

The Heart of The Gospel

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[0:00] Would you open your Bibles, please, to Galatians 2, if you're not already there. Galatians chapter 2. And we're going to be toward the end of that.

And Paul, thank you for reading and getting us kind of the jump start, which is exactly what I'll be doing here in a second. So thank you for that, brother. Well, speaking of the children that are leaving, two of my kids have really reacquainted me with a love for puzzles, my older two. They've helped me see how wonderful puzzles are. And we like to do those on slow afternoons, especially rainy afternoons, and enjoy that activity together.

One of their puzzle sets is a book of fairy tale puzzles, and it's a lot different from all their other ones. All the puzzles in this set are built around a large and uniquely shaped centerpiece. It might be shaped like a flower or a butterfly, but it's got a unique shape. And each centerpiece of these puzzles occupies the heart of the puzzle.

[1:12] And all the other pieces of the regular jigsaw puzzle fit around that main piece. And if you don't have that large, uniquely shaped centerpiece that's in the heart of the puzzle, or if you try to substitute one of the other pieces for that piece, the puzzler is puzzled because the puzzle doesn't make any sense.

It falls apart. And similarly, the Christian faith has a unique and foundational heart that must be at the center of it.

For every Christian and for every church that proclaims Christ, there must be a central and uniquely shaped piece. And it has to be in place, or else everything falls apart and the whole faith doesn't make sense.

And that piece is the gospel. If you've been with us the past several weeks in the book of Galatians, or the letter to the Galatians that Paul wrote, we've been taking a close look at what he's trying to tell them.

And I'm guessing that you've probably picked up on some of the urgency and the crisis that are in Paul's words to the Galatian churches.

[2:25] Because he's very concerned that they're missing, and they're abandoning that central, uniquely shaped piece. And because they're abandoning this unique centerpiece of the gospel, the apostle dispatches this letter urgently before their faith is shipwrecked and doomed.

So if you've caught nothing else from the last couple of weeks, I'm guessing that you've at least figured out that the Galatians, the letter to the Galatians is about this really important thing that needs to be at the center of the Christian life, which is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And the Galatians were in serious danger of losing it. But, what is the gospel? What is this gospel that Paul's talking about?

Paul has been talking up and down about the gospel. Just a quick look at chapter 1 and chapter 2, you see the word gospel pop up all over the place, but he's only hinted at what the gospel actually is, and hasn't really spelled it out yet.

And like Paul, as Christians, we talk a lot about the gospel too. But it's really important that we get it right, that we understand exactly what it is, because it's the central, uniquely shaped piece that makes our faith hold together.

[3:46] So what is it? Well, today's passage, which is really the heart of the letter, everything that Paul's been saying up to this point has been leading to this big reveal of what the gospel is, and everything that's

going to come after this passage is going to be pointing back to it.

So it really is the hinge on which this letter turns. So if you're going to fall asleep, maybe choose another Sunday, because this is really important.

In fact, if your neighbor's fallen asleep already, go ahead and wake them up for this part, and then they can go back to sleep. So just again, you can see this right here. So what is the very heart of the gospel, which is the heart of this letter, which is the heart of the Christian faith?

What is it? It's this. The only possible way we can be made right with God is by trusting in Jesus, period.

The only possible way that we can be made right with God is by trusting in Jesus, period. And this is what Paul wants us to feel, that we need to work really hard at keeping this central.

[5:03] We need to work really hard at keeping this truth central to our lives, to our life as a church. This has to be at the center.

Now, the only possible way we can be made right with God is by trusting in Jesus, period. That sounds pretty simple, doesn't it? And it is, wonderfully so. The gospel is pretty simple. And yet, that's kind of why we have to work really hard to not let it just kind of be like the ABC song and just kind of go back to the back of our head.

It's not just the door that we open into the Christian faith and we kind of move beyond it. No, we never move beyond this. So that's exactly what happened to Peter, as we're going to soon see. He moved beyond the centrality of the gospel. So here's how we're going to move into this passage and gather momentum to the heart of this gospel. There are four stops along this train ride we're going to move on through the heart of God's gospel.

