

The Spirit's Enabling For Godly Fatherhood

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[0:00] I would like you to take your Bibles this morning and turn in them to Ephesians chapter 6.

First passage, pray, and then begin.

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Heavenly Father, this morning we are thankful for the blessing we have of gathering together as a people who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus.

We're glad that as we are here together to praise your name, to listen with attentive and spirit-enabled hearts to the word that you have given to us for our joy and blessing and your glory.

[1:20] That the activity that we engage in is not one that we are left stranded to our own devices to accomplish. But we may rely upon your spirit that you have given to every believer to instruct, to counsel, to encourage, and to continue the process of helping us through your grace and power grow to be more like the Lord Jesus.

I am thankful that as I stand here this morning to preach the word of God, that I can depend upon your spirit, your word, and the prayers of your people to make Jesus and His glory supremely attractive and worthy.

And I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Let me begin a Father's Day sermon by referencing someone that probably most of you do not know.

Shirley Randall used to be a member of our church. You who remember Shirley, wave at me. Wow. Shirley Randall is, I don't know if she still wears white gloves on Sunday, but she did wear white gloves every Sunday.

And Shirley was a very, she probably still is, because I think she's still with us and not with the Lord and with Dick. But Shirley was, when she was here, she was a very objective and pointed person.

[2:59] She let you know what she thought. And I remember when I was preparing one week for Mother's Day and Shirley came to me and she said, so, who gets the guilts this time?

You know, that was an appropriate way to question a pastor regarding his sermon. And it was like, so who gets the guilts this time? And I thought about that because it kind of took me back a little bit. What do you mean? And she said, well, generally, Mother's Day sermons, one of two people, one of two groups walk out kind of feeling a little gloomy. You know, it's either the mothers who listen to the Proverbs chapter 31 passage and they walk away thinking, I'll never get that.

I'm done. I give up. Or, on the other hand, you have the sermon that kind of amplifies the importance of honoring and respecting your mother. And you walk out of there thinking, well, I'm not there yet.

And so, that was kind of a little pointed comment that stuck very clearly in my thinking. And I got to thinking, you know, this business of giving the guilts is not all bad.

[4:09] But the preaching of the Word of God should do more than that. It should not only help us understand our responsibilities before the Lord, but it should also always be an encouragement to us to trust in the goodness of God that does more than just lay out the facts and convict us.

So, one of the things I'd like to have you do this morning from the very beginning is I want you to say something with me. I'm going to tell you what it is, and then I want you to say it. Here's what I want you to say.

God is good. Okay. Just a minute. I want to say it all together, you know. And some of us are designed to kind of say things a little later. But anyway, God is good.

That statement is a profoundly significant statement and has bearing on all that we do and believe. It's not just a statement about things that He does in this world. It's not just a statement about the Lord Jesus Christ and the blessing that we have in Him.

[5:24] The theologian John Frame made the comment that when we say that God is good, we're referring to everything that God is. Think about that. When we say that God is good, we are referring to everything that God is.

There's nothing wrong with saying every time that you have an issue happen or that you're faced with a moment's challenge, you say, God is good.

Because everything that He does is good. Everything that He thinks is good. Everything that He commands is good.

And this morning, as we look at a passage that is going to be a premise for the Bible lesson that we're going to engage in this morning, I want you to understand that it is directed particularly to fathers and it gives those of us who are fathers explicit and pointed instructions from God.

I want us to frame that instruction by the reminder to ourself that God is good. And when He gives us a commandment, as it says in 1 John chapter 5, His commandments are not, who knows the rest, burdensome.

[6:38] It's saying that, you know, when God says do something, it's not like Kim Il-jung who says do this, do that, and it's designed entirely for His little petty interests.

When God tells us to do something, it is for His glory and it is also for our good. And so as we launch into Ephesians chapter 6 verse 4, I want you to recognize that we're looking, first of all, at some very significant commands.

