

Gospel Identity: Ephesians 1:3-14

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[0 : 00] Please take out your copy of God's Word. Turn with me to the book of Ephesians, chapter 1. I ask also at the same time that you take out the handout that was given to you on the way in.

I hope it was that we managed to pull that off. If not, it's okay. That won't be detrimental to your study. The intention there is to give you a summary statement for the sermon today that you might mark it up, take a pen out and write, write additional notes.

I would encourage you to take the text that I provided for you, not because I don't want you to have a copy of God's Word open in front of you. I don't want to remove things from their context.

It's not what we're trying to accomplish by handing this printed out to you, but I want you to be able to mark on it. I want you to have the same translation that I'm using, which is the ESV, which is not an inspired translation.

It's just a good one. It's okay if you have another, but this way you'll have those words there in front of you. If you're new to our fellowship, we typically do verse-by-verse exposition, and we have been as of late working through the book of Acts.

[1 : 17] This has been the great labor in front of us. We are on the cusp of starting chapter 11, but because we have just started as a church another church, we've multiplied into two congregations.

Christ Family Church has become Christ Family Church Dahlonga. Welcome. And Christ Family Church Oakwood meeting really kind of flowery branch, but we're calling it CFC Oakwood, and they're meeting this morning even now.

And we thought it would be good to take some time to focus and refocus, make sure that we're all on the same page, and we're all moving forward together into this next year. Just as a precursor to this, I really don't enjoy topical preaching.

I enjoy preaching. I enjoy teaching things systematically, or having you at least understand things systematically. But it is a real work, because we come to a topic like gospel identity.

Who are we in Christ? And there is so much to say. Even just listening to the three songs that we've sung, there's different things I'm going, oh, we could talk about that, and we could talk about it.

[2 : 33] And my head is starting to rewrite the sermon that I've already written. So I'll do my best this morning. We're going to look at Ephesians 1, verses 3-14.

And I know for some of you, that really gets you excited. Ephesians 1. We are not going to look at it in every bit of detail. And if that dramatically disappoints you, then I would suggest you care a bit too much about soteriology.

Possibly. Possibly. But before I read it, let me start by reading to you the summary statement for this morning about our gospel identity, which reads as follows, By grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone, we are justified before God, forgiven and adopted by Him.

This gospel identity is our great motivation for worship. Now Ephesians 1, the word of the Lord, beginning in verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved.

[3 : 58] In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth.

In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of His glory.

In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.

Beloved, this is God's word to us. It was written for His glory and for our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

Now, before I break down the summary statement, I want to just take a few moments to look at verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

[5 : 24] And you see this word root here being blessed. Blessed, blessed, and blessing. And I want to just point out to us very quickly that just in verse 3, we note that there is a blesser, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You will note that I read that word, blessed. I say blessed be. Not blessed be, but blessed be. And then when we get to who has blessed, we tend to read that differently.

And the reason for that is because they are not the same Greek word. It's important to note this.

The Greek word here translated, blessed be, is eulogio, which means blessed one or praised one.

We get the word eulogy from this Greek word. A word of commendation. Typically, you think of a eulogy being preached at a funeral. All of the praise that's given to the person that has passed.

All of the reasons that we love this person and the reasons that we will miss this person. Here, Paul is not communicating that God needs our blessing, but that He is already the blessed one.

[6 : 44] He is worthy of praise. He is worthy of honor. And He is the blesser. He has blessed us in Christ.

So who are those who are blessed? Here meaning joyful, enriched. Those who are in Christ.

Those who have believed in Christ are blessed by God. Apart from faith in Christ, a person is in a grievous state.

Romans 3.23-26 reads, All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. There's no one exempt from this.

Everybody in the world is the condition of man. Apart from Christ, all have sinned. They all fall short. They all fail to measure up to the holiness required of God on our behalf to be pleasing before Him.

[7 : 43] And this puts us in this grievous state because God hates sin. And because God hates sinners, they are an affront to His character.

The person who is in the state of sin openly and willingly rejects God as king. Good king. Given to us a good word and we disregard it. And we have it as our own.

It's a saying that God hates sin but loves the sinner. And that's so true in part, but it's not completely true.

Let me show you why. Psalm 11.5 says, The Lord tests the righteous, but His soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.