Four stops. And then, after I get to those four stops, we're going to have three ways to consider how to respond well to this good news.

[6:15] So let's look at the first stop in verses 14 to 16. And the name of this stop is A Gracious Reminder. A Gracious Reminder.

Last week, we looked at how Paul publicly rebuked Peter for leaving the Gentile cafeteria table, which Mike set up so well for us, and he moved over to the Jewish table.

Now, thank goodness for Paul, because he saw it. He saw it in the moment, and he called Peter out on this anti-gospel hypocrisy, and he called them out on it publicly right then and there.

And verse 14 begins this rebuke, and I'm pretty sure a lot of other folks believe that this rebuke goes all the way to verse 21. So if you have quotation marks at the end of verse 14 in your Bible, I think it makes most sense for those quotation marks to be at the end of verse 21.

It seems like Peter's rebuke from Paul is all of this passage. So we need to keep that in the back of our minds. This is all a rebuke from Paul to Peter.

[7:21] So let's look at what he says starting at verse 21. Let's see how it's a gracious reminder. Peter. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas, or Peter, before them all, if you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?

So Peter's table switching led Gentiles to the conclusion that they needed to become Jewish in order to be really okay with God. And that was confusing.

They were sort of in by trusting in Jesus, but then if they get really in, then they had to also eat the right foods, get circumcised, et cetera. And this is a very confusing message that it would have been sending to the Gentiles because they had believed that faith in Christ was the only thing necessary to be made right with God.

Now look at verses 15 and 16, and let's see how Paul uses repetition. Just listen for it to drive home his point of this reminder. We ourselves, Peter, are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners.

Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. So we have also 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.

[8:48] Did you hear it? It's like three times. We're not justified by works of the law. We're not justified by works of the law. No one can be made justified by works of the law, only by faith in Christ.

I mean, he's just hammering this home. Paul's logic is so clear, too. If God helped law-abiding Jews like he and Peter to realize that it was an exercise in futility to try to be right with God through their

law-keeping, then why would Peter turn around and tell Gentiles with his actions that they needed to keep the Mosaic law to be right with God if he himself knew that that was impossible?

It doesn't make any sense. Now, just for clarity's sake, you might have noticed I used the error quotation marks in verse 15. Let's look at that word sinners in verse 15. What Paul's not saying is that the Jews aren't sinners.

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners. He's not saying that Gentiles are the sinners and Jews are fine. He's not saying that. Rather, he's using a term, which the quotation marks help with, that the Jews used to describe the Gentiles who were considered sinners in the eyes of the Mosaic law, including all the purity laws, offering sacrifices through a priest in the temple, getting circumcised, et cetera.

So law-abiding Jews would refer to Gentiles as sinners because they didn't follow the law of Moses. So it might be helpful to kind of imagine the quotation marks there.

[10:17] So there's the gracious reminder. Paul gives it to Peter. He gives it to the Galatians by writing this down to the Galatians and by means of the Spirit of God preserving this over 2,000 years, he gives that to us.

We don't get right with God through keeping the law. We get right with God by trusting in Jesus' law-keeping on our behalf and by trusting in his death on the cross for us lawbreakers.

That's the gracious reminder. Now, before we move on, we need to be clear on one thing. What does Paul mean with this word justified? Shows up three times in this verse as well as in verse 17 and in the original language, the word justified is very closely related to that word righteousness in verse 21.

So obviously, it's a really important word for this passage and it's an extremely important word for the Bible. So what does Paul mean by it? When Paul uses language like justified or justification, he's talking about a gracious, legal pronouncement that God makes on an individual sinner when that person trusts in Jesus as his or her substitute.

If the whole of God's law can be summarized in the two commands, love your neighbor as yourself and love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, then you and I are utterly condemned before God.

[11:54] Let that sink in for a minute. We blatantly ignore these whole summarizing commands daily and we choose to issue and obey our own self-made commands to love self with all heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And apart from God's grace, we would be facing God's righteous wrath and punishment because of this law-breaking. But God sent his son.