And I want you to understand that when God gives His children commandments, they are not designed to crush us, but they are designed to bless us. And so I want you to recognize this morning, if you're sitting here as a father, that this instruction from the Word of God is for your particular and personal blessing and obedience to it is also a means of you being a blessing not only in your own life but in the lives of other people.

So let's start with several obvious points. For one, God's command here is directed specifically to fathers. It's talking to those of us who have become fathers.

And I can tell you that by experience that after God brings a child into your life, you remain a father until the day you die.

[7:59] I remember actually the process of seeing our four children leave our home. I remember the process of them coming into our home and I remember watching each one of them go off to college and the military and whatever else.

And I remember the day when the last one, the youngest one, actually left and Judith and I were sitting there in that new phase of life called empty nesters. There are some of you here that on occasion are thinking to yourself, oh, I can't wait for that.

Well, I can tell you now as a veteran empty nester that the process of being a father doesn't stop at that point. It changes and in some ways actually becomes more complex and more challenging.

Can anybody tell me why? Who is an empty nester? In the good old days when you had a problem and you wanted to make a difference in your child's life, what did you do? Well, in my case, I would usually say to them, why don't you go up to your room and spend a little time thinking about this while I think about what we're going to do?

The reason for that process of time was because my natural tendency was to go ballistic. You know, you hit the red button and everything flares up and I realized the passage in James says the wrath of man does not, what?

[9:19] Does not work the righteousness of God. And so I would always say to my children, you go take some time and think about this. And I was over there praying and thinking, how am I going to minister? And so we would come back and we would address the issue in a biblical fashion.

When I could have them sit on the couch, it was actually easier than when they reach adulthood.

And I am in some senses an invited counselor and no more.

You who are older parents with children that are out of your home, I can tell you, you only get to give them unsolicited advice a few times and guess what happens? They stop taking your texts.

They stop taking your phone calls. You follow what I'm saying? It's wise to be cautious and prudent in deciding when and what deserves your undivided attention and counsel.

So I want to understand that this passage is given to you, our fathers, and you are a father for the remainder of your life. For another, this command makes it clear that fathers are divinely appointed to be the spiritual heads of their homes.

[10:25] Now listen to me, because I think this is something that sometimes is neglected. Fathers are divinely appointed to be the spiritual head of the home.

It's amazing how often you see illustrations of families and home constructs in which really the daddy, all invested in maybe making a living and providing for the family, when it really comes down to the issue of spiritual headship and leadership in the home, he is largely disconnected from that responsibility.

And I want you to understand, here's the word of God that says, dads, you are the ones who are responsible in principle to bring them up in the nurture and instruction of the Lord. The assignment of headship for a father is not one that is a throwback to some brutal society where hunters and gatherers were kind of gathered around and doing their thing.

And so, by the way, that cultural construct was, okay, the fathers are the ones who give these commands because they're the towering personalities, no, and the power of the home. No, no, no, that's not it.

It was an illustration of God himself driving the issue of the structure of the home and saying, here's who is to be in charge. And we recognize that when he gives us something as an instruction, we look at it and say, all right, God, we trust you and we recognize in your goodness you've established it that way.

[11:54] A husband and father's headship is a reflection of God's goodness and his wisdom. I want you to fix that in your mind because we live in a day and age where that is kind of put off to the side and it's actually disrespected.

But here's the deal. The word of God given to us by which we may be saved and also live godly, orderly, blessed lives tells us that dads are to be the heads in their home.

And trusting him for his wisdom and his counsel means saying in practical terms, I believe God is good and I am glad to obey. The assignment of headship doesn't mean that a wife or a mother is not important.

I assure you of that. It is stating the matter of order and task. And if one is tempted to kind of think that this assignment of roles is something that diminishes the significance of a wife, I want to remind you that in the Trinity itself, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, there are explicit, specific tasks each one of the Trinity holds and is responsible for.

