

# The Glory of the Gospel

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[ 0 : 00 ] Our gracious and heavenly Father, we come to you tonight because we recognize that what you have given us is something that we often don't aspire to hold on to or even grasp for. We ask that you would pour into us by your spirit a greater understanding of who you are in character and in nature, a greater understanding of what you have done by your son's person and work, and a greater understanding of your continual love for us by the illumination of the spirit in our own hearts. Our Father, we ask that what we know not, you would now give us. And what we are not, we pray that you would now, or what we have not, we pray that you would now give us to where what we are not, we ask that you would make us and transform us into the likeness of your holy and precious son.

We pray this in Jesus's name. Amen. Well, if you've got a Bible, I want to encourage you to turn to the book of Romans chapter 3. Book of Romans chapter 3. I know that some of you are new to me this evening, having not been here last night or today, and so it might be a little bit helpful for you to hear a brief about me. I said this morning I was raised in a Christian home, a church home, where my parents were first generation Christians, and they were always really very helpful on recognizing that my sister and I were very forgetful people to where they all wanted, they wanted to always put the gospel in front of us. You can even hear on camcorders, VHS tapes on their shoulders, where they would be teaching us the gospel, whether it's through, you know, Christmas time or Easter or whatever. On other seasons, they would be slightly making fun of us on these VHS tapes.

When we'd fall over, when we'd be forgetful or whatever, but the gospel was something that was always in front of us. I didn't grow up in a rebellious state by my own doing. I was always given, by the grace of God, kind of a guilty conscience, and the Lord really in His really sweet kindness kept me from a lot of things that I would have normally wanted to go to, and did want to go to, but out of just fear of punishment and pain, was kept from that, and I'm so thankful for that.

But that also put me in a position to think that my testimony was a little bit less than other people's. I grew up going to camps, Christian camps, things like Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Vacation Bible Schools, Sunday School, Backyard Bible Clubs, Good News Club, things like that.

And if you've ever been to, like, a Christian sports camp, all the speakers have these incredible testimonies of the Lord saving them to Himself through the most extraordinary events, like falling out of a helicopter or under fire from pistols and just stuff. And I'm like, I just went to Good News Club and heard that I was a sinner. The Lord is offering me Himself, and I'm like, that sounds pretty good to me. To where at a certain point when I was, you know, 14, 15, 16, was starting to not doubt my salvation, but actually doubt the veracity of the Lord's intervening power in my own life to where I think, in retrospect, it actually caused me to be a little quiet about God and His grace and mercy in my life. And I was expressing this to my youth pastor at the church that I grew up in, and he was very helpful, very good. We were out at Johnny's Express, which is like a burger shop, and we were out at Johnny's Express over lunch my freshman year of high school, and I was just kind of telling him, like, yeah, just, you know, it's just, like, I just don't have a good testimony. And, you know, he knew this was coming. He's probably done this a thousand times.

[ 3 : 42 ] And he was like, what do you mean you don't have a good testimony? And I was like, well, you know, you recount all things from other places. He's like, you mean to tell me that God Almighty sought and saved you, purchased you for himself, brought you to himself, and holds on to you forever and ever, and you don't think that's very good? And I was like, well, I mean, when you put it like that, it's pretty cool. And he goes, no, that is everyone's testimony in your life. That is your testimony that God on high saw you, a sinner, and saved you. And I was like, well, okay, that'll, that kind of changes things to where all of a sudden got a little more vocal, got a little more courageous, even to the point where you started kind of sharing God, not yourself, but God with other people,

whether it's on a baseball team or at a fraternity house or your best friend in a car where it's like, I've never actually told you this. So friends, I wonder who you think, who you think the gospel is for. Who do you think the gospel is for? Many people misunderstand the gospel, thinking that the gospel is exclusively for non-Christians. The gospel's for non-Christians.

