

The Before and After of the Believer

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Preacher: Pastor Kenoyer

[0:00] Why don't we try this while I'm eating these. I'm going to ask you to pray for me later. So I'm going to crunch on these, and you are not going to be distracted, and you are going to plead with the Holy Spirit to work in me and to work in you.

It'll take me a couple minutes, so you go right ahead and use the time wisely. I apologize. The alternative is not good.

And once I start, there's no turning back. How many of you this morning, as we were singing, were cross-referencing things with the Scriptures?

Were you doing that? I want everybody to nod. Just do it. Okay. Beloved, I plead with you that when you listen to anything, the benchmark against which you judge all things is the Word of God.

And here's the truth. If what is being said is good, are you listening? Cross-referencing it against the Scriptures amplifies its value and encourages your heart.

[2:02] Does that make sense? It's like, this is a thing that I want to say yes to, and God's in business with this one. I like it. And so, I would plead with you that, boy, that last song that we were singing, my mind was just doing this overdrive search in Ephesians chapter 1.

That's where I was. As Paul says this, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

That's verse 3. That's verse 3. And then in verse 6, it says that we have been accepted in the beloved. I tell you, there is nothing sweeter, truthfully to me, than recognizing that I am accepted in the beloved.

If there is one thing that is significant about Tim Kenoyer, it is this. I am loved by Christ, and I'm the child of God, and nothing else counts in comparison.

The journey to heaven is cloudy, stormy. I was talking with Pastor Ken, or Ken Lauro earlier this week, and we were talking about ministry, and he says, you know, there's somebody I know who's told me that ministry is all uphill.

[3:29] I said, yeah, that's true. But you know what? Nothing, nothing, nothing is more priceless than knowing that I am the child of God, beloved son of the eternal father.

And really, the truth of the matter is, is that what we're doing here this morning is just kind of a warm-up for the someday when we are going to see him face-to-face. Isn't that going to be wonderful? And I hope one of the things that's happening is, as you go through your journey and through your day, that you keep on coming back to thinking about the fact that today is not the final draft or final story.

There is a better day coming. There is a day when we are going to be face-to-face with the Lord of glory, and we will rejoice in his presence forevermore. It will get better than this.

Amen. I want you to look with me at Ephesians chapter 2. My sugar is kicking in, so we're good. Let me read it to you just a little bit.

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

[4:58] But now, in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Father God, I am reminded of the words of the prophet Zechariah, not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord.

And it is my prayer, and I know that other believers here this morning join me in praying together that you would work among us, that the glory of Christ would be seen in our hearts, would be quickened to see the things that are true and pure and wholesome, and that we would grow to be more like Jesus.

We ask this in your precious name. Amen. How many of you recognize that probably one of the most difficult things about Christian life is that you keep on having to do it over and over again? Do you realize that? I mean, there's one day that's up and pretty good, and then there's another day that's a little more challenging, and then day after day after day after day, they're the constant challenges, and our emotions peak.

[6:22] They wane, and they come and go. And practically speaking, I'm just curious, as you sit here this morning, if you can think of when the last time was where your heart was just kind of overwhelmed with thanksgiving for your salvation, where just the thought of you being delivered from the burden and bondage of your sin took your heart and your affections away from the burdens and heartaches of the moment and just kind of brought to you that overwhelming sense of thanksgiving.

It's like, yes! I'm blessed! When was the last time that you just found yourself thinking, wow, I can't believe it, that I have peace with God?

All of you here can remember, if you stop and ponder, that there was a day when you made your journey of life with a cloud over you. You never knew what was going to happen next, and you faced the uncertain prospect of the doom of the judgment of God against you because you stood condemned as a sinner.

And Christ Jesus came and saved you and delivered you from the bondage that you had, and He gave you a new song and a new hope. And what a blessing to have all of that and peace with God. I wonder when the last time was that you were actually moved to tears. Now, I know some of us reserve tears for very, very special moments like funerals and weddings, but others of us cry periodically.

[7:55] So, you know, I mean, when were you last moved to tears when you thought about the fact that Christ loved you? I mean, it just overwhelmed you. Should that happen fairly regularly?

What's the answer? It should. Now, I don't want to presuppose that all of us have to be as emotional as the next person because I admit that we're all hardwired differently.

Do you understand that? God, in order to help me understand the practicality of that, gave me a darling wife who is much more placid than I am. Do you know what I mean by placid?