Now a sad note here that I want you to mark is this, or a side note is when those who value God's input in raising their children would think through this process of the matter of men being the spiritual heads of their home, I would encourage men who recognize and value that to put more, are you following me?

[13:27] Because this is important. Fathers put more importance on helping your children regard and respect the matter of male leadership and headship in a home and invest more energy in developing spiritual responsibility and maturity in your boys in particular than you do in allowing the home to become a trophy case for their physical accomplishments.

We have a culture that has gone off the deep end when it comes to the matter of the things that are most prized and valued. At the end of the day, I can tell you, when you are my age, you don't think that much about what you did physically when you were 18.

It is far more important that men, in particular, grow to be spiritual leaders and the responsible heads of their homes.

Now, let's go a little further. We understand fathers are the ones that are responsible here, but the text goes a little further and gives us a very specific command. It says, fathers must not provoke their children to anger.

Fathers must not provoke their children to anger. And the command leads us to ask the logical question, okay, so how does a father provoke his children to anger?

[14:48] How is it that a father provokes or stirs up, promotes, builds into the life of his own children a habitual attitude of anger?

How many of you know what anger looks like? Anybody here? What does anger look like? We all, now here we are in rows, very polite, you know, kind of sedate, but we know what anger looks like, don't we?

I'll never forget an individual in our church had installed in, don't come to me and tell me that I was talking about you because I was, but he had installed in his truck over on the side.

He had this little sound thing. It had four buttons. One was a rocket, one was a machine gun, one was a cannon, and one was a grenade launcher. And so when he was driving down the road and someone misbehaved in front of him, he would just choose which one of those buttons he pushed and he would get sound in his car proportionate.

Hi, I'm talking about you. I loved it. He said, come here, come here, see this. I go over to his truck. He swung it open and he's like, you know, it's like, okay.

[16:05] We know what anger looks like, don't we? So how does a father provoke his children to anger? The most obvious way to provoke a child to anger would be to be an angry man.

Write that down. The most obvious way to provoke your children. Hey, listen to me because I don't think you're listening on this. God himself tells you don't provoke your children to anger.

So how do you do that? What do you need to avoid? A father who is an angry man does a great, great deal to stir up an angry spirit in his child.

And by the way, the child may well be rather intimidated in his father's presence and in his minority until he graduates and leaves and is on his own.

Then what comes out? The child's anger. I want you to understand that the Bible has a great deal to say about anger, about avoiding angry people, and about anger's sad instability and consequences.

[17:18] So if you're a father that is here this morning that finds that you struggle with anger and you hear the word of God telling you, don't provoke your children to anger. You say, all right, what do I need to do?

Number one, plead with him to help you change. Plead with him to help you change. How many of you recognize that the necessity of change does not include the idea that we can pull it off ourself? The Bible does not teach us that we are fundamentally capable of changing who we are by ourself. Would you agree with that?

Not by might nor by spirit, not by night, more by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord. And if you're sitting here listening to the sermon thinking, man, I am an angry person and I know this isn't good for my kids.

Well, how am I going to change? You start with humility and prayer and say, Lord, I need to become a man who is not that way and I can't do it by myself. Secondly, pack your heart with scriptures that counsel you on anger.

[18:26] Hey, here's the deal. When there is a spiritual battle and persistent struggle in your life, one of the great remedies to dealing with that recurring battle is to pack your heart with Bible verses that have particular application to that weakness.

So let's take a minute, just for a second, and look at a couple different verses on this matter of anger. Turn back to the book of Proverbs. By the way, it is loaded with passages on anger.

What that tells you is that it must be a problem that God thought we needed plenty of help on. Let's look at Proverbs chapter 15, verse 18. A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.

Now, the benefit of packing your heart with Bible verses is that when you begin, how many of you notice in your own thinking that as you begin to drift left of center, there are little signals that you get from your conscience and then the Holy Spirit saying, don't go there.

How many of you are there? You get those promptings. That's where the Bible verse you grab onto. So here's the Bible verse. A hot-tempered man stirs up strife. I don't want to be that way.