The person who has not placed their faith in Christ is in a grievous state because the wrath of God is being stored up for them. Beloved, we must understand this.

[8 : 49] I hear on a regular basis about people who come and visit and why they won't come back. And some of you might find yourselves in that place this morning. One of my favorite complaints is that I don't make people feel good about themselves.

building up your self-esteem. Be damned if you'll be damned.

Care about your souls. This is a weighty thing that we do. Considering the truth of God and what it means for our lives matters. Doctrine matters.

The truth opened up to you. This is why I say every Sunday, this is God's Word to us. You would do well to listen to it. Believe His promises. Obey His commands.

You must understand that God hates sin. And God hates sinners. He will punish sinners. But the wonderful truth of the Gospel is that at the same time, God loves sinners.

[9 : 59] Praise Him. I was loved by God and saved by God as a sinner. So the statement, God hates sin but loves the sinner is partially true.

It should say, God hates sin and hates the sinner and loves the sinner. And it's a difficult thing for us to comprehend that because we're not God.

God. And we fail so often to understand God by His revealed Word because we want to put ourselves in His shoe. How dare we? We can't possibly understand how it is that God can both hate and love at the very same time, but He does.

And there's a beautiful picture of this. The great high point of redemption, the cross of Christ. where He loves us as He hates us.

He pours out His wrath on Jesus. The hatred towards us. Jesus takes us. Propitiation. He takes on our sin and He pours His wrath out on it.

[10 : 59] It's a great loving act on His part. Verse 24. Romans 3. And are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation, a blood sacrifice replacement to be received by faith.

This was to show God's righteousness, God's perfection, because in His divine forbearance, He had passed over former sins. It was to show His righteousness at the present time so that He might be just punishing sin in Christ and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

If you have believed in Christ, you are saved by God from God to God. God is the blesser.

Those who have placed faith in Christ are the blessed. What is the blessing? Paul here writes that we're blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

And there's much that could be said at this point. But the idea of it being a spiritual blessing speaks not to the extent of the blessing or the particular outworking of the blessing.

[12 : 26] Paul's not here talking about spiritual gifting in its entirety. What he's speaking to is the source of the blessing. It comes from God Himself.

We are blessed spiritually because God is Spirit and has given us blessing. Not only that, but He's given us every spiritual blessing. We have all the power that we need to love as we should, to have peace and joy, to find contentment, to be obedient in all things, etc., etc., etc.

And He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places which refers to the domain of God. Not just future blessing, although future blessing is included in this, but present blessing now as those of us who have placed faith in Christ are part of God's kingdom.

If you have believed in Christ, you are blessed in Christ with a new identity. A gospel identity. which I have summarized with a portion of today's summary statement, the middle portion of it, we are justified before God, forgiven, and adopted by Him.

And I'll speak at length to the portion of the summary statement, but let's take the statement in its written order and ask the question first, what is the cause of our gospel identity?

[13 : 47] If you have placed faith in the personal work of Jesus Christ, you are justified before God, forgiven and adopted by Him, but what is the cause of this gospel identity?

The first part of our statement, by grace alone, through faith alone, in the personal work of Jesus Christ alone. Beloved, we undoubtedly must believe in Christ.

I like the clarification. You have heard me or you will hear me if you stick around, in the person and work of Jesus Christ. I think my head's tallied at least a dozen times.

I've said it already this morning. In the person and the work, to believe that Jesus is who He said He was, that He is the Son of God, and that He lived a perfect life, that He died a sinner's death, that He was raised on the third day, that He's ascended and seated with the Father.

We must believe these things. When we say we must believe in Christ, it means that we believe all of those things. It doesn't mean that we believe that Jesus was a good teacher, but that He was the Son of God.

[14 : 49] That we place our faith in Him for the remediation of our sin. Not just that we believe that He could be our buddy. There's specifics about what we must believe about Christ to be saved by Him.

But undoubtedly, we must believe. Paul writes in Romans 10.9, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead work, you will be saved. Our text this morning confirms this. You can look at verse 12 and verse 13. I underline these with squiggly marks on my page. So that we who were the first to what?

Hope in Christ. There's a work on our part. We hoped in Christ. In verse 13, in Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him.

So something happens. Something takes place in our conversion. We place faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. So you could say that our faith is the cause of our gospel identity.