It certainly is for them to hear, but the gospel is primarily, overwhelmingly, for God's people. The gospel is for God's people to believe in, to rest in, to find joy in, to find their purpose in, again and again. The gospel is the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. In my point in this sermon, I talked about the glory of the church this morning. I can't believe I've only been here for 24 hours. It's felt like a year and so much good stuff. I talked about the glory of the church. Tonight, I want to talk about the glory of the gospel. And my point in this sermon is that the gospel is something that you and I can never forget and must always practice. We must preach it. It's not a one-time thing to acknowledge. It's not something to know just for sharing. So I want to know four things about the gospel so I can reach out to you on a campus, so I can go to you after a loss, or even so that I can remind you of it. But the gospel is something that we don't just acknowledge.

[ 6 : 15 ] It's not something that we don't just know for sharing. It's not just something that we know in order to be decisive about who we are compared to others. But it is something we've got to know, and it's something we've got to preach all the time. And the audience is very surprising of whom we preach it to. Now, every good preacher or every good Christian values the preaching of the scriptures.

I love to hear really good sermons. I love to hear fine sermons. I was told by a seminary professor that mature Christians are easily edified. And I thought, man, I'm not easily edified. I need to be a mature Christian. But a Christian is easily edified by the heralding, proclaiming of the gospel. Since the Protestant Reformation, Reformed churches have done something so radically different than what churches did before them, where in the Protestant Reformation, Reformed churches actually placed the preaching of the word at the very center and even focal point of the Christian worship service. So it's no surprise here. This is a quarter of an inch platform, elevated of importance.

The very center thing here is the pulpit of which the gospel goes out. There are things behind me. There are things behind you. There are things in front of me, things in front of you. But the very center of the room is the preaching. It's why the pulpit and nothing else is the center. Now, it's even interesting. This is like a small diatribe. I do not care. Or no, no, I do care. It does not bother me when preachers do something different than this. But it's a personal conviction of mine that I stay actually behind this holy desk. Partly because I cannot walk and talk at the same time. But also, we have to realize that what is happening here, even to the point where you can see the tips of the pages on this scripture, always wanting our attention to be on the very word of God, recognizing that the very word of God is mediating something between you and me, but also especially between us and him, to where it is the focal point of everything that we have. Not just the preaching, but the gospel proclamation. We get excited about biblical preaching because of its power. We love being challenged, confronted, and changed by the heralding of God's word. We need to be good at preaching.

[ 8 : 38 ] But the preaching that goes on from this pulpit, this holy desk, as it's called, is not the only preaching that you and I must be concerned about. I appreciate that you're listening to me right now.

But that's not the only time that preaching should go on. To where I think that you must practice, you personally, don't know all your names, but thank you me imagining all of your names, all of your souls, you must personally practice preaching Christ.

You, individual Christian, must preach Christ. Now, I hope this sermon is helpful. It's coming in three parts. Every good sermon comes in three parts. First, I want you to recognize Christ's gospel from the scriptures. It's not just something people say, but it's something people were given. You can't preach Christ to yourself without recognizing the gospel. Second, I want you to place the gospel. Understanding where you can actually place it. Where Christ to you is nothing unless you regularly make him in his work known to you. And then third, I want to tell you how to preach Christ, especially to yourself. So three things there. The first one I want you to see is to recognize the gospel, and will be primarily for the rest of the time in Romans chapter 3, verses 19 through 22, I think, 23. So I want you to first recognize the gospel from the scriptures.

In order to preach Christ, you've got to know him. You can't preach Christ unless you know him. We all know that's logic. You've got to be a graduate of what he's done. It will only edify you to really know the good news of the scriptures. If you know the bare minimum, then I think you can only expect to have a bare minimum spiritual life. If you only know the bare minimum of the gospel, you can assure yourself that you will have a bare minimum spiritual life to where you have to go to a deeper knowledge of Jesus, understanding that you don't need a degree in theology, you don't need a ton of books, you don't need secret knowledge, but a rich, refined recognition of Jesus through the scriptures.

