as 2 Corinthians 6:2 says: “*For he says, ‘In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.’ I tell you, **now** is the time of God’s favor, **now** is the day of salvation.*”

Don’t be a fool. You have no assurance you will live even one more day. **Now** is the time of God’s favor. **Now** is the day of salvation.

Let’s pray.