[16 : 05] That would be accurate. Our faith is the cause of our gospel identity, but what is the cause of our faith? What made dead people who were bent against the worship of God suddenly decide to worship God?

Our text this morning speaks to this. I don't intend at this moment to make a complex soteriological argument. If you don't know what soteriology is, that's probably okay. It's the study of the doctrines of salvation.

I hope you're familiar with the doctrines of salvation though. I don't care to work out all the intricacies of such doctrines, precious though they are, but for the sake of your understanding of your gospel identity.

If you've placed faith in Christ, person and work, you need to see that God is the cause of your faith. It's very important to see the way in which God brings things about faith in the life of a believer. I don't want to get into a debate about this. These doctrines are taught to you to give you a pillow to rest your head on and I want to show you why.

[17 : 21] Note with me some phrases and some verses in our text. I put these in parentheses if you're marking yours up. verse 4, He, being God, chose us in Him, being Jesus Christ, when?

Before the foundation of the world. Don't make this too complex, beloved. Paul's not trying to pull some semantical tricks on us here.

Read it as it reads. It's the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. Before all of this came to be, before original sin, there was a plan in place. Christ was always plan A. Never a plan B. And God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Very last part of verse 4 and verse 5.

I don't understand why the numbers fall this way. In love, He predestined us according to the purpose of His will.

[18 : 31] Again, according to His purpose in verse 9. Verse 11. Having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.

It's very difficult to get around this. And I know that for some of you, your brains are racing out implications. Stop. Calm down for a minute and look at what Paul's trying to communicate to us. He's simply trying to say that our faith was brought about by God. Why is that going to be important? I'll tell you momentarily. Don't get away from this.

The word predestined is such a scary word this day. But I'll tell you what it means. In Greek, it means decided beforehand or predetermined.

Paul's statement in verse 4 so beautifully defines the word for us. Chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. Predetermined.

[19 : 34] Decided beforehand that we would believe in Christ. So what is the cause of our gospel identity? Ultimately, God.

Specifically, God's grace to us. In His loving kindness, He brought about faith in us. If you look just a little further on in Ephesians 2, beginning in verse 8, Paul says, For by grace you have been saved through faith.

And this is not your own doing. Paul's referring here to the faith, not to the grace. And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God.

Not a result of works. Why? So that no one may boast. Oh, proud me, I have faith.

Oh, poor pitiful me, I would not have faith apart from Christ. Oh, Christ is to be praised. Why is this doctrine important to your understanding of your gospel identity?

[20 : 40] It's important because your identity is secure. It was wrought by God. He brought it about and He will not change His mind.

God made you and He will keep you. Numbers 23, 19. God is not man that He should lie or of son of man that He should change His mind.

Has He said and will He not do it? Or has He spoken and will He not fulfill it? Paul says in Romans 8, verse 29 and 30, for those whom He foredo, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of a son in order that He might be the firstborn or preeminent among many brothers.

And those whom He predestined, He also called. And those whom He called, He also justified. And those whom He justified, He also glorified. Future tense, one day we will be made entirely perfect and be in His presence forever.

So who has brought about this gospel identity that we're speaking about today? It's God, beloved. You may not know this, but I call you beloved.

[21 : 55] I'm hoping that I'm referring to everyone in the room. When I say beloved, I'm referring to Christians. Jesus calls His own Son, God calls His own Son, Jesus, beloved.

And that's a title passed on to us, loved in Christ. Adopted sons and daughters of the Most High. So what is our gospel identity?

Again, here we are, middle of the phrase, we are justified before God, forgiven and adopted by Him. We are justified before God.

To be justified before God means to be declared righteous before God as our judge. It's a courtroom term.

Standing before a judge and the judge not only dismisses our offense, our sin has been forgiven, but also declares us perfect.

[22 : 54] There's two sides to justification. Right? Verse 4 says that we should be holy and blameless before Him. If you are in Christ, if you have believed in Him, you stand before God justified.

And there's really not another great word for this word. Two sides of the coin. Debt canceled and a deposit has been made.

Christ took your sin. The debt has been canceled. Christ gave you His righteousness. You're seen as perfect before God. We are justified, beloved.

Important, important doctrine to understand who we are. We've been forgiven. Verse 7, in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses.