[10:42] So Romans 3, chapter 19, or chapter 3, wow, that'd be a long book. Romans chapter 3, verses 19 through 21 says this, now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law, no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Verse 21, but now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it. Here we see, I think, seven things. There are seven things that help us recognize the gospel here. So if you're just using the Bible, I'm going to walk through what I believe are clear, seven specific things about the gospel. The first one is that the law, it says, shows us that we are not righteous. The thing you got to know about the gospel first is that the law shows us that we are not righteous. A righteous person is someone who perfectly obeys the law of God.

A righteousness is a status of legal integrity that satisfies requirements of God's character. A lot of big words. Righteousness is a status of legal integrity that satisfies requirements of God's character.

And when Paul speaks of the law, what Paul means when he speaks the law, he means all of the scriptures. Oftentimes you'll hear of the law as the Pentateuch or the first five books of the Bible. When Paul is talking about the law, he means the whole thing, everything. He means the entire scriptures. Now, Jerry Bridges, one of my heroes, strikingly calls the law, quote, the transcript of God's nature and the rule of obedience that he requires of all human beings, the ethical commands scattered throughout the Bible. Basically, God lays out the standard through righteousness is perfect obedience.

You look at the law, you read the Bible, what is righteousness like? It would be you being perfect. But I think we can all recognize that we do not hit the mark. Turn over to the book of James.

[12:58] Book of James, past all the Pauline letters. Book of James, chapter 2. I don't like 10 books there. James, chapter 2. I'm going in verse 10.

I'm arguing from the scriptures that none of us hit the mark. James, chapter 2, verse 10. It says, for whoever keeps the law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

What James says and what Paul also says is that none of us are righteous. No, not one. If we even miss a part of it, then none of us or none of ourselves are righteous. Now, a year and a half ago, my wife gave birth to our son Bradley. And Bradley came two months early, which at the time, me, never having a child before, at the time you're like, all right, cool. You go down to the hospital. Brooke is not okay.

She goes into, I don't know what kind of state it is, but her body is very puffy, sorry. But her body is very puffy. Blood pressure is shooting through to where she goes to the hospital. One of her friends actually tricked her into taking her to the hospital so that she'd go. And they kept her there. I come 10 hours later. And they, in order to keep her calm, they say, oh, we'll probably deliver the baby in the next week or so, but we're going to keep her here. And we're like, hey, we love Oklahoma City. This is great. My in-laws live here. Maybe I can catch a minor league baseball game or whatever. They were doing all that to trick us because then they came to us the next morning about eight hours later and said, we're actually going to take the baby within the hour. The doctor's on his way. And they take Brooke and Bradley in there. The doctor comes to me and says, there is a very elevated chance that neither your wife or your baby survive the birth. And guys, I'm not in my right mind. I'm like, okay, we'll do well with this. I didn't even recall it until like three days later because about three days later, Bradley was born safely. Brooke is fine. We were in the hospital. Brooke was in the hospital for about eight days after that. She's there. She's not okay. Bradley's doing well in the NICU, but there's constantly a bag of blood above Brooke's hospital bed. I don't know what is supposed to happen here. So my dad walks in the room and he's like, why is there blood there?

And I was like, I don't know because she had birth. And he goes, that's not a thing. And I was like, I mean, I don't know. And he was like, I think something happened. So you look into it more. Brooke had almost bled out.

[15:27] Bradley almost died. Thankfully, by the grace of God, she was given transfusions for several days. Now, everyone look. Let's all laugh. Okay, now look back at me. She was given several blood transfusions for the next several days. All of those bags of blood were good. What would have happened if Brooke was given a bag of blood with one ounce of HIV? One percent of the bag, one drop of a bag that had a disease in it? Would you say, oh, I want that. I'm satisfied with that bag of blood.

You'd be like, no, no. If it has one drop of something that is pure, throw the whole thing out. The law shows us that we are not righteous. I hear all the time, you hear all the time, everyone hears all the time, from a wandering grandchild, they're a pretty good kid.

From a wayward grandparent, they're really nice at Christmas. But according to the gospel, the law shows us that we are not righteous. The point of this is that God will not accept you because you're a decent person, because you're 99% pure.

He says you're not a decent person. Now, in other parts, he says you're not even close. In fact, you're impure. The law calls you unrighteous. The law calls you a sinner.