And God's son, Jesus, lived every moment of his earthly life in perfect, loving obedience to his heavenly father and in perfect love toward his neighbor.

and then Jesus gave his life up as a willing substitute for those of us who hated God and hated each other. And when we, as these lawbreakers, see and understand what Jesus did and trust that he did that on our behalf, in the moment of that trusting, God makes a legal declaration.

He says that we are no longer unrighteous lawbreakers in his sight, but he legally pronounces us righteous. Even though in reality we aren't.

[13:13] He chooses to view us through the lens of Christ's shed blood on our behalf and through the lens of his perfect and righteous life as if we were the ones who lived it.

Now, for a moment, let's just pretend that you're a Christian and you've heard this before. You believed it. Just pretend you're hearing it for the first time. You are not right with God.

There's no way you can get right with God on your own. And then God graciously shows you what he did for you through his crucified and resurrected son, Jesus. And you believe in him. And then all of a sudden, with one sweeping declaration, not only are your sins forgiven, but God declares you righteous just like his son is righteous.

It should make our jaws drop in awe of his mercy. Just like the song we were singing earlier, all I owe, you paid for me. So that's the gracious reminder.

From the lips and from the pen of the Apostle Paul, Peter, the Galatians, and us, we all receive this gracious reminder. It is a slap in God's face to pretend that we can be righteous before God by any other means except by the shed blood of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

[14:28] That's the gracious reminder. And that's our first stop. It's just a beautiful mountaintop vista of the gospel. But let's move to the second stop. Verses 17 through 19.

There is some rough terrain ahead. So I need you to stick with me. But it's going to set us up really well for our third stop. The second stop is called an old relationship discarded.

An old relationship discarded. Let's kind of read these verses together. But if in our endeavor to be justified in Christ we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin?

Certainly not. For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God.

So what is that old relationship that Paul is talking about here? Well, it is the Christian's old relationship to the law of Moses. And in the context it's the Jewish Christian's old relationship to the law of Moses.

[15:33] Paul has just been saying that we're not justified by keeping the law of Moses and so now he needs to clarify what that relationship used to be and how it has got discarded.

So let's skip ahead to verse 19 to answer that question and then I'll take us back to verses 17 to 18. Here, in verse 19, Paul says that he died to the law.

So obviously it's an old relationship it's discarded but how did he come to that conclusion? Well, Paul says that he died to the law through the law.

Don't you wish that Paul would be a little more clear sometimes? What does that mean, Paul? Well, going back to verse 16 helps us with this a little bit. Paul and Peter as ethnic Jews realize with God's help that their obedience to the law could not justify them before God.

Only Jesus' law keeping and his death on their behalf could justify them. So, through their law keeping they realized that their law keeping was not up to par.

[16:36] They could not be justified through their law keeping and therefore they died to the law as a way of making themselves right with God. In another letter in Romans 7, Paul uses an illustration to help us with this and it's kind of from another angle.

In Romans 7, Paul depicts the law as a husband to which we, the bride of Christ, were once married. The only problem is that it was a very dysfunctional marriage.

The law made demands on us that we just could not keep in our very nature as lawbreakers. That relationship produced guilt and shame and condemnation in us not because the law is bad but because we simply could not keep it.

But, we were bound to the law just like spouses were bound to each other in the covenant of marriage and only death could break that bond. And then, a death happened.

Crushed by God's holy law, the law we broke, Jesus died on our behalf. And if we are bound to Jesus by faith, then we also are dead to the law, our old husband, as a way of justifying ourselves before God.

[17:54] And this happened so that we could live in a new relationship to God, no longer bound to the law as a means of getting right with God. So that's the old relationship to the law and how it got discarded.

We used to be in a relationship with the law in which we depended on our own obedience to the law to make us right before God, but now because the death of Christ took place and we died with him, our dependence on the law as the way to get right with God is broken.