We have been adopted. Verse 5, He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ. And ladies, it's okay that Paul is using this terminology because culturally, you want to be a son.

[24 : 03] Sons got inheritance. Sons took over the Father's place. Women at this time had very little rights to inheritance. Very little.

They needed to marry into family to have those things. So, to call you a son of God is not a gender offense in this way. We've been adopted as sons through Jesus Christ.

And I fear in my own mind and sometimes then in your minds that here as we hold high God and we present Him as sovereign King, as ruler, as creator and sustainer, which He is, all of those things that we sometimes forget to call Him Father.

And as we talk about Christ as the prophet, priest, and king, supreme in all things, we forget to call Him friend.

Our relationship is deep and intimate with the Lord of the universe. And this is an astounding reality. J.I. Packer, in his work entitled Knowing God, which you should read, wrote the following, that justification by which we mean God's forgiveness of the past together with His acceptance for the future is the primary and fundamental blessing of the gospel is not in question.

[25 : 23] Justification is the primary blessing because it meets our primary spiritual need. We all stand by nature under God's judgment. His law condemns us. Guilt gnaws at us, making us restless, miserable, and in our lucid moments afraid.

We have no peace in ourselves because we have no peace with our Maker. So we need the forgiveness of our sins and assurance of a restored relationship with God more than we need anything else in the world.

And this, the gospel offers us before it offers us anything else. But contrast this now with adoption. Adoption is a family idea conceived in terms of love, and viewing God as Father.

In adoption, God takes us into His family and fellowship. He establishes us as His children and heirs. Closeness, affection, and generosity are at the heart of the relationship.

To be right with the God, the judge, is a great thing. But to be loved and cared for by God, the Father, is greater. this is who we are in Christ.

[26 : 37] Accepted by God and drawn into a familial relationship with Him. And beloved, this is based in His work before the foundation of the world that we might have faith and believe in the personal work of Jesus Christ.

I hope that even if that's a strange doctrine to you, that you could see the beauty of it. I hope to say, I can rest in that. That in the midst of all of the best that I am, I am God's in Christ.

That's our gospel identity. That's what He's done on our behalf. And it should rightly have some effect in our lives.

If you are Christ's, you don't have the option from to be merely your Savior and not also your Lord. He said, those who love me keep my commandments.

It becomes the natural response of the heart that's been turned to God in Christ to follow Him. To be His disciples. And far too long, we've had presented in America a complacent Christianity that says, it's just okay that you show up and you consume.

[27 : 59] We're just happy you're here. We're happy you're here because we want you to be engaged in obedience to Christ in the world. It's good for the world and it's good for you.

How dare we not press obedience on the people of God? How dare we not show them the great joy that's found in Christ and obedience to Him?

We won't be doing that here anymore. You're either going to get caught up in the mission of God because you're His or you're going to get really uncomfortable around here.

What is the effect of our gospel identity? Last sentence of our summary statement. This gospel identity is our great motivation for worship.

Because of what God has done for us in Christ, we worship Him. I am not simply referring to congregational singing. I appreciate it.

[29 : 04] It's been said a few times already this morning. It's a poor nomenclature that we call singing in church worship. It is worship, but it's not all that worship is.

I think that some people begin to think that that's the extent of it all. It's a type of worship. Musical worship. But worship, beloved, is all that we do.

It extends into every aspect of our lives. It is sharing the gospel. It is showing up on Sunday morning and singing songs. It is listening to sermons preached.

It is preaching sermons. But it is also washing dishes and changing diapers and vacuuming floors. All of those things in life are done to the honor and glory of God.

This is also worshipped. Your purpose as a justified, redeemed, and adopted person is to live as a holy person in all things to the praise of God.

[30 : 11] God. I say to my sons, those of you who don't know me, I have three sons now. I have a six-year-old, a four-year-old, and an almost four-month-old. So to the older two, I say, boys, my sons obey their father.

Are you acting like my sons right now? And they go, well, you are my sons, aren't you? My sons obey their father. And when they're punished, when I discipline them, I get a spanking and they're sent off to their room to lay in their bed.

We reconcile afterward and I always say, you're my son and I love you and that's why I want you to obey. Your father is good and he cares about you.

He is concerned. And let me tell you that I fail so often at this, but God never fails to give us good and right and proper commandment for us to live and flourish under his rule.