The second thing that we see from this passage is that righteousness from God comes apart from the law. Look at verse 21 again. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law.

[17:23] We cannot achieve, you and I cannot attain, righteousness on our own at all. But the good news of the gospel is that God actually provides righteousness for us. The righteousness of God is established in the perfect righteousness of Jesus, who through his sinless life and his death, in obedience to the Father's will, perfectly fulfilled the entire law of God.

Now, the word here, manifest, you might have there in your copy. Mine has been manifested. Manifest means become clearly revealed in the senses and judgments. The righteousness of God has become clearly revealed in the senses of judgment apart from the law. Where God's gift of righteousness is a real righteousness, worked out in real circumstances by a real person. What we mean by this is that when Jesus, when the Son of God eternally existed and came and was incarnated or came at the incarnation and then lived in life, his righteousness is because the life that he lived was perfectly sinless. Now, statistics are all over the place on was Jesus perfectly sinless? Was he a great guy? Did he do really good things?

The Bible is explicitly clear. Friend, if you have any doubt at all, the Bible is explicitly clear that Jesus was 100% righteous, which means that he was 100% rich or righteous sinless. He was perfect in his life, even to the point where he was perfect in his death. In his life, he perfectly lived and obeyed unlike us, unlike Adam. In his death, he completely paid the penalty of a broken law. Everything they did was good. So from the standpoint of obedience to the law and paying the penalty for breaking the law, he perfectly fulfilled the law of God. He did what we couldn't do and he did what we chose not to do.

And by this, God declares, think of it, us righteous on the basis of the real accomplished righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is the term called imputed or credited to us through faith.

The effect of this is the overwhelming evidence of Isaiah chapter 61 verse 10, that God declares you righteous, not by your righteousness, but by Jesus's righteousness. A third thing we see that the gospel brings to knowledge is that righteousness from God is received through faith in Jesus Christ.

[19:58] You see this in verse 22. So my point, righteousness from God is received through faith in Jesus. It says there in verse 22, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

I've heard it said that faith is the hand by which the righteousness of Christ is received. Faith is the hand by which the righteousness of Christ is received. Now, the word faith is a noun.

I hope that you're impressed by that. It's a noun and it has no verbal form in English. Instead, we use the word believe, oftentimes a replacement for faith. Do you have faith?

Do you believe? We see this in Acts chapter 16 verse 31. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved. The scriptures are clear that we are to believe in, trust in, have faith that the Son of God clothed in our humanity, Jesus lived a perfect life and then died on the cross for our sins. We believe in that to be true and that is the

gospel.

Where Jesus is the object of our faith and belief. I don't remember when I first heard that, that Jesus ought to be the object of our affection, not the religious practice. You know, I grew up in a, well, I grew up in Oklahoma. There might be four Catholic friends in Oklahoma where their entire religion is by what? Not the object, but the activity. The activity brings you in to the joy of the Lord. Whereas the Christian faith brought to us in the scriptures is that Jesus is the object of our faith. Faith again is merely the hand that receives the gift of God and God through his spirit even opens our hand to receive that gift. There's tension here and I don't think there needs to be.

[ 21 : 52 ] But what is faith? Every summer I'm allotted two to three weeks, started as one, now we're at three, two to three weeks of a reading sabbatical where my elders afford me time to get away from my normal duties, preaching, counseling, typing in the bulletin, things like that to where I get away and I just read on a particular doctrine, a particular subject for like eight or nine hours a day. Now I know what you're saying, man, that sounds terrible. No, no, I'm in a pool half the time, so don't feel bad for me.