She's the calm pond, you know? Ripples seldom happen. I have a tempest in a teapot, you know? It's like things happen all the time. And, you know, I've sometimes looked with great envy at why she's so calm, and I imagine she's kind of looked at me and thought, man, I wish I just, you know, had those whoo!

Then the other thing, you know. But, you know, here's the deal. It's fair to say, so when, when has my heart been caught up with just affection and delight in the reality of the blessing I have?

[9:11] Ephesians is all about our salvation. It is an incredible book that talks about the blessing of God's work in redeeming us, and particularly the first chapter is really loaded with the issue of the blessing of our salvation and that God chose us before the foundation of the world, and He's chosen us to bless us with all spiritual blessings.

Chapter 2, then, kind of amplifies that a little bit by explaining in greater detail where we were. And the reason that that's so important is because when we forget where we've come from, we get kind of caught with the details of the moment, and we get kind of buried, and we don't appreciate where we're from.

And so chapter 2 looks at our past from two different perspectives. Chapter 2, we look first of all at verses 1 through 10, in which the apostle talks about where we were in broad terms.

And if you were to kind of work your way down through this, you'll find out that we are reminded in chapter 2, verse 1 through 10, that we were at one point dead in trespasses and sin. We were the slaves of Satan.

We were on our way to hell. We were children of wrath. And over us, the cloud of the wrath of God against us was clearly defined and something that our conscience understood and stayed under the

weight and burden of that.

[10:44] Now, we come to the second part, and our study this morning is going to take us from chapter 2, verse 11 down through 18. And in this, we are going to find that the apostle wants to amplify our understanding of our past by helping us realize that we who are Gentiles...

Is there anybody here that's not a Gentile? By the way, those who are not Gentiles, in terms of the economy of the New Testament and Old Testament, guess who they are? They're Jews.

Jews. I was studying this week and kind of thinking, is there anybody in our fellowship that is a genuine Jew? Now, I'm talking about genetically. Because what it...

Are you? Hi! Cheryl, raise your hand. We have one over here. Good. Is it Eddie's side? What is it? Your mom. Okay. Well, there we go.

I didn't know that. I'd forgotten. Probably knew it and forgot. But for the rest of us, that's about... You know, you're about 1.0% of the congregation this morning. The rest of us fit safely into that little category called what?

[11:46] Uncircumcised Gentiles. And Paul was writing to a church there in Ephesus that was made up, for the most part, of Gentiles. And so he wants them to understand the blessing of salvation that they've received and to understand it in relationship to the Old Testament and the promises that were there.

And so he speaks in verses 11 through 18 of this matter, of our background and the blessing that we have in being brought near to Christ through His blood.

So our study is going to delve a little bit into this subject of what God has done for us who are Gentiles. And Cheryl, you kind of think about this in relationship to Bob and the rest of us because it applies.

Okay? So let's pick up there, if we will, in Ephesians 2, verse 11. And we want to remind ourselves of our past. We look here and it says, Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision.

Let's pick up on something that we mark here in this very beginning verse, in verse 11, that we have to admit all cultures have prejudices if those who are in the majority, well I shouldn't say if, but when those who are in the majority kind of gather together, they have a tendency to look with a dismissive spirit to those who are not in the majority.

[13:07] I mean, right now in our congregation, most of us are of a certain ethnic background. I remember growing up in India, and there were very few white people around.

Guess what we were called by those who were in the majority? All kinds of names. Now one of the distinct advantages, you remember that? I see Tom and Carrie and Marcy kind of nodding because when they were missionaries in Japan, what were you called?

Gaijin? Gaijin? Gaijin? Gaijin? Yeah. You were called aliens. Aliens. Yes, aliens. Well, that's nicer than what I was called. I was called a red monkey, okay?

Lal bandor. Lal bandor means red monkey, or sada bandor means white monkey. And the only pleasure I had when those things were said is most people didn't figure I knew their language, and growing up I actually knew three of the languages in the area, and so I would let them carry on, and they were having ho, ho, ho, and I would let it go for a little while, and then I just began speaking in Manipuri or Hindi, and they just go, what did I say?

Okay. But the truth of the matter is, is that sadly, because of the fall, this prejudicial attitude exists in every culture.

[14:27] It exists in India. It exists in China. It exists in Japan. It exists in Africa. It exists here in America. And it existed back then in the church. Those who were Jews had their nose up in the air towards those who weren't.