You hear me say to the kids on Sunday mornings, I love you, which is why I want to remind you that God loves you, which is why he gave you parents that love you, which is why you should obey them.

[31 : 22] We glorify God when we act in appropriate response to who we are in Christ. We bring him great honor. Not that he needs it bestowed upon him, but we show him for who he actually is when we live in accordance with what he's done for us in Christ.

Note this in our text. Ephesians 1, verse 6, you'll see the phrase. I did a big scribbly circle around these phrases. To the praise of his glorious grace.

Verse 12, to the praise of his glory. Verse 14, to the praise of his glory. There are two types of magnification.

This is a classic John Piper. Type of magnification that a microscope does where it makes something very, very tiny. It looks bigger than it is. Many people think of glory in that way.

Glorifying God in that way. This is not the case at all. The type of magnifying we do is making something that's huge and massive and far off and distant look much more like it actually is.

[32 : 34] And in obedience we do this. We magnify God in that way. We show him to be king and ruler in our hearts. In Matthew 7, verses 17 and 18, Jesus says, So, every healthy tree bears good fruit.

But the diseased tree bears bad fruit. Good trees bear good fruit. Bad trees bear bad fruit. Verse 18, A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.

We are changed by God from a bad tree only producing evil to a good tree. This reality is the doctrine of regeneration.

This is the new birth. We're not the same anymore. We're made new. We're not changed in degree. We don't encounter Christ and we're made a little better.

We're changed in kind. Subliminally, Subtly, maybe not so much. The church has a new logo. The astute amongst you have noticed this.

[33 : 50] We had a bunch of trees before. It's a single tree now. Mostly Facebook and Instagram that's forcing everything into circles and squares is causing this. But, when you see this logo, I want you to think good tree.

Who am I in Christ? In Christ, I'm a good tree. What do good trees do? Good trees produce good fruit. On the front of your bulletin, you'll see a Spurgeon quote.

I do this because I want to connect you to history. I want to connect you to the church that existed before. These are blessed brothers. We stand on their shoulders.

They have so much wisdom. And Spurgeon says things so much better than I do. He wrote, God works in man a change so great that no reformation can even so much as thoroughly imitate it.

So, no change a man can do can even imitate the change that God brings about in a man. It is an entire change. A change of the will of the being of the desires of the hates of the disliking and of the likings.

[34 : 55] In every respect, the man becomes new when divine grace enters into his heart. Our gospel identity produces obedience, but we do not become perfectly obedient, do we?

Oh, I wish we did. We do not become perfectly obedient. And I think we can muse about the why of that at length. I think one of the primary reasons for it is that we still have our flesh and we carry that around.

And I have to tell you that for me, I sympathize deeply with lost people because I see the vileness of my sin. I step back into my old self-functioning and I remember how miserable I was before Christ.

My heart goes out to people who don't know him because I still need him. There's a concept, a biblical concept, first systematized by Augustine called the fourfold state of man.

I think we have a slide for this. It was later made popular in a book entitled Human Nature in Its Fourfold State by a man named Thomas Boston.

[36 : 10] He was a 17th century Scottish pastor and theologian. So this is a biblical concept. It's taught in the scriptures. I'm going to show it to you in Latin. And not again, I'm not doing this.

I don't quote people and do this because I want you to think that I'm smart because I'm not. I steal everything that I present to you. There's nothing new under the sun. I'm just a mockingbird.

For me, Latin helps me remember things. And that may not be the case for you, but getting phrases in my mind in Latin helps me remember things. But in addition to that, I want you to be comfortable in some respect with Latin because if you read the guys you should be reading, the old dead guys, they do this a lot.

They just throw Latin phrases into the mix of things. And you need to know that it's Latin and you need to try to start figuring out what these things mean. With no explanation, they'll just use a Latin phrase and keep on going.

So I want you to get comfortable around Latin. So you're going to see it a bit more in our meetings together. But the fourfold state of man is a biblical concept, systematic theology here being brought together.

[37 : 08] The very first state is the state of innocence. This is the pre-fall state. Only two people ever lived in the pre-fall state, the state of innocence, Adam and Eve.

Adam and Eve. And in that state, they had *potestas non peccare, et potestas peccare*. Right? The power not to sin, *potestas non peccare*, and *potestas peccare*.

