

# As We See Them Perish

By Don Green

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**Truth Community Church**

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

Well, for those of you that have been with us on Sundays, you know that we've been focusing on the Great Commission from Matthew 28, and I consider it to be a very very important, even foundational series for our church because the matter with which we approach these things has a long-term trajectory in terms of where we have come as a congregation, where we become as individual Christians, and the way that we do the outworking of our doctrine. In one trajectory, you can become rather cold and indifferent and inward looking because you're satisfied to have Christ for yourself, the other direction which we're trying to cultivate through teaching and our focus in the time that we spend on this, makes you warm and evangelistic and outward looking. We're not content simply to have Christ for ourselves, we want his name made great among many others, and we want many others to come and share in the salvation that we ourselves have in Christ, and the way that we view these things has very long-term implications and very profound implications for the way that we live as Christians. So the length of time that we spend on it is indicative of the importance that I place on it. Christ said in Matthew 28, he said, "Go and make disciples of all the nations." We've seen on Sunday that that's a universal appeal that gives every person everywhere a warrant to believe in him, reason to believe in him, a basis upon which they can come to Christ and know that they will be saved. Because Christ commands them to come, Christ commands you to come if you're not a Christian here today, he commands you, he calls you, he promises blessing, there is every reason for an unsaved person to come to Christ for their salvation.

Now with that said and just kind of looking at it from a slightly different perspective at the moment, and I addressed this two Sundays ago, I'm not going to dwell on it here, we understand that the Bible teaches that God chooses who will be saved. We understand that he chose before the beginning of time who would be saved, and it's easy at this very point, this is the intersection where fatal collisions take place, okay? I don't know why a car accident analogy came to my mind but this intersection between evangelism and election is where fatal accidents take place when we're not navigating through the intersection carefully. A wrong view on the doctrine of election can make you cold, it can make you indifferent if you're not thinking thoroughly biblically about everything. It would be possible for someone to say, "Well, it's God's will who's going to get saved so why should it bother me?" Or even more selfishly, "I'm saved and so what's the problem, you know, why do I need to be concerned about everybody else? After all, it is well with my soul, you know?" So we just want to be very very careful about this and the way that we think about it. The doctrine of election should not lead to people who are cold and

indifferent toward evangelism. The entire teaching of the Bible takes us to a completely different direction.

So the title for tonight's message, "As We See Them Perish." As we see them perish. We were singing that first song which is one of my favorite hymns, "Brethren, we've met to worship," it's all about praying for God's power to go forth as his word is preached. It's all about compassion toward the lost, that God would have mercy on them and that we would be agents and hands of his mercy, as it were, his instruments in their salvation, and the question that I ask you tonight is: what do you think, what's in your heart as you see sinners that are perishing, as you see people without Christ? Can you see that and be unaffected by it? Can you know that people are going to hell, dropping into the pits of hell moment by moment throughout the world and not have that really affect the way that you think or feel about life? What is to be our perspective toward the lost and not just globally but those that are within our circle of acquaintances, our circle of influence? This is a matter of utmost highest priority and I believe that a church that can get this right long-term is a church that is greatly positioned for the blessing of God and to be used by God. If we get this wrong, there's really not much reason for God to take much interest in what we're doing, to be frank. John MacArthur says that there are three things that the church is to do and two of them they can do in heaven. In heaven, we can worship. We do three things, we worship but we can do that in heaven. We fellowship with one another but we'll do that in heaven also. The one thing that we can't do in heaven that we can do while we're on earth is to be evangelistic, to share Christ with those who do not know him. This is the one window of time that we have during the 70 years that the Lord gives each of us and the time that he gives us as a church. This is our opportunity and this is our responsibility and this is our privilege, is to proclaim Christ to those who do not know him.

So what should be our perspective toward the lost? Now beloved, I want to tell you that this perspective, what we're talking about here, it's not like this is a math class. This is not a study in mathematics where the equation is a matter of academic interest but it has no real import for life. It's not like that and you and I have to develop this kind of perspective as we consider as we see those that are perishing without Christ, we need to have the perspective that these are eternal souls that we are looking upon; that men are lost; that eternal hell is real; that Jesus is not bluffing when he says that there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth there. This is not a bluff. This is not a falsehood. This is what the reality is as people pass from this life into the next without Christ. And so these things are real and this is what Scripture teaches. Some of them are our loved ones. Some of them are sitting next to you as we gather here this evening. What shall you and I think and what shall you and I feel in our hearts as we see them perishing, as we see them without Christ? In other words, what is our point of view as we proclaim the Gospel?