Okay. So it's old relationship and it's discarded. But what about verse 17 and 18? What are we going to do with that? Well, scholars have spilled a lot of ink on these two verses and there's really kind of two main interpretations.

Both of them have good ground to stand on. The one that makes most sense to me is this. If you want to talk about the other one, come find me later. It seems like the word sinners in verse 17 is meant to mirror the same word sinners back up in verse 15.

So in other words, it needs to have quotation marks around it as the label that Jews gave Gentiles who didn't keep the law of Moses. So follow Paul's logic with me in verses 17 and 18.

[19:04] I'm going to give you kind of an expanded paraphrase here. It's as if Paul's saying this, Peter, you and I realized that we needed to be justified by faith in Christ, not by keeping the law of Moses. And when

we realized that, we also realized that Jesus himself had made parts of the Mosaic law obsolete.

He fulfilled the purity laws by making us clean in him. He fulfilled the priesthood and the sacrificial system by becoming our great high priest and our Passover lamb.

So those parts of the law no longer apply to us because we're in Christ now. But Peter, that doesn't make Jesus a promoter of sin, does it? No, because Christ has fulfilled all that law for us.

And he has broken down the wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles now. But sadly, Peter, you just rebuilt that wall. You had torn it down before by refusing to find your justification in the law and putting your trust in Christ.

But now, when you switch tables just now, you're rebuilding the wall between Jews and Gentiles again. And that makes you a real transgressor, Peter, because you violated God's truth of our justification in Christ.

[20:16] You've also violated his law of love that we're supposed to keep toward our Gentile brothers and sisters. That seems to make the most sense out of verses 17 and 18. Peter had died to the law through the law and yet he wanted to start rebuilding his old relationship with the law again.

It was like, going back to the marriage illustration, it's like a remarried woman going on dates with her ex-husband instead of the one that she's actually married to. Bad deal. So this is the case with Paul and Peter, it's the same case with the Galatian Christians, and same with us too.

Our relationship with the law is no longer binding as a way of getting us right with God. The Mosaic law is not bad, it makes a good guide to understand the holiness of God.

It gives us a good guide to what it looks like to live for God, but it makes a poor Savior. The law leads us to feel our need for a Savior and also leads us along a good path of righteous living to please our Savior, but it cannot be our Savior.

Ever since the Garden of Eden, human beings have known that there was something wrong with us. Ever since Adam and Eve broke God's holy law, and we don't like that brokenness on the inside.

[21:35] We don't like that guilt and that shame and that condemnation, and yet we can't help but try to make ourselves feel better about it by trying to make ourselves right in some way, by trying to justify ourselves in some way.

So we do what Adam and Eve did. We blame others for our misdoings, and we try to justify ourselves in that way. We shift the blame. Or we compare ourselves to others in self-righteous judgment, telling ourselves we're not as bad as those people over there, because we're doing this or we're not doing this.

Or we deceive ourselves into thinking that if we try hard enough to be decent people, we'll deserve God's grace somehow. Or we lower God's standard of righteousness so that it's easier for us to meet.

All of these are desperate attempts of the human heart to try to justify itself through an old relationship with God's law. But these are just painkillers, not the cure.

Our self-righteous blame games, our self-righteous judgmentalism on others, comparing ourselves to others, our desperate attempts to measure up to God's law, it's just a morphine drip for a cancer patient.

[22:52] It can dull the pain temporarily, but the disease of God's condemnation on us as guilty people continues to kill us. So our self-righteous performance just doesn't fit in that uniquely shaped center of the gospel.

If we put it there, our faith falls apart. We have to discard ourselves as our own saviors, and we have to embrace another, which leads us to our third stop.

a new relationship embraced. A new relationship embraced. Paul hints at this new relationship at the end of verse 19.

He says, I died to the law, through the law, that I might live to God. Well, that kind of begs the question, how, Paul? How are you dead to the law and living to God?

Look at verse 20. It's through a new relationship. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

[23:58] In the life I live now in the body, or in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. This verse proclaims in a nutshell one of the most precious realities of the Christian life, and one of the most easily overlooked by us.