They had both. They could do either. And we see that picture. Genesis chapter 2 into the beginning of Genesis chapter 3. They commanded not to eat of a tree. And what did they do? They eat of the tree.

They didn't have to eat of the tree. They had the power to do either. *Potestas non peccare, et potestas peccare*. And they immediately, and all that have followed them at birth, enter into what's secondly called the state of nature.

The state of nature. The post-fall, pre-conversion state. If you are not in Christ this morning, if you know people who are not in Christ, this is where they function.

[38 : 17] And in this state, people only have the power to sin. *Potestas peccare*. Even things that we would deem as good activity are not rightly motivated by faith through the glory of God and

therefore they're sin.

Passé pécare. Thirdly, you have the state of grace. The converted state. If you're in Christ, this is where we find ourselves. Gospel identity is what we're talking about. So this is where we land in the third state, the state of grace.

And we once again return to the nature of the state of innocence. Passé non pécare et passé pécare. We have the power not to sin.

Praise God by the work of the Spirit. We're made new. We have the power not to sin. And we have the power to sin. We still choose to be disobedient.

And then fourthly, and praise God for the fourth, the eternal state, the glorified state, when we will only have power not to sin.

[39 : 23] Passé non pécare. We long for that day. Passé non pécare is the truth. So, we find that living as a holy person for the praise of God in the state of grace takes effort.

Our salvation is monergistic. It's a work of God. God works. We're saved. Our sanctification, the process of becoming like Christ, is a synergistic process.

We work and God works. Wonderful proof text for this is Philippians 2, 12 and 13. Paul writes, Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Verse 13, for this is the reason for the fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

So, you work, God works. And too often, beloved, those who hold dear the sovereignty of God, those who understand our need of grace become complacent and lazy as if we're waiting to be compelled to obedience, animated, I should even say to obedience.

[40 : 48] I hear so much from you. This is what I want to do. I really desire to do. But then you don't do it. If the desire is genuine, you will go.

You will do the thing that you said you would do. I think sometimes you desire me to think that you desire to do the things you're supposed to do. We will be obedient and it takes effort on our part. It takes work on our part. Our sanctification, biblically, biblical sanctification is progressive. We've got a slide for this one as well. You've heard me say this before.

You can see it in picture now because it's going to astound you. I know, right?

Yay for visuals. You need to see, right? Moving towards holiness, right? Away from unrighteousness, towards righteousness. Looking more like Christ. Across time, we progress.

[41 : 50] We still sin, right? There's downward spikes in this. But we keep working our way upward by the grace of God toward Christ's likeness. Longing one day for glorification where we will be made perfect, complete.

That process will be over. Progressive sanctification. And there are a lot of erroneous views on sanctification. I don't have time for it today, but there are popular erroneous views.

Methodism is a dangerous one. If you grew up a Methodist, you may not even think this way. You may think the proper biblical way about sanctification, but many Methodists have a skewed version. Wesleyan sanctification is not biblical sanctification.

Tezic sanctification is another one you need to watch out for. And both of them suggest that we have spikes in our life where we suddenly become holy. And then we live that existence out. I've never talked to a Methodist, for example, that's ever said that to me and ever seemed to believe that. I've heard a tale of some older Methodists that have claimed to be perfect for decades.

[42 : 55] They've reached that point. That point of perfection and they've moved on from there. All the offense to the Gospel that that is. Sanctification is progressive and it's synergistic.

And we're going to begin talking as a church about four areas of sanctification. Four areas of good fruit bearing if you prefer. Four areas of Christian living.

and we're going to talk about those in the next four weeks. I want it to be a thing that you're talking about together. You can structure all of your Christian meetings around these things to be sure that this activity is happening in one another's lives.

These things are disciplines of grace to us. They're things we must work at and lean into. They're places that we experience Christ. We're so motivated and our joy when we get to be caught up in His work in the world.

They matter. And there's different ways to structure this but we're going to structure it in the following way. Number one, conviction. Those of you who are members and got the member health

survey, this has been subtly getting interjected as well.

[44 : 06] We asked you questions based on these four different areas and we'll be talking about some of the results of that survey in the coming weeks. Conviction. What do we believe to be true about God, about ourselves, about Christ?