And Paul reflects on this in this letter, and he talks about the fact that this congregation that was made up of a mixture of Jews and Gentiles together, there must have been some kind of ethnic tension because we see it hinted here in the passage.

It says, you Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision by the circumcision. Okay. Now, in God's eyes, does circumcision and uncircumcision make any difference in the church?

And the answer is, not in the least. But to these ethnically sensitive individuals, their attitude was, well, you're an uncircumcised. Well, yeah.

Okay. And I'm circumcised. I must be better. And the church kind of had this division. And Paul says, listen, that was not something profitable. But he says, listen, that is a reflection of the fact that in the Old Testament, God did call Abraham.

[15:42] And God called Abraham to be the father of the nation, but also the man through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed. And God's intention actually was that the Jewish nation would become evangelists for him, that they would go around the world spreading first the glory and character of God and also the law of God, the purposes that God has.

And by the way, when God gives us a law, is that law bad? What's the purpose of the law? It's always good. Let me use a very, very, and it's maybe not a good illustration, but how many of you know what Chilton's is?

A little in the previous day, Tim, I got a smile out of you on that one. If you had any inclination towards auto mechanics, you had a Chilton somewhere in your house. Now, that's before you have the internet.

What? You have several Chilton's, right? You know, it's how to fix your Dodge Dart 1969. You know, it's like, how do you take that fuel pump apart?

You know, where does that screw go? And everything that is in Chilton's wasn't put in there to frustrate you. Actually, it was put in there to make your life easier. Do you follow that? Now, if Chilton's was made for your sake, I got to tell you, the word of God is far more valuable than Chilton's.

[17:03] And when God says, do something, he means it's for your good. And the nation of Israel had been called by God to bear witness to his glory and to his character and his goodness, and also to model the value and the wisdom of God's law.

Being a Jew was an advantage because you had received the law. You had the covenants. You had the promises. And as you look here in the passage, it talks about the fact that those who were Gentiles, not part of the Jewish nation, they had some distinct disadvantages that were recognized and it was worthy of remembering because when you stop and think about what your salvation has brought you, it's fair to realize how far you've come.

And so here in verse 12, it says, remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Those of us who are today Gentiles have to recognize and admit that our history and our ethnicity puts us as a distinct disadvantage over the blessings that the Jews had.

We have them tracked there in verse 12. When it says separated from Christ, it's talking about the messianic promises that were given to the Old Testament saint and particularly to the Jewish nation.

[18:29] The Messiah would come through the Jewish nation and the blessing was associated with that. Alienated from the commonwealth, the family of Israel, strangers to the covenants.

And what were the benefits of the covenants? They were promises that God made to the nation of Israel that He kept. He said, I'll give you a land. He said, I'll give you blessings. And He did keep those blessings.

I remember as I was thinking through this of thinking of the one passage in Deuteronomy where Moses, as he is recapping his ministry, says, listen, I want to remind you that every single one of the promises that God has made to you, He's kept.

There's not a single one that He has failed to accomplish. And so Paul, as he is speaking to the church there in Ephesus, He reminds us of our past, our ethnic past, and He does so to increase our thanks for our salvation and not to shame us.

Is there anything bad with being a Gentile? What's the answer? No. Is being a Gentile any worse than being an unbelieving Jew? What's the answer? No. Where does an unbelieving Jew and an unbelieving Gentile go?

[19:39] The same place. And so Paul is saying, listen, I want you to stop and just realize that your past is what it is.

There's a sense in which the truth of all of our and each of our paths and pasts is an honest contributor to the blessing and the sense of appreciation we have for where we are.

Let me illustrate this by a couple different passages. I want you to turn for one to where Paul thinks about his past and the reality of what his past was kind of amplifies his appreciation for his salvation.

Turn over in your Bible to 1 Timothy chapter 1. 1 Timothy chapter 1 and pick up there, if you will, in verse 13 through 15. Though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent, I received mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief.

And the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Now what is he saying? He's saying, listen, I started out in a pretty miserable place.

[20:49] And the grace of our Lord Jesus overflowed. But then look at verse 15. This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am what?

Foremost, chief. Now, question. Was Paul just saying something for emphasis? How many of you have been in a conversation with a person who is grieving and suffering and you've been tempted to say, I understand exactly how you feel?

You ever done that? I've got to tell you, that's not a wise thing to say. Do you know why? None of us can understand exactly what someone else is feeling. But however, in our desire to be sympathetic, we want to communicate our companionship, our association.