Brother, sister, if you have trusted in Jesus, then you are united to Jesus. You are in him. Like this. Paul is saying here that when Jesus was crucified, all those who would ever bind themselves to him by faith were also crucified with him, becoming dead to self and alive to God through their union with Jesus.

Now what does that actually mean? How does that flesh it out? Well it means as far as being made right with God is concerned, I might as well not be alive.

I'm not even alive anymore if I'm trying to prove myself, justify myself before God. Paul says it's no longer I who live. I'm not living before God to justify myself. Now Christ does that for me.

[25:12] The old Billy Nye, the pre-conversion to Jesus Billy Nye, was living to justify himself before God and it was horrible. But the converted justified Billy Nye, who is united to Jesus by faith, is dead to any attempts to justify myself.

In fact, my own sinful self died with Jesus on the cross. He put the death nail in my old self that was enslaved to the twin masters of sin and self-justification.

So now by embracing Jesus as my justification and not myself as the only way to be right with God, Jesus put my old self to death. He gave me a new life in him that has him as the indwelling and reigning king.

It's no longer I who lives but Christ who lives in me. Jesus lives for me before God now as my justification. So embracing your new relationship with Jesus as your justification means that you now have the spirit of Jesus at work in you.

He's bearing spirit to your spirit in God's presence that you are in his son and therefore you are one of his sons or daughters. So because my old self is now crucified with Jesus and because Jesus lives before God as my justification and he indwells me by his spirit, the actual life I do live day to day, I live by faith in him.

[26:41] It's dependent faith and it's not a life of fear or shame or drudgery but it's a life of grateful adoration. Did you catch the end of verse 20? The life I live in the flesh I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

You can't help but hear the gratitude and the joy spilling out of Paul as he talks about living by faith in God's son. He can't talk about the cross of Christ without his own personal delight in Jesus' love for him gushing out of him.

Jesus loved Paul, the guy who violently oppressed the church and hated the very name of Jesus. So brother and sister, do you see his love for you?

He gave himself for you? Embrace that. Embrace him as your justification. Discard your own attempts at justifying yourself that died with him and embrace the one who loved you by giving himself for you.

Let's come to the fourth stop now, verse 21. We'll call this stop a line in the sand. A line in the sand. Look at verse 21.

[27:56] I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. There's not a lot of new content in this verse.

Paul summarizing what he had already said to Peter, which was recorded for the Galatians and also for us. If righteousness comes from our obedience, then Jesus died for nothing. It was a joke. A terribly tragic joke. But you can't miss the line that Paul draws in the sand. I do not nullify the grace of God in comparison to Peter, who had just begun to nullify the grace of God through his actions.

actions. To say that we contribute anything to being justified before God is to nullify God's grace, to make it nothing for no purpose.

If we do that, then God's incredibly costly grace of sending Jesus to die for us was for nothing. It didn't accomplish or do anything at all. And Peter was essentially doing that by switching tables. [28:59] That's why Paul had to rebuke him in this way. And that's what the Galatians were doing, as Paul is going to make very clear in the very next verse, but I'll let Pastor Mike do that next week.

And it's also what we do. Consciously or unconsciously, if we do not keep the gospel of grace in the center of our lives. It's a line in the sand and you can't straddle it.

You got to be on one side or the other. And Peter shifted across this line unconsciously, and we can too. He moved from living with his life, with the unique gospel of grace at the center of his life, to removing it altogether by his actions and leading others astray by doing so.

So we must consciously and diligently keep this unique gospel at the center of our faith, or else we cross the line, and we get out of step with the gospel, and we make the grace of God a joke.

So we've made four stops along this train ride, all the way to the heart of the gospel. Now I'd like us to consider three ways to respond in faith and obedience, and I've hinted at a lot of this already.

[30:15] Number one, stop justifying yourself. Stop justifying yourself. Hear those words lovingly, but stop justifying yourself.