What we said on Sunday was that there is a reason for them to believe because from their perspective the command of Christ is coming to them as something to be obeyed, the promise of Christ comes to them as something to be believed and cherished and to draw them to Christ as the Holy Spirit works in their heart, and so we've seen it from their perspective, tonight we're looking at it from what is our perspective as believers and what

do we want to be as a church, and how do we want to think about these things. In some ways, this series that I'm doing could be the most important thing that I've ever preached here over the past eight years. What should we think, what do we think as we see them perish? Well, it's not just a matter of, "Well, they're, you know, if they're not elect, they won't be saved and, you know, why should I get too worked up about it?" No, that doesn't work biblically. Jesus looked out on Jerusalem knowing who would and would not believe and he wept over them. He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how many times I wanted to gather you like a mother hen takes the chicks under her wings and you wouldn't have it." Their stubborn refusal to believe was a grief to him and he wept over them. What we think when we see unbelieving people going through indifferent to Christ is we're mindful of this, that they are dying, they are dying, my friends, even as they live, and that moves us to a sense of compassion that plays itself out in multiple multiple ways.

Charles Spurgeon who has helped me an awfully lot on this and I've got a long long way to grow in all of these things of which I'm preaching, but Charles Spurgeon in one of his messages said this as he addressed some of the unsaved people in his audience in the day, and he puts his finger on this as he put his finger on so many things. He said, "Young men, you do not pray for yourselves but your own mothers wrestle for you. You will not think of your own souls but father's anxiety is exercised for you. I have been at prayer meetings when I have heard children of God pray and they could not have prayed with more earnestness and more intensity of anguish if they had been each of them seeking their own soul's salvation. And is it not strange that we should be ready to move heaven and earth for your salvation and that you should have no thought for yourselves, no regard to eternal things?" He says, "You're there and you're so indifferent to these things of the Gospel, but it's not like that with the people of God toward you. Your mothers are weeping over you. Your fathers are praying for you." He goes on to speak his perspective later as he's speaking as the pastor praying for them saying, "If you don't care about your soul, there's at least one here who has labored in prayer over your soul that you would be saved." So we just see this window of insight into how these things were viewed earlier in the days of Christian preaching.

Well, I just want to bring two things out to you today to make this important and to make an impression, I hope, on your soul and, again, let me just back up for just a moment. I have alluded to this far more than I need to but I just want to make the point really really clear, the reason that it seems like we're talking about the same theme multiple times and the reason it seems like, you know, we're like a wagon that's circling in the snow saying, "Hey, I've seen these tracks before not too long ago. The tracks in the snow are still fresh." Yeah, precisely, precisely. We want the tracks to go deep in your mind. We want this to be plowed deeply into your heart and just one message or maybe two done in a quick hurry, it does not do that. This is everything in terms of what we need to be thinking as we think about evangelism in our lives and in our church.

Point 1 is for us to remember that God uses means to save souls. He uses means to save souls, and what we mean by that is that God has appointed the end of who would be saved, that's very true, that's the doctrine of election, we've covered that many times, but

God doesn't do this arbitrarily. He doesn't just zap people in a random way that is unrelated to anything that is around them or anything that they've heard. He uses the means of Gospel preaching and biblical teaching to inform the minds of people and the Spirit of God takes that and shapes their will and renews their hearts so that they are willing to come to Christ for salvation. God gathers in the sheep through a universal appeal that goes out of all men.

Romans 10:13, if you'll turn there with me. Romans 10, and actually let's just go back to verse 9 and we'll just kind of get a running start into all of it. Romans 10:9 says, "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." So the response of faith is described there. What does it mean to put your faith in Christ? It means that you believe in him as your Lord and as your Savior. You come to him and you confess him as God over all. You confess him as your personal Lord and you receive him and you rest in him as the one who alone is able to deliver your soul from the sin and the consequences that your sin deserves. You confess him as Lord and God accounts that to you as righteousness and it results in salvation.