[19:47] I don't want to be that way. But he who is slow to anger quiets contention. Look at Proverbs chapter 19, verse 11. And I could roll through here one after another.

Proverbs chapter 19, verse 11. Good sense makes one slow to anger. Now, what is that saying? Good sense makes one slow to anger. I'll give you an illustration.

I can think of instances in which in my younger days before I understood that anger had a high probability of causing me to do incredibly dumb things, where when things didn't go my way, I decided that anger was an appropriate response.

And how many have discovered that after you have put your hammer through a sheet of drywall, all that remains is a repair job? Do you follow that?

Or you really get irritated at the car repair and you kick the fender. It doesn't heal by itself. And so everybody's walking by.

[20:55] What happened to your fender? Well, did you have a wreck? Well, in some senses I did. Wasn't one of my more brilliant moments.

Proverbs chapter 19. Hey, listen to me. A Bible verse is a whole lot smarter than repair jobs. Would you agree with that? Verse 11. Good sense makes one slow to anger.

And it is his glory to overlook an offense. You find somebody that has a high OI. Do you know what I mean by high OI? Or by smile.

Put this away for your own edification. The word OI means offendability index. What is a high OI? It means somebody that is easily irritated on a fairly consistent basis.

That's a guy with a high OI. Here it says, It is to his glory to overlook an offense. So, plead with God to help you change.

[21:58] Pack your heart with scriptures that counsel you on anger. Third, invite other people into your life to help you deal with this destructive sin. When I'm having...

By the way, I have problems with sin. And you do too. I have problems with sin on a very regular basis. And if you ask me, one of the things that I'm really looking forward to about dying is I'm going to heaven and I'm done with sin.

I'm happy to be here. But when the day comes, there will not be another battle with sin. I'm looking forward to that. In dealing with this ongoing battle with sin, one of the things that I have discovered is so helpful, and the Bible makes it clear, is partner with other people that are going to help you with that process.

So, the question is this. You've got a problem with anger. Who is it that you have intentionally invited into your life to help you deal with this particular problem? Problem.

That means someone that you are willing to listen to when they say, whoa, what is that all about? What's going on?

[23:09] Finally, don't become close friends with chest thumpers and men that are known to have short fuses. Does that make sense? You know what I mean by chest thumpers?

I mean, it's the guys who sit around telling stories about how angry they got in the past. Well, I remember when someone said that to me and, you know.

He's like, really? I'm out of here. Greg, Greg, Bernard, where are you, Greg?

There you are. Greg, smile at me. I know you're talking. Greg and I and Connie were sharing oatmeal with an individual that let us know that he wasn't carrying any weapons.

I said, it's a good thing. Then he held up his two fists. He says, I got these. Guy was probably, he had every known affliction to man, a diabetic, asthma and everything else.

[24:11] He goes, I got these. Okay. But anyway. Hey. You're an angry man.

You need help. Bible says, Dad. And by the way, how many of you realize that this piece of advice is very practical because parenting can be very frustrating?

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, not for yours, but at least the four I had. I mean, I said the same thing over and over again. And every now and then I thought that maybe if I said it a little louder, it would help.

I got to tell you, it never did. Fathers, don't provoke your children to wrath.

And you do it by being an angry man. Another way to provoke children to wrath is by persistently neglecting them.

[25:13] First Kings chapter 1 verse 6 makes a very interesting statement about a king who never corrected his son. Never paid attention to him.

Never involved in his life. I got to tell you something. Children are hardwired by God to need a father's time and attention. There's no way around that.

And persistent neglect for all of the common reasons is going to produce unintended consequences. Work, hobbies, sports, TV, and every other self-focused reason will first of all wound and then later embitter your children.

Can I say that again carefully? It will first of all wound and later embitter your children. A third way in which you can provoke them to anger is by not loving them unconditionally.