There's a famous Bob Newhart comedy sketch in which he plays a psychiatrist seeing a patient who's suffering from extreme claustrophobia. And after listening to her problem, he says, well, now I have two little words for you that I think will help clear this problem up rather well.

And of course, she's very interested, and she leans in and wants to hear what he has to say. And so after a dramatic pause, he yells, stop it! God, through Paul, is basically saying that to Peter, and he's also saying that to the Galatians.

How could he not be saying that to us? Stop trying to justify yourself. Now, I'm pretty sure nobody in this room is seriously considering getting circumcised or eating kosher food as a way to justify themselves before God.

If you are, let's talk afterwards. But hopefully this sermon made sense to you if you've been considering that. But that's not the way we, in our culture and in our evangelical subculture, tend to slip into self-justification.

[31:31] After all, we love the gospel of grace. None of us would deny it. However, Peter did, and he loved the gospel of grace too. He slipped into self-justifying ways and led a whole bunch of people along with him.

So, how do we do that? Well, we do it in a thousand different ways. Self-righteousness is slippery. Self-justifying is very slippery.

Here's one way in particular. We can consider ourselves to be good, legit, decent Christians in comparison with those Christians. It's a self-righteous judgmentalism.

So, for example, Christians who don't drink alcohol can judge those who do drink alcohol and vice versa. Christians who support Trump judge those who hate Trump and vice versa.

Reform Christians judge Arminian Christians and vice versa. Charismatics judge non-charismatics and vice versa. Social justice activist Christians judge more conservative Christians and vice versa.

[32:38] White Christians judge black Christians and vice versa. The list could go on. The fact is, we all have a tendency to want to justify ourselves with regard to other believers thinking that we are the legit Christians because we do certain things or don't do certain things in comparison to these Christians.

We tend to develop a certain set of self-righteous merit badges that we can wear because we mistakenly think that God approves of us more than those people over there because of the things that we do or don't do.

And that is a form of self-justification and the church can't do that. We must stop it. The one who loved me by giving himself for me on the cross is the same one who loved you and gave himself for you on the cross and is the same one who loved them and gave himself for them on the cross.

Only the blood of Jesus makes us right and approved before God. Only the righteousness of Jesus that God has graciously clothed us with is able to make us stand before God as approved and precious in his sight.

Period. There are no first and second class Christians in Christ's kingdom. We all get in like little children trusting humbly and dependently on the perfect righteousness of Jesus and his shed blood

for our sin.

[34:06] Period. Period. So take a look just around the room for a moment. Just kind of look at each other. It's kind of fun to do that every once in a while. We are a bunch of different people.

We're white collar, blue collar, no collar. We're black, white, Asian, Hispanic. We're educated or self-educated. We're socially awkward.

We're socially savvy. We're biblically literate or not literate at all. We're visually well put together or just barely hanging together. We're young. We're old. But what unites us is the plain fact that none of us can do anything to get right with God on our own.

We are completely dependent upon Christ and Christ alone. So what should be running through your head when you see your fellow Christians right now is the same blood that was shed to justify me was also shed to justify them.

Now there are other ways we can tend to justify ourselves. We can overemphasize our spiritual disciplines, for example. We can see them as a way to maintain our righteous standing before God as if God smiles on us more when we read our Bible than on the day that we don't read our Bible.

[35:21] We know deep down that reading our Bible and praying won't make God love us more or consider us more righteous than we are already in Christ, and yet we can easily slip into that mindset. We can also blame others for our sin as a way to justify ourselves.

We can also ignore certain parts of God's Word to lower His holy standard to justify ourselves. But no matter how we do it, we've got to stop. This passage won't let us continue to think that we contribute anything to our righteousness before God at all.

It's only by trusting in Jesus, and we are no better than anyone else who does too. Number two, embrace your union with Christ.

Embrace your union with Christ. This is the biggest antidote to number one. This is the antidote to self-justification. When you realize that you are no longer married to the law, but you are married to Christ, and all that was yours, all that yucky stuff, is now His, and all that is His, all that lovely stuff, is now yours, and that He has committed to you forever in love, then the need to justify yourself just kind of fades away.