I find another person at church and be like, hey man, can I read, can I read on the doctrine of justification at your pool for four hours tomorrow? And one of the summers I got to study on the doctrine of justification, it became so evident that during the Protestant Reformation, they actually categorized for us, I think in a really helpful way, what is biblical faith? What is biblical faith? You may have heard a lot of ways that you use the word faith. If you believe it, you can achieve it. If you're down and out and your wife has cancer, she just needs more faith and she can be healed. What is faith according to the scriptures? Using the acronym K-A-T, an improper way to spell cat, so don't teach your kids to spell cat this way, K-A-T, knowing the Lord Jesus Christ according to the scriptures, ascending to him, and then trusting him with everything in your life. That's what it means to have faith. Knowing the Lord Jesus Christ, going to him, and trusting in him with everything. Not stopping short of any of those things. It's great to trust him, but what if you don't know him? What are you trusting in? It's great to go to him, but what if you hold things away like the rich young ruler? Having faith in Christ is knowing Christ, ascending to Christ, and trusting him with your entire life, and it's received through faith in Jesus. Now, as an aside here, a little bit of my hobby horse is understanding that someone is regenerated and then they have faith. So, God, by his spirit invades your life, changes your heart to where your affections now look at him and respond in repentance and faith. Because if it's the other way around, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and then he regenerates your heart, he's responding to you. You're in charge of him. But according to our word, righteousness from God is received through faith. Fourth thing, righteousness of God is available to everyone on the same basis because all have sinned. It's available to everyone. Righteousness is available to everyone on the same basis because all have sinned. Verse 22, the second part. Mine has a comma.

[ 24 : 42 ] No, mine has a period. For there is no distinction for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. God sees no distinction in the seriousness and worsening of sin. He treats all people equally because of their sin. He treats all people equally because of their sin. All may not be equally guilty, but all are guilty. Like the difference between getting a 20 out of 100 or a 40 out of 100.

Both people fail. They both get an F. You might have murdered someone. You may have lusted after someone. But God sees that as guilty. Failed. Both scores are failing. The first purpose of God's method of salvation through Christ's death is to deliver us from guilt and death. And the point here is the business of God in salvation. It is not of your goodness that you are delivered from. It is not your goodness that you are delivered from. It is your guilt that you are delivered from. The joy of the gospel is that it is available to everyone on the same basis. I have not been pressed up against on any format of my upbringing or character or genes. I mean, my town is like 98% white.

Now, within that though, depending on the north side of town, you've got a certain group of Germans from the west side of town of a certain group of Germans. Whereas the gospel says it goes to all of them, even though they want to have two different churches. And they did for a while. The beauty of the gospel is that it looks at you and it sees you as opposite of God's righteousness. And it deals with you on the basis of your guilt and frees you from that. Fifth thing you see is that all who believe in Jesus, think of all who believe in Jesus, they are justified.

They are justified by God's work. All who believe in Jesus are justified by God's work. Look at verse 24. They are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is Christ Jesus. To be justified is to be forgiven from any charge of guilt and to be declared absolutely righteous. We are

not only cleared from all of God's wrath because of our sin, but we are personally accepted by God because of Christ. Justification is like the two sides of a coin where one side says not guilty and then you turn another, turn it around and it says the righteousness through Christ. The doctrine of justification is the completed work of Jesus and it's done completely by him. A sixth thing you see of the gospel truth in this passage is that Christians are justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

[ 27 : 55 ] They're justified not by their own works or by their own capability, but they're justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Look at verse 24. They are justified as a gift of grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. At this point, it'll be helpful to distinguish between justification and a simple pardon. We look at the doctrine of justification where God declares to all of the world, this person is mine, forgiven, which is different from a pardon. I think you and I think often as justification in the same way that we look at a pardon. A pardon is just letting someone off the hook. Maybe you've been pulled over. I have. What do you want? You do not want justice. You want a pardon.

One, decades ago. I don't know if anyone here was alive then, but there was a president named Richard Nixon and things happened. Things happened. The people in the 1970s saw that things happened, saw that a man exit office, saw that another president took the throne, you will. And one of the first actions that Gerald Ford did as president of the United States was he pardoned Richard Nixon. And so many people hated that. They couldn't believe it. They were incensed. It was like almost bringing on its own right. They couldn't believe that that was happening. They couldn't believe that Richard Nixon was being pardoned. Why? Because they wanted him to feel pain. Some wanted him to go to jail.