You know what? I am, I continue, and John, some of the songs as we were singing this morning, I was so blessed to think about application that those words had to our time in the Word of God.

[26:38] But one of the things that is such a rich blessing in my own life is reminding Tim Knoyer of how unconditional, unchangeable, unfailing is the love of God for Tim Knoyer.

And Dad, one of the things that your children should know about you and think consistently about you is that you love them unconditionally.

Unconditionally. Does that mean that you don't bring heat when necessary? Ah, no. But even when you have to deal with issues in their lives, the thing that should stand out without question is that you love them unconditionally.

And a father's love that is driven by a performance-based relationship is going to cause heartache beyond imagination. One of the things that I should be able to stand at the door as you walk by this morning and ask your children, by the way, I'm not going to do it, so everybody's off the hook.

Do you follow that? But I ought to be able to stand there at the door and as your children are going by say, hey, does your daddy love you unconditionally? Fathers who are stand-in representatives in some sense for the Father in heaven should be known to their children as unconditional lovers.

[28:03] Well, the negative command is given two positive backups. And so let's take a look at that and understand that fathers who are striving to please God are going to work, first of all, not to provoke to wrath, but then they're going to do something else.

And mark what it says here in the passage. It says, Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up, bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

I'll put it this way. Fathers are to provide godly discipline. The Greek word that is used here, *paiduo*, and I'm not going to overplay the Greek and its context here, but understand that what it means is coming alongside to provide instruction and encouragement.

It's not just kind of high-level carpet bombing with truth bombs. You know, I think sometimes a father thinks that he can kind of drift into the situation and just drop this explosive fact.

Boom! You know, I've given them the truth and it's all on them. No, it's a process of coming along and building into their lives. Yes, the word does not carry the idea of corporal punishment in the Greek.

[29:16] Now, did I just say that there is no place for corporal punishment in the life of a godly father ministering to his children? And I've got to tell you, the Scriptures are explicit and clear.

But the predominant ministry of a father is not whacking them around. It is leading them with godly instruction and encouragement towards an outcome that pleases Christ.

A father is to be one who goes about this process of instruction and training over a period of time, working to build incrementally into the life of his children those things that please God.

Fathers are to provide godly discipline. Furthermore, fathers are to provide godly instruction. The word that is used here is a word that is not talking about incessant nagging.

How many of you know that there is a point where the ears just plug up of their own nature? How many of you will identify with that? The ears plug up of their own nature.

[30:23] You know, at some point, you've said it too much. That doesn't mean that it shouldn't be said, but you have to recognize as a father that sometimes you overstep the issue and you're not really solving the problem.

The word means to provide information that seeks to admonish. Correct. Particularly by connecting instruction with consequences. Let me say that slowly so you don't miss it.

It provides instruction that connects what is being said, the information, with consequences.

Let me give you a perfect illustration of this. Turn back in your Bible to 1 Corinthians chapter 10.

We're looking at an illustration of where the Scriptures explain that instruction should be backed up by consequences.

1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 6. Now, these things took place as examples for us that we might desire evil as they did.

[31:26] Do not be idolaters as some of them were. 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 6, now 7. As it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did and 23,000 fell in a single day.

We must not put Christ to the test as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents. We must not grumble as some of them did and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now, these things happened to them as an example.

What's it saying here? It is making it clear that one of the reasons we have the written text of these particular incidents that God called out of all the various things that happened in the nation of Israel. These things are gathered for us so that we can learn from their experiences. Now, track with me here for a moment. A fool doesn't learn by the experience of the moment.

How many of you understand that? A fool doesn't learn from experience. An intelligent person can learn from experience.

[32 : 35] Most people have reasonable intelligence. If you were to take a bobby pin and you were to carefully insert it, do not try this at home. If you were to carefully insert it into a socket, your child would probably demonstrate reasonable intelligence.

By that I mean that they wouldn't do it twice. A fool doesn't learn. Socket, bobby pin, over and over again.

