

Acts 13:13-52 "Total Forgiveness"

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 September 2024

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 0 0] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah. It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Let's just bow our heads in prayer. Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would continue to move with might and power and deep conviction upon us as we think about your Word.

guide us and lead us into all truth. Grant us wisdom and discernment. And we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

So I did my training in a downtown Anglican church, Anglican Church of Canada Church. And then after I was ordained, I spent three years as an assistant curator, as a curate in an Anglican Church of Canada suburban church. And then after I'd been there for three years, I went and had my first churches where I was the rector, the senior pastor. I looked after four little tiny churches out in the country, a place called Eganville, a place called Killaloo. Eganville had about 1,200 people. Killaloo, 700 people.

[2 : 1 3] Clontarf and Traymore, they're now just bends in the road. And no community around them whatsoever. And I'm a city guy. I was raised in Montreal. We moved to Ottawa. I lived in Ottawa. Then we went into the country. And after I'd been there a short while, I realized one of the big differences, there's lots of differences between country, rural Canada, small town, rural Canada, and cities. And by the way, all of those places, they're far enough away from Ottawa that in those days, nobody commuted to Ottawa. This was a complete rural-based economy. And in both of the churches that I'd been at before, the Anglican Church of Canada churches, probably a significant number of people in the church fundamentally didn't believe the Bible. And by that I mean is they probably would have just said, well, that's just what the Bible says, but there you go. You know, heard that. Let's just move on.

That's really no particular authority or high respect for it. Maybe a respect for it as part of our tradition, our heritage, but beyond that, not really thinking it has any special claim on truth.

One of the things I discovered in Eganville and Killaloo is most people had a basic respect for the Bible. Didn't mean they lived it. In fact, I think at the time that I was there, Renfrew County, that's the county I was in, that had the, of all the counties in Ontario, the highest percentage of, they had the highest alcoholism rate in the province of Ontario. And by the way, when men, when men told me that, it wasn't as if they were embarrassed about it either. Almost it was a point of pride that they had the highest alcoholism rate in Ontario. But they had a basic fundamental respect for the Bible. And it can be illustrated even in a very funny, ironic way. My wife and I had been in this, in Eganville, I don't know, a year or two. And we went to a wedding reception.

I'd done the wedding and we went to the reception. It was a big, big, big, big country reception. And this, this inebriated fellow comes up to me, you know, moving to some wind that only he felt.

And he starts talking to me. And in particular, he started talking to me about this guy that did something wrong to him. And he told me that he was going to go and punch him out. And then he said, but don't worry, Padre. I'm just doing what the Bible says. He probably saw my surprise look.

He said, says in the Bible, vengeance is fine, saith the Lord. So I'm just doing what the Bible tells you.

[4 : 41] So if you're not familiar with the Bible, it doesn't say vengeance is fine. It says vengeance is mine, the exact opposite of what he wanted to do. But it's sort of interesting. He felt he had to reassure me he was being biblical, even when he was going to go punch somebody out. So the text that we're going to look at today is a summary or an outline of how Paul talked to people who respected the Bible.

That's how we can understand it. Later on in the book of Acts, you're going to get outlines of how he talked to people who had basically no knowledge whatsoever of any of the Old Testament or Jesus. We're going to get some ways as to how he spoke to them. But here we're having sort of an outline, a prairie, as to how he would speak to people who had a basic respect for the Bible.

And so on one hand, on one hand, it doesn't really help us to think about how we would talk to people outside the door. Although on another hand, it actually has something very profound to help us speak to people outside that door, because it talks about something very, very, very unique about the Christian message. And it also has some very profound insights about two great concerns that the average Canadian has, namely how to know and make sure that they're a good person and how to forgive themselves. And this text actually has something quite profound and I think wise to speak to those issues. So if you take your Bibles, we're looking at Acts chapter 13. Acts chapter 13, and we're beginning at verse 13. It's a big chunk of the Bible today. Hopefully we'll be able to get through it. I might have to skip a little bit, but I'm not going to, as you're going to see, I'm not going to skip any of the problematic things, but hopefully we'll get through the whole thing. Acts chapter 13, beginning at verse 13, and here's how it goes.

Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos. So they're on their first missionary journey, the very first missionary journey in the history of the Jesus movement of Christianity. They've been to Cyprus. And verse 13, now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia, and John left them and returned to Jerusalem. I just have to pause here for a second. So first of all, they've left Cyprus and they go to what we now call Turkey. And hear this little phrase about John leaving them. What Luke is doing here is signaling something, but you don't necessarily, it doesn't jump out at you, but it's signaling something very important. The area that they're going to is where, those of you who know the Bible, the book of Galatians is written a couple of years after this to the church that in Antioch of Pisidia, which is where Paul is going. And so what you know, if you read that letter, and if you read some other parts of the book of Acts, two very, very hard things are happening to Paul in this simple verse. It's, you know, it's very easy for us to sort of look back at the Bible, especially the book of Acts, and think that somehow or another these are superhuman type of people and their life has nothing to do with yours, but it's quite the opposite.

[7 : 47] So what we discover from Galatians is that part of the thing that Paul is struggling with is he has a very, very, very serious illness. So he's making a hundred mile walk, it's 160 kilometers, 160 kilometer walk while very, very ill. And by the time he arrives in Antioch, he's very ill.

The other thing is not only is he dealing with a very serious physical problem, he's also dealing with a deep sense of betrayal. Because as you'll discover later on in the book of Acts, John, who we now know primarily as Mark, who wrote the gospel of Mark, he leaves Paul and Barnabas.

And Paul views it as a profound act of betrayal. A profound act of betrayal. And it's really important for us just to pause and think about this for a second. You see, the Bible doesn't promise God, the triune God doesn't promise his children that they won't have hard times.

Idols promise you that you won't have a hard time. But the Bible doesn't. And so this is a, this is Paul and Barnabas persevering in a very, very hard and difficult time. Now it's also, if you know this about Mark and John, one of the wonderful big stories is that Mark is the final word about Mark is not betrayal. He will go on to write the gospel of Mark and he and Paul will again become companions and partners in ministry. But at this point in time, there is an act of betrayal. And we all know what it's like to deal with, some of us don't know what it's like to deal with serious illness. Some of us do. And some of us also know what it's like to deal with betrayal. And that's what's going on as they walk to where they're going.

Well, the story continues. Verse 14. By the way, I'm going to, not every verse will take that long to get through. Verse 14. But they went from Perga and came to Antioch and Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day, and on the, sorry, and in the Sabbath day, they went into the synagogue and sat down. After reading from the law and the prophets, another way of referring to what we call the Old

Testament or the Tanakh, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, that's Paul and Barnabas, saying, brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it. So Paul stood up and motioned with his hand, in other words, for quiet. Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen, you who fear God are people who are pagans, who are in the process of stopping living as pagans and living under the Jewish law, but they're not circumcised. So that's who they are. So men of Israel and you who fear God, listen, the God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt. And with uplifted arm, he led them out of it. Now just sort of pause here.

[10:52] So remember I said this is an outline or a sort of a structure about how Paul probably spoke about Jesus when he had his first go at people who had a basic respect for the Bible. And what he's going to do in this very first section can be illustrated to us in something which is very important for us spiritually. And it's captured very wonderfully in one of the collects, which I forgot to look up the number. But here's the basic principle. God is more willing to speak to you than you are to listen to him. God is more willing to listen to you than you are to speak to him. And God is more willing to act than you are to want him to. Now this is very important. It's very counterintuitive to our flesh.

It's a very common thing for people to wonder, you know, I pray and pray and pray and God doesn't seem to listen. You know, why doesn't God speak to me and give me direction? Why doesn't God act? That's a very, very common thing for us to think and feel. But the message of the Bible is that, you know, in a sense, it's telling us now something that God will tell us face to face when we see him in the new heaven and the new earth. That if God was in a sense to replay your life, just rewind it, you know, bring you into a theater and you play rewind your life in front of you, he'll just go, look, I was willing to listen, listening. I was willing, willing, willing, willing, willing, never spoke. I was speaking, speaking, speaking, speaking. You were going around like this.

I was willing to do those things and I knew in your heart you didn't want me to do those things for you. That in fact, the initiative is always on God's part. That God, in fact, the God that really does exist, the God that is the triune God that's revealed by Jesus and the scriptures is a God who's always more willing to speak to you and me than I am to listen. He's always more willing to listen to me than I am to speak and he's always more willing to act than I am willing to let him act.