Some wanted him to be flogged or whatever, but Richard Nixon just went off to California. It's important to know that our redemption, our salvation in Christ was not given to us by a mere pardon. Justice was, according to the scriptures, satisfied where the penalty for sins was paid in full by a very bloody, cosmically wrathful death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christians are justified through the redeeming, bloody, deathly work of Jesus on the cross. So they were justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Seventh, finally on point one, God presented Jesus as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith. Look at verse 25. Whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance, he had passed over former sins. Now, some Bible translations rightly use the word propitiation when translating this Greek word. Propitiation is rarely part of your and I's vocabulary. It is a word though that we've got to know. Like put it up on a poster in your office. Propitiation in the context of salvation means that Jesus appeases the wrath of God against sin. So the Lord Jesus Christ, by a sacrifice on the cross, appeased and turned aside God's just and holy wrath, the wrath that we should have suffered. Now, we all know this. I'm from the state of Oklahoma. The state of Oklahoma is much like Colorado. It's very flat, very ugly. Nobody wants to go there. I'm kidding. Everyone wants to go here. It's very beautiful. It is not flat. One of the things that is so amazing about Oklahoma is there are zero natural lakes in Oklahoma. There are zero natural lakes, but everyone likes a good boat. Everyone likes a good lake house. So Oklahoma decided, don't know who these people were, 80, 100 years ago. Let's build a bunch of lakes. Not just for drinking water. We've got streams for that, but let's build a bunch of lakes. How do you build a lake? You build a giant dam that stops a ton of water, but that's not the end of the story. When you build a giant dam, a dam, when you build a giant dam, it stops a bunch of water. It allows for boats to go everywhere. It allows for lake houses to stop or be built. It allows for beautification to be elevated above these streams. But every now and then, that dam needs to release a ton of water so that the dam doesn't overflow, so that all these houses don't get waterlogged, so that these boats can stay in their own place. You got to release some of that water that's coming from this dam, even to the point where it becomes actually a thing, where people, when they're at the lake, sitting on top of the water, go back to their dock, go to the other side of the dam, and watch all this water come out of a dam. It's a beautiful thing. It's an incredible thing. But you've got to know here what propitiation means. Propitiation means that God in Christ stops all of the wrath of God for your sin, and none of it empties out. There's no doubt, and did he stop all of it? Or is this God's wrath being poured on me little by little by little by little? Think of the book of Job, the character of Job. Was that God's wrath pouring out on Job? Did the dam just not be built high enough? Did they not just build an excellent point a little bit at a time? No, it says so clearly in the scriptures that Jesus

was a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith to the point where he absorbed all of God's wrath. It is not diverted anywhere else. A very important point is that propitiation is taken by us as sinners through faith in Jesus's blood, where the blood of Christ referring to his death is to be the object of our faith by which we take his propitiation. The blood of Christ, it says, in connection with our salvation is a regular expression in the New Testament writers occurring about 30 times. It's the blood of Christ that cleanses us from the defilement of sin. It's the blood of Christ that purifies us from all of sin. Friends, out of seven things, this is the gospel of Jesus. Now, I want you to take and recognize the gospel of Jesus Christ according to the scriptures and actually place it in a particular area. Place it in a particular area in your life. I think you should take the gospel according to the scriptures and place it at the very front of your life. And the reason of this, practically, is that life will push back on your faith. Life will push back on your theology. Life, and sometimes even yourself, will push back against you. And in situations like this, you do not need to be clever. You do not need to be brilliant or even bold and courageous. But you need to be consumed with the truth of God as revealed in scripture, recognizing that that is the thing prodding you forward. That is the thing driving you forward.

[ 34 : 58 ] The gospel is the thing that brings you forward. When life pushes, you can push back, not with your own power or prestige, but with the very gospel. Preach Christ, his life, his death, and his resurrection to yourself. You, Christian, need to preach this gospel to yourself, where you place the gospel where the world tries to place its trouble. The world tries to place its trouble in your very heart, in your very soul. You're a loser. You're inadequate. God hates you. Everything is going against you because of you, but because God is who he is and Christ is who he is. We place the gospel where the world tries to place its trouble in our very heart, in our very soul. When life becomes perplexing or even painful, we often start to, and I didn't get this from, I got this from Martin Lloyd-Jones, we often start to listen to ourselves and our doubts, rather than speaking to ourselves the very things that we need to hear.