How well do we know the scripture and how does that turn us to prayer? My suggestion is that if we have proper convictions we will pray a lot and we'll pray properly.

So conviction. Second, community. We've been given to a community. We've been saved certainly as individuals but we've been saved as a people. Community is a grace to us.

Young people, college students, freshmen up here don't neglect this grace. Too many college students have gone asunder as a result. A thirdly, character.

Who are we supposed to be both in private and in public as a result? What are the things that characterize the Christian? And fourthly, commission. We cannot say that we're disciples of Jesus Christ if we're not on the mission of Christ, the redemption of His people in the world.

[45 : 12] And so we're going to be pressing at these things. We're going to be ramping up the expectations on members and just kind of trying to draw those of you who aren't members into what we're doing.

And we'll be talking about these things at length in these four areas. I really hope in a year you are just sick and tired of hearing about the four C's but that it's changed the way you live by grace.

What is happening when we sin is a failure to remember who we are? Beloved, it always goes back to identity. You have failed to believe in the moment that you sin the wondrous truth of the Gospel. You have forgotten who you are. My sons forget that they're my sons when they're disobedient. The Gospel-centered Christian, the person who's recognizing who they are in Christ, is humble before God.

I am failing you if you leave this place feeling good about yourself. I don't want you to feel good about yourself but I want you to feel good about Christ and then who you are in Him.

[46 : 21] Don't walk out of here with your head hung low but recognize who you once were and who you still tend to be and praise God for what He's done for you in Christ.

The Gospel-centered Christian is humble before God, recognize that they could do no good thing to gain God's favor, is motivated by their Gospel identity to obedience. In their failures, they repent quickly, confess to the Lord and get back into the race, straining for what lies ahead.

The Gospel-centered Christian boasts only in the cross of Jesus Christ. Paul says, Galatians 6.14, but far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

Gospel-centered Christianity, right? Recognizing our identity and working as a result out of that.

And as so many Christian doctrines are this way, there's a tight rope to walk on and we try to get right down the middle, but there's always two ways to fall off.

And I want to just expose you to those two ways and I want to ask you to consider if you fall into these, which one you fall into. You do at times. I'm assured.

[47 : 35] The first is the self-loving Christian. Self-loving Christians. Self-loving Christians find themselves justified by their obedience.

Find themselves justified by works. They're self-righteous. They're always good enough. They view God as loving them just as they are.

They view God as properly loving them as if He's saying, why wouldn't I love you? You're doing so good. These people always have an outward trapping of having it put together.

Never question their own motivations for why they do the things that they do. They believe that they deserve God's grace, which is an oxymoron. The other side of that tightrope to fall off of and just knowing our church most of us find ourselves here is the self-hating Christian.

Self-hating Christian knows that they will never be justified by their obedience. So, they try to be justified by their penance. They know they can't ever do enough work.

[48 : 47] They get that doctrine right. But rather than placing their identity in Christ and His righteousness, they seek to beat themselves up over their sin.

not true repentance, but just penance. Walking around with a head hung low, not remembering that they've been forgiven and adopted. They stand before God justified in Christ.

Self-hating Christians are never good enough. They view God as unable to love someone as wretched as them. There's two ways to fall off rather than coming back to the center saying that

we're to be humble before Him.

No good in and of myself. Nothing I could do to earn God's favor, but praise be to God that in Christ He has loved me. He has justified me.

He has forgiven me. He has adopted me. I am His. This is His work. And I fail to live for Him as I ought, but praise the Lord, my sins were wiped away the cross of Calvary.

[49 : 55] What a motivation to act and to move and to want to honor Him with the way that I live. Confession for the gospel-centered Christian goes quickly.

We repent, we turn from sin, and we move. Oh, again. Oh, this thing that keeps coming up in my heart. This thing that doesn't belong is not as it ought to be.

Lord, I confess, this is an offense to You. I know that, and I hate it. Help me to put it to death. Help me to live righteously for You, and then we go.

We act. We do. We're obedient. So it comes back to how we walk, what we understand, by grace alone through faith alone.

In the person and work of Jesus Christ alone, we are justified before God. Forgiven and adopted by Him. This gospel identity is our great motivation for worship, and I look forward to bringing out the implications of the way that carries out in our lives over the next four weeks.

[51 : 00] Let's pray together.