And we're going to get that basic idea in a series of statements as Paul is going to describe what happens from the time that Israel and Joseph and his brothers enter into the land of Egypt up until just a few years ago. Listen to the verbs. I'll read verse 17 again. Listen to the verbs, okay? I'm going to emphasize them. The God of this people chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt. And with uplifted arm, he led them out of it. And for about 40 years, he put up with them in the wilderness. And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. Now just pause. God just said here that God destroyed seven nations to give the land of Israel as an inheritance. And if this was any other Sunday other than today, I would probably take a big part of the sermon to talk about this. I'm not going to say anything about it right now. You know why I'm not going to say anything about it? Not because I'm afraid to talk about it. Because Paul Copen is going to talk about this very topic on Friday night and Saturday morning, and you should go hear him if you have questions about it. He's written books on the subject.

So if you're curious, go hear Paul Copen Friday night, Saturday morning. Ask him your hardest questions. He's written several books on the subject. So I'm not going to say anything about it. And by the way, he will be here on Sunday preaching at the 10 o'clock service. And he's going to preach on one of those, another difficult text in the Old Testament, Psalm 137, by the waters of Babylon, we sat down and wept by the willows there, we played our harps. And that's a very, very beautiful psalm. And then it ends with smashing babies' heads against rocks. And it's a very, very hard text.

[14:39] And he's going to preach on that. And he'll be available for coffee afterwards, where if you want, you can have grilled Paul Copen after the service. Anyway, back to this. Notice the verbs. Back to verse 20. All this took place about 450 years ago. Sorry, all this took place about for 450 years. And after that, God gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. Then they asked for a king. We finally get people actually asking for something. And God gave them Saul, the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin for 40 years. And when God had removed him, God raised up David to be their king. And then God testifies and says, I have found in David the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who will do all my will of this man's offspring. God has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus,

as he promised.

Now just sort of pause here for a second. So you see from the verbs, that's the first thing that Paul's going to try to do. He's trying to deal with, in fact, a common human problem, especially for those of us who have some sense of what the Bible is, and maybe some respect for Christianity. We have a deep prejudice that somehow, really, we know that we're trying our best. We're not sure if God's trying his best. We know that we're really trying to do things. We don't know if God's trying to do things.

And it might surprise people, if you're here and you're outside the Christian faith, you might be surprised to know that that's a problem for Christians. And so Paul's going right after it. No, no, no. No, no. Look, look, just think about the history. Just think about your history.

Just think about the verbs. Who's doing what? God is more willing to act for his people than we are willing to let him. He's more willing to speak than we are to listen. He's more willing to listen than we are to speak to him. That's who we're dealing with. Now, I don't know, 70, 80 years ago, there was a man by the name of C.S. Lewis, who's famous nowadays primarily for having written the Narnia Chronicles. And he wrote a talk at a university. He did a very interesting talk called Myth Became Fact. And he talked a little bit about how in Jesus you can see that all these ancient myths in imperfect ways were pointing to Jesus and that what you see in Jesus is the best part of these myths. They actually become fact. And what Paul is going to do now, he's going to move, in a sense, into something similar. He's going to say that the promises of God have now become a fact of history.

So he goes from, in a sense, our spiritual issue and the heritage, all these things God has done, he now, in a sense, brings them up to the present day. And he's going to talk about how these promises of God that he has been making for centuries have, in fact, now become a fact of history. Look at what he says. It continues on. We'll say verse 23 again. Verse 23.

[17:52] Of this man's offspring, that's David, God has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus, as he promised.

Before Jesus' coming, John, in this case it's John the Baptist, John the Baptist had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John the Baptist was finishing his course, he said, what do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but behold, after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie. Now just pause here for a second.

You might say, well, George, you know, I know the Bible a little bit, and I mean, John the Baptist is just an internal Bible character. Well, no, that's actually not, I mean, that is, in fact, true.

But, you know, the other day at a funeral, I said something which I've said in many places at different times, which catches people by surprise. Do you know that there's really, really, really good historical evidence to say that Jesus rose from the dead on one of two dates? And I think that the evidence points to the fact that on April 5th, 33, Jesus rose from the dead. The other date is in the year 30. And people can differ over which one of the two dates is the better choice. And you might say, what, like, really? What? Like, isn't it just all like religious stuff? No, no, there's really good historical reasons to believe that the date of the resurrection is the 5th of April of the year 33. And the reason is, is that the New Testament has so many cross-references with secular history. So even here, we shouldn't think of John the Baptist as mainly just being a biblical character.