I've got to tell you, when Paul says what he does here, he's not just trying to help us understand that he's one of us. He is speaking the truth from his heart because when a humble heart considers the reality of their own wickedness and their own state before Christ, what do we end up thinking about ourselves?

We don't have a very positive self-image, do we? And Paul in this passage says, let me tell you something. When I stop and consider, I recognize that I was chief among sinners.

[22:14] And I point this out to your attention because it was Paul's appreciation for the absolute depth of his wickedness that caused him to appreciate his grace more.

Let's try this. I'm not going to ask you to raise your hands if it ever happened, but let's just imagine that you, on your final exam, that meant you either passed or failed college entirely, you got an F. I mean, you got a, let's say a 40. That's pretty bad. Okay? A 40. I want to tell you, my first semester in seminary, I came in as an unpracticed student.

For whatever reasons, I had been able to get through college. I didn't get through high school easily, but I got through college without studying at all. Never did. And I got to seminary, and they suddenly expected me to study, and I had no idea what study was.

I knew it was a word, but I really didn't. And I'll tell you what, I got a 56 on my first exam in seminary, and I had sold our house, moved my family up.

[23:20] We were living in a little apartment, and when I got that 56 on my exam sheet, the room went dark in front of me. It did. By the way, I got a 98 on the next one, just so you know.

I mean, I did get through. But if you got a 40 on the first exam, and someone else sitting right next to you gets a 98, and the teacher in just an absolutely amazing display of grace says, Listen, I'm going to give everybody 100.

Do you think the person who gets 98 is as excited about it as the person who got 40? Hmm? So, Paul says, I want you to remember where you came from.

I want you to remember where you came from. I want you to look at another passage, and I love this one. I love this one. I've had people say to me, Well, you know, I don't know about coming to church yet.

There's still a lot of things in my life that just, you know, my past is pretty ugly. And I said, Well, join the crowd. 1 Corinthians chapter 6. Now, I do want you to pay attention to the way in which this passage reads, because it's pretty significant.

[24:37] 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 9. I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. Not at all meaning the

sexually immoral of this world or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters. Since then, you would need to go out of the world. But now I'm writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother, if he's guilty of sexual immorality or greed or is an idolater, reveler, drunkard, or swindler.

Don't even eat with such one as that. And what Paul is reminding us of is that our past, by the way, where were we at one time? You look forward into 6, and you pick up there in verse 9.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Don't be deceived.

Neither the sexually immoral or idolater or adulterer or men who practice homosexuality.

Nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revelers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were what? Some of you. How many of you had pretty lousy past?

[25:39] Don't raise your hand and wave at me. We all did. You may have been saved when you were 5. But you were as miserably encased in the hardness of your sin as the person who was saved when they were 45.

Because there is none righteous, no, not one. There's not a one that seeks after God. And Paul here, he says, let me remind you what your past was. An appreciation for our past leads us to have a greater appreciation for the blessing of our salvation.

And that is what Paul wants us to understand going back to the passage in Ephesians. Let's look at the text. It's not just that we were dead in our sins.

But as it tells us there in the verse, in verse 12 and 13, we were separated from God with no hope and strangers.

Separated, no hope, and strangers. And I want to remind you that to not appreciate the past that we have is something that leads us to kind of be marginally insensitive and indifferent to our salvation.

[26:50] And one of the things that's a giveaway is that when you have lost your affection for the blessing of your salvation, it begins to creep into every part of your life. Do you understand that? Think about the passage over in the book of Revelation where John says this, or actually it's Jesus.

He says, you've lost your first what? Your first love. How does that happen? We begin loving something else.

Something else begins to take the place of the Savior who delivered us from the absolute depravity and brokenness of our state as an unbelieving person.

And we forget what it is to be saved. And we lose our affection and our passion. And it's a sad, sad predicament to be in. Our thankfulness in the present and our hope in the future has its roots in a firm grasp of the past.

I think about the songwriter. It says, I was sinking deep in sin. How many of you know the words to that? Far from the peaceful shore. Sinking deep, deep within, never to rise no more.

[28:01] But, what? The master of the storms heard my despairing cry and from the waters lifted me. Now safe am I. I want you to recognize this morning that we as believers, even those who are here today that have been saved for many, many years, it is appropriate for us to remind ourselves on occasion where did we come from?

What was our past like? How miserably afflicted were we in our sin? And what was our state prior to our conversion? Well, I want us to grasp what we have in Christ.