An intelligent person learns by experience. A wise person learns from observation and instruction and doesn't have to have the experience.

A wise person learns from observation and doesn't have to have the experience. And so you as a father are involved in saying, Hey, John, you don't have to be the fool and become involved in immorality and suffer the consequences of that.

You can listen to what the Word of God has to say about it and avoid the outcome. Hey, Tim, you don't have to be an angry person and eventually have everybody kind of treat you like a skunk because they're just not sure how close they can get.

[33 : 56] Hey, Andrew, we have several of them now. You don't have to be covetous.

You can see the outcome that the Word of God gives to you and say, I'm not going there. So understand this.

As you look at this passage, the thing that it says is these things happen for an example and they're written down for our instruction. So, Daddy, as you minister to your children, one of the things that probably you ought to be doing from early on is bringing lessons and examples from the Scriptures into kids' lives, your boys and your girls.

As you're having devotions at home, you're helping them understand from Bible examples what the outcome is to certain behaviors and thoughts. Help them learn so they don't have to go through those experiences the hard way.

Now, let me come to one other piece. Go back, if you would, to that passage in Ephesians chapter 5. Because this is one that I really want you to hold on to and be encouraged by.

[35 : 05] Ephesians chapter 5. I'm sorry. Ephesians chapter 6. Okay. Verse 4, it says, Bring them up in the nurture and the instruction of the Lord.

Of the Lord. What's being said here? And really, what we're dealing with here is one of the best parts of today's lesson. The fact of the matter is, is that discipline and instruction that we as Christian fathers are to be engaged in is that which comes from God and is for God and is going to be enabled by God.

When it says, Godly fathers are called to minister to their children with the Lord's wisdom.

Not with their own. Godly fathers are called to minister by encouraging their children to respect the goodness of God and the wisdom of God and the nature of God.

And why is this? Because He is the one who is the center around which all that we are revolves. A Christian father then, we put it this way, is called for a very brief moment to labor for God's glory and His great name.

[36 : 28] I want you to fix that in your mind. Your task as a Christian father is to labor for God's glory and His great name. And that is a very serious and wonderful role when it says that you are to not raise them up to be angry, you're to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Now, I want to come to the closing and incredibly valuable truth that I want you to hold on to that avoids this issue of who gets the guilts this morning.

Okay? The great comfort that we have in handling this passage is really found in the reality of the fact that we don't have to go about being a godly father strictly on our own ability.

We have the great comfort of the Holy Spirit. God's goodness, going back to that principle that we started with, God's goodness is seen not only in that He gives us a command from His goodness, but He gives us the enabling of the Spirit because of His goodness.

It's wrong and it's unhelpful to teach Ephesians chapter 6 verse 4 and not link it back to Ephesians chapter 5 verse 18. I want you to go back there just for a moment and take a look at it.

[37 : 46] Ephesians chapter 5 verse 18 says, Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.

And let's look at this for a moment. What is being said here is this, is that the responsibility of being the Christian father that has the instruction in Ephesians chapter 6 verse 4 is dependent upon the enabling of the Spirit of God that dwells in every believer.

If you are here this morning as a father that is a Christian, that is a believer, when you think about the responsibility of being the kind of dad He wants you to be, it ought to leave you with a sense of, I can't, I don't know.

How am I going to pull this off? And then the comfort of the Word of God says this, you don't have to rely upon your own ability and your own power to pull this off. You can enjoy the enabling of the Spirit of God to do what He calls you to do.

Look at the passage, 518. It says, Be filled with the Spirit. A Christian father, mark this, has the Spirit of God indwelling him, and the Christian father can rely upon the Holy Spirit to accomplish His calling.

[39:04] The enabling of the Spirit of God will not be seen in a self-willed or proud man. The enabling of the Spirit of God is going to be found in the individual who from the outset confesses his inability and relies upon God to help him be what he should be.