[19:44] John the Baptist was famous at the time and was recorded by sources outside of Christianity. He's recorded historically. He's a well-known historical figure. Just as when Paul mentions casually that he studied under Gamaliel, if you go to an Orthodox Jewish synagogue and say, was there in the old days a rabbi named Gamaliel? And they'll say, of course there was.

We still study his thinking. Like, he's a well-known historical character. And so John now, so Paul is now bringing something to the fore of a, well, even probably an Antioch.

And he's also doing something else, which I've talked about in other weeks, that if people wanted to go check out whether or not Paul is just, you know, making up stuff, they can go and they can go to Jerusalem and they can ask around, you know, about these different types of things. So anyway, and you'll notice there that it's promised, that a savior has been promised. And then he's bringing in John the Baptist, who's very famous. And John the Baptist said, listen, I'm not this prophet that's been promised. In fact, I'm pointing to you to the guy who's so much greater than me that I can't even be, I can't even, I'm not even worthy in and of myself to touch his sandals. And then it continues in verse 26. Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers,

because they did not recognize Jesus, nor did they understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, they fulfilled the utterances of the prophets by condemning Jesus. And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, another reference to an Old Testament way of understanding the cross, and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead. God raised him from the dead. God raised him from the dead. [22 : 00] And for many days, he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. And we bring you the good news that what God has promised to the fathers. This he has fulfilled to us, their children, by raising Jesus.

And then he's going to give a couple of Bible verses, and we'll just sort of skip them. It's just some different Bible verses. You can look them up later. And verse 36, for David, King David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, that's another word for Jesus. And he said, he said, And he said, In other words, his bones decayed and turned into dust. But he, whom God raised up, did not see corruption. Now just pause here for a second.

Jesus, Paul is now, remember, he's gone from a basic spiritual condition. He also wants to see, help people to see, in a sense, a really big picture of the big part of the Bible, basically all of the Old Testament. From early on, I can't remember what chapter is, 23 or something like that, 25 in the book of Genesis, right up until that day. He brings it now into history. He's making very, very, very specific claims about God acting to save people. And he did something in history.

And what he did in history involved God, the Son of God, dying on the cross and rising from the dead. Now, just pause here for a second. One of the well-meaning things I hear all of the time when I get into conversations, whether it's a coffee shop or some other place, is, you know, maybe they'll ask me about a Bible story or I'll say something. So I'll just say, well, listen, you know, everybody has holy books and they all tell you different stories.

Why should we believe anything from your holy book? Like, yeah, okay, so it says that in your holy book. But, you know, the Koran says certain things and, you know, the, you have the different Hindu scriptures and the Buddhist scriptures. Why should I believe your book over that? And then the other thing they might say is, and by the way, you know, they all say the same thing.

[24 : 26] Like, they all say the same thing. So they're all saying the same thing. And, and, and either that's done in two ways. That one, it's, it's all said the same, they all say the same thing in a way that means that, therefore, they're all sort of equally untrue. Or it means that they're all true in their own, you know, there's just a bit of confusion. Why should, why should we believe this?

Well, the response to it is, is very interesting. Here's how we should respond. Okay. Like, where do those other religions say this? You're going to tell me that in the Koran, there's a history of prophecies that God is going to save you.

And then at the end of, and that he's going to do something in history. Like, like, where is that in the Koran? Like, just tell, show me where it's there. It's in the Hindu scriptures. Well, the Bahava Gita or something. Okay. I've just, out of curiosity, like, where, where, where is it in the Bahava Gita? Like, those things are actually said. Like, where is it in the Buddhist scriptures?

Well, it's not there. In fact, not only is it not there, it can't possibly be there. Allah does not save people.

There is no salvation in Buddhism or Krishna. Hinduism. They have a completely and utterly different understanding. The highest thing we can hope for in Islam is to be God's slave.