Imagine a woman who was not only poor, sick, and a million dollars in debt, but also a convicted felon in jail with a \$10 million bail. Okay?

[36:44] Get that picture in your head. Now imagine a brilliant millionaire doctor slash lawyer who's healthy and an upstanding citizen. He goes to the jail, pays her bail, goes to her creditors, and pays off her debts.

He proposes marriage to her after finding a miracle cure for her sickness and getting her free from all her charges. Upon their marriage, He shares with her all His wealth, all His upstanding reputation, all His wisdom, and all His affection.

Now if that can start to make our mouths drop a little bit in awe, then we're just starting to begin to understand how astounding it is to be united to Jesus by faith.

We offer Him nothing but our sin. That's it. He offers us everything at great cost to Himself and binds us to Him through grace.

And once we are united to Him, then we're dead to trying to justify ourselves before God. Because Jesus has already done that. He's already shed His blood for it. So we're dead to our old ways of wanting to continue in sin.

[37:50] Because He dwells within us by His Spirit. And we yield to Him as our King and our Lord. And we're alive to wanting to please God because through our union with Jesus, we now have God as our Father.

Father. So if you've trusted in Christ, then this is live for you now. This is your reality now. It's not like kind of partway and you kind of gradually edge into it.

No, it's just boom. Once you're married, you're married. You're not half married. You're one with Him now. And you are as united to Him now as you will ever be for eternity.

So embrace Him. Move toward Him in faith. Drop any sin that you're clinging to. Drop any self-justifying ways that you're hoping in.

Revel in His love for you like Paul did. The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. And as Paul mentioned in verse 17, just because Jesus had fulfilled the law of Moses and were justified by Him in faith and not by keeping the law, then that doesn't mean that Jesus supports law-breaking.

[38:54] So you're not united to Him now. And Christ is not a servant of sin. So if you're one with Him, then you're dead to sin. You've been crucified with Him.

So embrace Him, not sin. If you happen to be feeling the conviction of the Spirit for a particular sin, or you know that you've been running away from Him for a while, and you need to turn around, then do that now.

Repent. Come back to your new husband, because He's good, He's generous, and He will never leave you dissatisfied. And if you're finding yourself as a believer who knows and even loves the Gospel, but your joy has been kind of slowly ebbing away, take some time to soak in the truth of your union with Him.

Read verse 16. Read verse 20 over and over and over again until it kind of starts to get traction in your heart and remind yourself that it is your relationship with Him only that makes you right with God.

So exercise that muscle of faith and trust in that new relationship, and I think that you'll begin to experience joy again. And number three, offer this Gospel.

[40:08] Offer this Gospel. This is the most precious truth anyone can ever hear. It requires boldness and courage and faith to offer it to someone who may not receive it, and it grates against the fear of being rejected by people, which we all face, just like Peter did.

But the fact is that we, as the Church of Jesus, are the only people on the face of the planet who carry around this light in an otherwise very dark world. So act in faith, just like Paul did in confronting Peter, to offer this Gospel of getting right with God by faith in Christ.

Let it flow out of you in your joy of your union with Him. Freely you receive this Gospel, so freely give it away. Perhaps this Gospel is something that you yourself are just starting to understand, perhaps for the first time.

If that's you, then embrace it. It's being offered to you, so embrace it with your whole heart. Ask God to make you right with Him.

Put your trust in Jesus. Talk to someone about it, too. Some of the pastors and elders would be happy to pray with you down here at the end of service. So church, let's keep this Gospel central.

[41:19] Let's keep it as the centerpiece of our lives, and let's work hard to keep it there. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. We thank you, Father, that your word is a shield to those who trust in you, and you never change.

All that you say is true and right and good. So God, help us to receive it now by faith. Give us the strength we need to respond in obedience.

And give us great joy as we rejoice in the grace you've given us in Christ. Amen. Amen. Thank you.