Picking up there, if you will, in verse 13. It says, but now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Let's grasp what we have in the Lord Jesus.

As I've said, remembering the truth of our past makes a difference in thinking about our present and our future. And the verses that follow in the passage are going to flesh that out for us.

Once we were far off, now we are brought near by the blood of Christ. Being far off doesn't sound quite as bad as it really is, but theologically what it means is that we're distant from God, and we have no ability, no hope of having any contact or reference point with Him.

[29:16] How many of you remember praying about something that you were really concerned about, and you felt like the heavens were brass, and you were never heard? It's a frustrating state to be. You want something to happen, and there's no connection, there's no relationship.

And I want you to understand that Paul draws on that in verse 13. He says, You who were once far off have now been brought near. You've been brought near.

In the ancient world, to be able to come near to the king or to the power was something that granted you a great sense of comfort, but it also gave you particular blessings.

How many of you remember the story of Esther? And remember Esther? She'd been away from the king for a long time, and there was this threat against the Jewish nation, and Mordecai said, You better go talk to the king.

She said, Well, hey, I'm not real sure about going into his presence, because if I go into his presence and I'm not accepted, what are the consequences? What would happen? Death. And she went in, and the king invited her to come forward, and she received the blessing that came from that.

[30:26] In the ancient world, to be brought near was a distinct honor and a blessing. And Paul is writing to Gentiles who had no right to come close at all to the temple or to the worship that took place there, and they were distantly removed.

And here it says, Listen, you have now been made near. I want you to think with me just for a moment of what that must have meant to the Jew or the Gentile as they were thinking about that when they thought about the temple.

The temple had divisions. There was the outer wall, and then there was the court of the Gentiles, and then there were two other parts where you could go into, and there was finally the Holy of Holies.

Who all got to go into the Holy of Holies? One person, once a year, with sacrifice. And the Gentiles, they were allowed in the court of the Gentiles, but if they went past that, there was actually a stone. There was engraving that said, If you go past this, you go on pain of death. And they have actually found synagogues where there's inscriptions saying, Beyond this point, you go at your pain of death if you're a Gentile.

[31:40] And Paul writes, and he says, Listen, because of the blood of Christ, you who were once far off have now been brought near. You can come in.

You're close. I want you to think with me just for a moment of just the blessing that that is to us, of being able to come into the presence of God, being able to come and share with Him our burdens and our heartaches, and have that sense that He knows our need, and He's paying attention to what's going on in our life.

Have you ever felt like nobody cares and nobody knows? You ever been there? The truth of the matter is that God cares because He's your Father. And He invites you to come into His presence, and there He wants you to sense His love and His concern, and you have the right of coming into His presence.

Why? Because you're a good person? No. You look in the passage and mark what it says there in verse 13. We come near by the blood of Christ. That's pretty significant.

It's a reminder that we're brought near by the blood of Christ. The imagery of being brought near in the blood bring back the pictures of the Old Testament sacrifice. And remember, it was the sacrifice that allowed the Old Testament believer to have that access.

[33:01] And without the shedding of blood, there is no remission for sin. And so Paul is reminding the Gentile believer, the reason you have this privilege of access is because of the blood of Christ shed for all, shed once for all, and it is because of that that you have this privilege of being close.

I want you to turn over now, if you will, just move forward a little bit to verse 14 through 18, and mark what it says, For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and broken down in His flesh, the dividing wall of hostility.

That wall that marked off the Jew from the Gentile was a wall of hostility. And for the Gentile to cross across it was not a good career decision because it could jeopardize his life.

And Paul says, Listen, He has made us one. He abolished the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that He might create in Himself one new man. And in the body of believers in the New Testament church, is there a distinction between the Jew and the Gentile in terms of faith?

What's the answer? Not at all. No. One new man. Because of the blood of Christ, we are one in our spiritual ethnicity, and the other things are irrelevant, aren't they?

[34:13] I want you to understand that's important. I want you to mark also what it says there, that He might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

And He came and preached peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near. Christ's testimony and message was an encouragement. Listen, God is there beckoning you to come to Him and have peace through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. And then there in verse 18 it says, For through Him we both have access in one spirit to the Father. Through Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, we both have access in one spirit to the Father.

And I want you to ponder with me just for a moment of the blessing that we have in being able to come directly into His presence and come boldly making requests in our time of need.