Martin Lloyd-Jones wrote of this in his book called Spiritual Depression, where he preached like, I don't know, 13 or 14 sermons on spiritual depression. Spiritual depression is where you just don't like yourself spiritually. He writes this, have you ever realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Somebody's talking. Who is talking? Yourself is talking. To practice that right now, I want to command all of you to not think of a pink elephant. Don't do it. I just told you not to do it. I'm not thinking of a pink elephant for you either, am I? You are thinking of a pink elephant, whether it's the size of Dumbo or something dancing on a drum in a cartoon, you're thinking of a pink elephant. You are telling yourself of that pink elephant, aren't you? Yourself is telling you of that. We see so many times in the scriptures where we are to preach to ourselves truth, reminding ourselves of God. Who is God? What is God? What has God done? What has God pledged himself to do? We're to place the gospel at the front of our lives. What's that mean? We're to preach Christ, we're to preach his gospel to ourselves. Now, preaching to ourselves is the act of applying the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus to our own lives with the aim of experiencing the sanctifying grace of God leading to ongoing faith and repentance. In short form, it is preaching to ourselves Jesus with the aims of experiencing God's sanctifying work that is sought out in faith and repentance in our lives. You and I must sit under the preaching of God's word, but we also must preach Christ to ourselves. Place the gospel before your every step and your every reflection within every lesson and before every aim. I'd imagine some of you are like others, where if I were to honestly ask you, how's it going? You would say, it's fine. And I always hilariously go, hush. I say hush to words, but I say hush, they're kids. No, it's not. Like, be honest. And then you'll go into a state of, here's how it's not going fine, and it's because this, this, and this. I'm a loser, God hates me, no one else likes me. To where it's at that point that you've got to preach the gospel to yourself. I told a group here afterwards earlier this morning, my wife has gone through a ton of turmoil with losing children. To where I was at a lunch with several other pastors about a month ago, and I asked this thing, what do you want God to do before the end of 2024 that only God can do?

[ 39 : 18 ] And so, you know, they have the answers, and then they turned the question on me, and I was like, I haven't thought of an answer. I just thought it was a cool question to ask. And I said, well, honestly, I would love for us to be pregnant. I don't think it's going to happen, and honestly, I just constantly feel like this is the worst thing that could ever happen in my life.

And one of them just said, who tells you that? And I was like, well, I just did. And he's like, you need to preach the gospel to yourself. And I was like, I'm actually working on a message like that right now. All of us need to preach the gospel to ourselves of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and eternal reign on high. It won't absolve us from the sad feelings that we go through, but it will remind us of who we are under his care. Now, how do you do this? Third and finally, how do you do this? How do you preach the gospel to yourself? You and I must rehearse the gospel of Christ. This is when preaching to ourselves is most critical. We need to hear the truth and ponder what is real. How, though? How do we preach this to ourselves? How do we rehearse the gospel? How do we preach Christ to ourselves? I think it's helpful in three ways. Three ways. Number one, point three, number one, look to God through his word. One of the most damaging and dangerous things I think happening in evangelicalism, bold claim, one of the most dangerous things I think happening in evangelicalism is placing not the pulpit scriptures, but the people at the center of our worship. But it's about you. Are you happy? Are you satisfied? Would you like coffee? Did you come here for this? Are you leaving because of that? You might as well call the church Mirror Church as it is aimed to reflect you, where we don't see God's word as what we're to receive that morning, but rather more of ourselves. But we are to preach Christ to ourselves by lifting our hearts to heaven. Psalm 73 says that, but when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task until I went into the sanctuary of God. How many of us have had a wearisome task? How many of us had times where we just were wondering and hoping to understand what God was doing in our lives, and the psalmist said, I was wondering about that until I went into the sanctuary of God? The point there is to receive God's truth. Preaching to ourselves is not a self-centered discipline. It's actually the opposite. I'm not talking to myself about myself. I'm talking to myself about God. It's a Christ-centered action. It's not looking in. It's looking up. In our town, we only have one true Anglican church.