[26 : 05] In Judaism, you have to do a whole pile of acts to try to be worthy of the kingdom of God. And as we know, if you follow Buddhism or Hinduism, it's all a matter of you attaining some type of enlightenment and then having a change some type of, with enlightenment, something that will mean that the cycle of birth and rebirth will come to an end. There's no idea of salvation.

Like, this is completely unique in Christianity. Completely unique. And not only that, that, that, that, unique that there's a God who loves you, who actually acts to save you, but that he did something in history for that to actually happen, is completely and utterly unique.

Now, I think there's very good evidence that the death and resurrection of Jesus is something that actually happened. And if it happened, it changes everything.

If Jesus really rose from the dead, in the context of centuries of prophecies, for the reasons and to accomplish something that's said, it changes everything.

Everything. And it's not just that there's this particular fact, but it's what it is that he's actually accomplished.

[27 : 38] And it touches upon our great needs. Look at how the story continues in verse 38. Let it be known to you, therefore, brothers, that through this man, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.

And in the original language, the implication is total forgiveness of sins. In the original language. Complete, total forgiveness.

In a sense, that if you were to think of your life as a string that has a beginning and has an end, and you don't know where you are in that string, you don't know if, I don't know if I'm going to die on driving home today, I don't know if I'm going to die when I'm 100, so I don't know where the end of the string is, but if you view your life as a string, and God sees the entire string, all of the sins from that entire string of your life have been completely and totally forgiven.

That's the claim being made here by the Bible. Read it again. Let it be known to you, therefore, brothers, that through this man, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him, everyone who believes, that's believed in him, believes this message, and believes in him, is freed, or justified, or vindicated, or made right from everything from which you could not be free, or justified, or vindicated, or made right by the law of Moses, in other words, by your own particular actions.

So just sort of pause here for a second. There's two particular things here which are absolutely huge. If afterwards, Steve and I, you know, sometime during the week, we're the only ones in the office, and I claim that he punches me.

[29 : 25] Which he'd never do. He's way nicer than me. Maybe I should use the other example. He claims I punched him. If after it's all over, and it just happened in private, if on Sunday, when Steve mentions that, if Andrew says to Steve, well, I forgive you.

Steve could go, or I could go, what? Like, you're forgiving Steve for punching me? Like, you weren't even there, dude. You know, if Steve punches me, only I can forgive Steve, right?

So this message implies that that action is not just something he does against me. Only, if only the person wronged can forgive. This is implying that God, who's involved in all actions of wrongdoing, he pronounces this complete, total forgiveness.

You see, what the text is saying is that there's this nexus of death and sin, and with this nexus of death and sin, which connect with guilt and shame, that the death and resurrection of Jesus deals with this nexus of guilt and shame, and deals with it totally.

And one way that he deals with it is that when you put your faith and trust in Jesus, that God has completely and utterly forgiven you. From the earliest moment that you were able to make what we would call a sin, what God would claim a sin, to the moment of your death, you were completely and utterly forgiven.

[30 : 51] And it's not just that you have been forgiven. This other word about made free is saying that there's something else. And if we think about it for a second, there's something else which we need as well on top of forgiveness, and that is we need to make it right.

So let's say once again, I've punched Steve, and then I ask for his forgiveness. And then maybe I have to say to him, like, is it right now between the two of us?

Like, are we, is it right? Has it been, like, fixed? And Steve might say, well, not quite. It's still not right.

And I don't know what it might be. He might say, you know, I think you need to get up and confess to the congregation that you did it. And maybe you need to have some therapy. And maybe if you've done that, then it'll be right with us.

But it'll take a while because you really hurt me. Is it made right? And use another example, which, because even the example of that physical thing, I mean, in a sense, the person who's wrong still has to swallow some of what's happened to them.

[32 : 07] You know, another example would be if somebody loaned you \$10,000 and then you wasted it and didn't spend it back, give it back, and then they ask for forgiveness, and you might be able to forgive them or say, I'm going to work on forgiving you.

But at the same time, the \$10,000 is still gone, and they might say, is it right between us? How can I make it right? And maybe you have some compassion and freedom with them, and so you say, well, the way to make it right would be, I don't know, I think you need to take out a bank loan, and I, you know, maybe take a bank loan out for \$8,000 and make those payments, and I'll swallow the rest.