Turn over in your Bible so we can follow this a little more closely. Turn over to Hebrews 4, verse 16. Hebrews 4, verse 16. The imagery of the book of Hebrews is all about the Old Testament Levitical priesthood and the practice of the sacrifices whereby the Old Testament saint had access.

[35:33] And as you know, the Old Testament saint particularly did not have access into the Holy of Holies, did not have the right of access. The high priest alone had that privilege once a year.

And yet here's what we read in verse 16. Let me read it to you. Hebrews 4, 16 or 15. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, talking about the Lord Jesus Christ, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin.

And then in verse 16. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Are you sitting there this morning with a burden and a difficulty that is overwhelming to you? The probability is that in the week that's passed, every one of us have been in the situation where it seems like the clouds of life are pressing us down.

What do we do? The passage says, and let me read it to you again, Let us then with confidence. Confidence. Growing up in India, I had a real tendency to play with knives and get cut.

[36:56] I have little nicks and scratches and cuts all over my body. One of the distinct advantages I had over all the other kids around me was that my father was the only surgeon within probably 30 miles.

And when I got cut, guess what my privilege was? I would hold on to the bleeding part and just walk right up to where dad was and say, Dad, I cut myself.

Again? I need to think about taking knives away from you. It never happened. But, you know, I'd just be holding on so it wasn't spurting or whatever else. And the next thing I know, we would get a Novocaine injection.

That was always painful. But after that, guess what happened? I was prof... Let me read this again so you don't miss this here. It says, You draw near with confidence.

I would come and I knew two things. I knew, number one, I'm getting in. And number two, it'll be better when I leave. Now, I had the blessing because of my relationship.

[38:02] Do you understand that? So let me ask you a question. When it seems like the wheels are coming off in your life, when it seems like there's more than you can bear, do you remember where you were and what you now have in Christ?

You have the right of access into the Holy of Holies to find help in time of need because of Jesus. And I would encourage you this morning under the burden that you are facing that what you would do is remind yourself, Man, Lord, I don't want to ever take my eyes off of what you've done for me ever again.

I wish that were true for all of us. I've got to tell you something. About three weeks ago, I came by my wife and I just told her, I said, How many of you have had those days where the clouds are just not in, but they're overwhelming you?

And it was one of those days, and it's been a long time since I've had one of those emotional, and I remember going to Judith and I just can't take it. And she says, What's wrong? I said, Well, here's the truth.

[39:11] I've taken my eyes off of Christ and I'm doing a Peter thing. And my wife is profoundly blunt. You know, she's not one of those, Oh, Tim, I'm so sorry. You know, I didn't get any of that.

It was something along the lines of, Well, why don't you stop sinning? I'll start right now. And that's what I did. That's what I did.

I said, Lord, will you forgive me for being so self-focused? And taking my eyes off the blessing of what you have done in saving me and the fact that your love doesn't change.

Let me read that passage again. Going back to Ephesians, and we'll close. Let me ask you, Let me ask you, Are you sitting here this morning and you have allowed Satan to rob you of the joy and certainty of the relationship you have in Christ?

And the clouds seem too much. This verse is for you. You've been brought near by the blood of Christ. Are you here this morning and your life is far more burdened with doubt and fear than it is with an abiding confidence that when this chapter of life ends, that the rest is all good in his presence?

[41:06] How many of you know how the story ends? When my story ends, I will be home with Jesus, and that's going to be good.

I wonder if there are some of you here today that do not know Christ, and really the biggest reason for the cloud and the uncertainty in your life is that you face an uncertain and fearful future in the hands of a holy God.

And I would plead with you in Christ's stead what it says in 2 Corinthians, Be reconciled to God. Scripture says it's profoundly simple. If you'll confess your sins, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall be saved.

And if you're sitting here today and you do not know Christ as your personal Savior, I'll tell you what, there is no reason to walk out that door without dealing with the subject the Scriptures make clear. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and you're one of them. And don't let your pride interfere with the humility that is necessary to confess Christ.

[42:17] Let's close in prayer. Our precious Father, Father, this morning as we revel in the fact that we who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ, we would ask that you would give to us a renewed sense of thanksgiving for the blessing of our salvation.

Not something that rises from a human emotion, but something that is the distinct work of the Spirit of God, that Christ alone would be exalted in our midst. Pray for us who are believers that our hearts would revel in this truth and rejoice in it and be strengthened.

And pray for those who are here today that do not know Christ, that today they would be convicted of their sins and trust in Jesus, in whom alone is salvation. We ask this in your precious name. Amen. Amen.