One of the things I love about this, it's a beautiful building, and one of the things I love about this beautiful building is that all the sides of it have red doors. I love that. Ours have see-through doors. I mean, the imagery there. Theirs have red doors. Ours have see-through doors. And I love this because these red doors remind us that when I, sinner, walk through these doors, I am reminded instantly of the blood that brought me into God's family. And that blood was not mine, but a slain lamb.

[ 42 : 37 ] Other traditions have like a giant Bible. Starts in the back, and it parades itself forward valiantly above the heads of whoever's bringing it down and placing it before everyone's eyes. Obviously, the symbolism there as the word comes from us, not to us. So look to God through the word.

That's how you start preaching the gospel to yourself. Second, speak to your need. Psalm 73. Speak to your need. When my soul is embittered, when I was pricked in heart, I was brutish and ignorant. I was like a beast toward you. Preaching to ourselves mean we need to speak to our need, address our need, and our greatest problem, our greatest need, is to be freed from our sin, to be cleansed from our sin, to have our unbelief become belief. Our greatest problem is our sin and unbelief in particular. We need to properly diagnose our sickness to find the medicine of the word. Now, we don't need to beat ourselves up. We don't need to physically or spiritually flog ourselves. Preaching to ourselves is not a gruesome contemplation, but a pinpointing of our unbelief and idolatry. We need to do this so we can more accurately speak truth to ourselves. The aim is to stop doubting our God as Redeemer. The aim is to apply the healing truth of God's word to our specific struggles and weaknesses. So, we need to look to God through his word. You think it's simply as we need to have the Bible. Second of all, we need to confess to the Lord of what is true in our own hearts. Thirdly, we need to set our hope on the person of Christ. Psalm 73 goes on, nevertheless, I am continually with you. You hold my right hand. Think of all the things that were from it. I want to understand. I have a wearisome task until I went into the sanctuary of God. When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, I was brutish and ignorant. I was like the beast toward you. Nevertheless, I am continually with you and you hold my right hand. Preaching to ourselves is the personal act of applying the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus to our own lives with the aim of experiencing the sanctifying grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, bringing about ongoing faith and repentance in our own lives. The gospel is makes. The gospel is what makes and sustains a Christian.

Friend, the gospel is for you. This is our great hope. It's the message that we need to hear the most. That we are reconciled to God, that he is our God, and we are his people, that our sins are forgiven, and eternal life is all ours through the person and the work of Christ Jesus. This is where all preaching must lead, both mine and yours. And when we lose sight of this good news, that the voices in the world begin to overpower the words that we have heard so often, we need to preach even louder. Friends, you've got to preach to yourself because the world is broken. The devil is devious. You are deceitful. Your heart is shady. You need the gospel. Preaching to ourselves doesn't mean that we must always... Or preaching to our gospel... No. Let me read the words that I wrote. Preaching to ourselves does not mean we must always be in the word, but that the word must always be in us.

It means we must pray through our theology and circumstances. And I'm convinced now, more than ever, that this is the personal discipline that is most necessary for our progress in the faith.

[ 46 : 10 ] Friends, preach the gospel to yourself. For the glory of God and for the good of your own soul. Who is the gospel for? It came from the Lord on high to you. He didn't want to take it away.

Remind yourself of him. Let's pray. Gracious and heavenly Father, we thank you for the absolute clarity of what it means to be reconciled to you in faith and in trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray that you would make and fashion our lives to where we always want, to clarify the gospel in our pits of despair and mountains of joy. We pray that you would give us opportunities to be reminded, even from others, of what the gospel means. We pray that we would cherish the different liturgical elements of a worship service where we're trying to put the tenets of the faith that you have given us by Christ Jesus ever before us. We aim that you would give us the ability and joy of preaching the gospel to ourselves. We thank you for it. We pray this in Christ Jesus. Amen.