By the way, can I tell you that the enabling of the Spirit of God is not limited to helping fathers. The enabling of the Spirit of God is there for every believer.

If you're a mother, you can rely upon the Spirit of God to help you if you're a believer. You're involved in ministry, whatever it is, you can rely upon the Spirit of God to help you. I want to remind you of one of the things that Jesus said to His disciples in John chapter 15, verse 5, the last part. It says this, Without me you can do, can anybody fill in the blank? You can do nothing. You know what? But the fact that the Bible teaches believers that they have the indwelling Spirit and must rely upon the Holy Spirit for their fruitful living sadly is a truth that is not appreciated as often as it should be.

And so this morning as we go about this business of saying, here's what the Spirit of God calls us to do as fathers. I want to encourage you to hold on to this reality.

[40:31] You can do it. You can obey the commandment of God through the enabling of the Holy Spirit that gives you the power both to will, as it says in Philippians chapter 2, both to will and to do His good pleasure.

So let's be honest and come to grips with the truth this morning. You are here this morning in one of three conditions. You may be here and not know Christ.

And the fact of the matter is is that this sermon, which has had its primary focus on the matter of being a godly father, you're sitting here saying, number one, I'm not a dad.

Number two, I don't know Jesus. Can I tell you that the greatest need of your heart is not for a little coaching on how to be a better dad or a better worker or to be more productive or whatever.

The greatest need of your heart is to come to grips with the fact that in your heart, you carry a burden and a darkness of unconfessed sin that has no remedy apart from trusting in the finished work of Christ who died on the cross and paid the penalty for your sins.

[41:38] And what the Bible says is this. I love this truth. It says, whosoever believes on the name of the Lord who calls upon his name shall be what? Saved.

Saved. I can tell you that you can walk out of here this morning. You came in here with a heart that was hard, that was filled with all kinds of blackness, and you just greatly appreciate that nobody else knows about all that stuff.

But here's what. Jesus died and paid the penalty for all that sin, and he is ready to stand to forgive you and to give you new life. And so if you're here today and don't know Christ, I would plead with you that today's the day to trust in him.

You may be here as one who has known Christ and knows Christ, but you've lost your first love.

And as a result, this business of fathering and the business of being the person that God wants you to be is kind of all clouded over by the reality of the fact that your life and your heart's kind of lost its joy and there's no satisfaction and pleasure in Christ.

Can I tell you that the Bible tells us over and over again that we're called to love Christ? We're called to love him. And it might be that you're sitting here this morning and you're not at all where you need to be and you're not at all where you used to be.

[42:57] I would plead with you this morning, repent. You call out and say, Lord Jesus, you have blessed me. You've done incredible things in my life and I want you to rekindle my affection for you and I want to move forward in a different frame and with a different heart.

There may be some of you here this morning that know the joy of obedience. You know what it is to walk with Christ and you are here this morning with a love for the Lord Jesus and a love for his bride

and a love for lost mankind.

Can I tell you, what you need to do is share that affection with other people? Christ is interested in you being the example to a broken and absolutely destroyed world.

And as we walk out of here this morning, the thing we carry with us is the sweetness of the gospel. We carry with us the confidence that God has given us a good word and we carry with us the confidence that when God gives us a command, he also gives us the enabling of the Spirit of God to do the things he asks.

And I would plead with you this morning. Your neighborhood, your families, the people that you work around need to see the power of the Spirit of God in a life that is changed by gospel power.

[44 : 21] They need to see what it is to be a Christian that knows Christ and is living victoriously.

Let's close in prayer. Our Father God, this morning as we think about this responsibility of being the kind of dads that you want us to be, we're so very thankful that you have not only given us your instruction in the Word of God, but you've also given us the hope of understanding that we who know you have the Spirit of God at work in us to be that.

We want to be obedient. We want to be fruitful. We want to be examples that the world looks to and asks us a reason for the hope that lies within us. And we want to leave this place this morning making decisions that honor Christ and lift up the glory of the cross.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.