Maybe if it's a lot of money, you can't even take anything, you know? Another example of this making right here is the example I've used before of a single mom with three little kids goes into a restaurant, and she's really struggling financially, but her mom has said, listen, I'd love you to take the kids to Swiss Shelley, and they didn't pay me for saying that, using that as an example, by the way.

It's on me, and give you a gift certificate, and she goes, and the kids are a bit rambunctious and all of that type of stuff, but, you know, she goes in with the three little kids, and the waitresses ignore her, and the food is really slow, and the, you know, the waitress asks in an exasperated way, and every time something happens, you can see that the waitress is almost trying to stir up support of the different customers about how terrible this woman, and this woman's just feeling completely and utterly humiliated, and finally she leaves, and she's in tears, and as she's going out of the restaurant in tears with her three little kids, this older woman comes into the restaurant and sees her leaving in tears and says, Honey, what's the problem?

Well, the woman is just so overcome with kindness that there's been kindness towards her. After what she's gone through, she blurts the whole thing out, and the older woman says, Honey, I'm so sorry.

[34 : 18] I'm the owner of this franchise. How can I make it right? Maybe it's a couple of free meals. Maybe it's firing the waitresses. But the owner wants to make it right, and she makes it right so that that young woman with the three kids can go to that restaurant again.

This is what the image is of what Jesus has done for us on the cross, friends, brothers, and sisters. It's not just that through his death and resurrection, this nexus of sin and death has been dealt with, but it's been dealt with in such a way that when you put your faith and trust in him, it is God's provision for you to be completely and utterly forgiven, and it is God's provision for you to be made right with him.

He has done what had to be done, which I cannot do and you cannot do, to make things right. And this is just very important.

I want to, I'm looking at time, I need to wrap it up, but here's why it's very, very good. See, one of the things that the world says time and time and time and time and time and time again is it says you need to forgive yourself.

[35 : 35] And I've talked about it before, but the fact of the matter is, is trying to forgive yourself is going down a rabbit hole that will only make things worse. What human beings need is to know that they've been completely forgiven by God.

And for those of us who've accepted Christ as our Savior, we need that to become more real to our hearts. I need that to become more real to my heart, that I have been completely forgiven.

And many, many people in our culture desire to be known as a good person, the problem with that is that it never works. Because even as they insist, the only people who insist that they're really a good person are people who are dealing with the fact often that they've done terrible things.

And so they make that self-declaration. What they're really longing for is to hear that in Christ, he has made them right with God.

They need that to be real to their heart. I need that to be real to my heart. You need that to be real to your heart. And it might sound as if believing these things is a recipe for unbridled narcissism.

[37 : 00] But brothers and sisters, as Christ enters your heart and what he has done for you on the cross becomes more real to you, as you begin to be able to live out of the fact that you're completely forgiven and he has made you right, it is only that which actually starts to make you and me whole enough that we can actually look at the wrong we've done and seek forgiveness and amendment of life.

only that makes us secure enough to see who we really are. Thank you.

I invite you to stand and we'll close in prayer. just before I pray the text goes on and says beware. I've just run out of time to be able to deal with it. If this is true it changes everything. and if it's true and you reject it this is not good for you.

And this is recorded in God's word because God wants you to say yes. He wants you to receive this and learn to live out of it and that's partly what our church should be.

[38 : 35] Our church should be a place of encouragement. I was talking to somebody the other day about you know there was somebody I had to deal with another organization I'm a part with and I said I'm going to approach the conversation not as I'm the righteous person there the sinner but I'm a sinner talking to a sinner and we both need grace.

We need to be encouraging each other to accept the forgiveness and the made rightness that only comes from Christ. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father we ask that you would bring these wonderful truths of the gospel deeply home to us.

that these truths would begin to form our hearts they would form our minds form our imaginations that these profound truths would be that on which we stand the solid ground on which we stand the solid end that we long for and yearn for the way that we can start to look at ourselves and look at the world that it will not create us and make us pride but it will humble us humble us in a good way so that as we bow to you and bow to these truths and receive them that they make us strong in you and so Father we ask that you would make these truths really deeply true in each of our lives and deeply true Father in us as a congregation and Father if there are any who are hearing this and they have not yet said yes to this profound message and offer from Christ we all pray Father that this will be the time that they say yes to him and we ask all these things in the name of Jesus your son and our savior amen amen