In verse 11 it says that this is a promise that is available for everyone who hears. Verse 11, "the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for 'Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" And so as I stand here tonight, as I stand here week by week as loved ones share the Gospel with you, there is this promise from God that if you by name put your name in there, if you will believe in Christ, Christ will have you, Christ will receive you. Christ said, "The one who comes to Me I'll certainly never cast out." So the only barrier between you and eternal salvation, the only barrier of reconciliation between you and a holy God is your own unwillingness to come. God for his part is fully disposed and willing to save everyone who comes to him and makes an offer and makes a command upon everyone to come that they might be saved because whoever believes in him, whoever will call on the name of the Lord, what does it say there in verse 13, look at it again, what does it say? "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord," what? "Will be saved." No one's going to be refused because they weren't elect. Everyone who comes to him will be saved and so it is only the unwillingness of the sinner that seals their doom. That's why we need the Holy Spirit to work in men's hearts to change them from being unwilling to being willing.

But he goes on, the Apostle Paul goes on. The question is, is how is that to take place? How are they to believe? How are they to know that they are to call upon this one who will save them and who is willing to save? And Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions in verse 14, he says "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?" You see, he's saying that the preaching of the Gospel is essential. God does not save apart from the preaching of the Gospel, he saves through the preaching of the Gospel. And so they need a preacher, they need someone to speak to them and tell them the truth about Christ and the truth about their sin, and how will that happen unless

a preacher tells them? How will it happen unless a family member, a loved one like you goes to them when they are not under the sound of a preacher, how will they hear unless somebody does that for them? How are they supposed to believe in someone that they've never heard? Well, the point of that for the Christian church is that we are therefore to speak because this is what God uses to accomplish the work of salvation.

Verse 15, "How will they preach unless they are sent?" You know, there has to be a support that is given to a proclamation of the Gospel, and so you see throughout this that God is establishing and ordaining the reality of the means of Gospel preaching of the biblical ministry so that his purposes of election will be accomplished in time. You could think about it this way, beloved, proclaiming the Gospel is the means that God has chosen to save the people that he has chosen, and it is not for you and me to speculate on who that might be. The roster of the elect is hidden in the secret mind of God and will only be fully revealed at the final day. What we act on is not something that he has not made known to us, the roster of the elect, what we do is we respond to the revealed command that he has given to us, the command to go and make disciples of all the nations, and we do not restrict that, limit that, or speculate about who we should do that to based on the fact that God has chosen some to be saved. We love him enough and we revere and fear him enough to say, "O Lord, that's what You command me to do? Yes, Lord, that's what I will do," and not let anything restrict us from proclaiming this in every opportunity to every person that God would give us opportunity to do it, so that the call of God on the church gives us this sense of unbridled freedom to preach him to every opportunity that we get, and the universal appeal that goes out to men gives this mutual perception that is real, it's not just a perception, it communicates the reality that God is intent on saving sinners and he'll save everyone who believes in him. God is willing to save, far more willing than sinners are to be saved.

So the Holy Spirit uses us to awaken sinners to eternal life and here's the point for this evening now that we've seen those means that God uses, the avenue that he uses, the tools that he uses to save souls, and the question is how do you and I think about this? How do you and I think about evangelism? How do we think about the opportunities that we have to communicate? Some of you one day, maybe God will give you opportunity to speak to unsaved people in a group setting, maybe some of you one day God will raise you up that you too are preaching the Scriptures to mixed audiences and all of that, and what's your attitude toward that? What's your perspective on it? Well, for our part, for us as Christians, the way that we think about this and what should be animating our hearts, oh beloved, it should not be something that is cold, that is indifferent or that is somehow mechanical to us; that there is a relational commitment, a relational component of love for the ones whom we are talking, that we love their souls enough that we would have them share in the blessing that Christ has given to us; that it's too good, it's too important, it's too crucial for us to keep it to ourselves. We are compelled within to want to share that with others and that it's not a matter of indifference to us about how they respond, we genuinely want them to respond and it breaks our heart if they won't because when you and I are truly filled with the Holy Spirit, when you and I in the power of the Spirit are obeying God's command to preach the Gospel wherever he gives us an audience, if we're filled with the Spirit, what's the fruit of the Spirit? Galatians 5, the fruit of the Spirit is,

what? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. If you and I are filled with the Spirit as we are in evangelizing, there is going to be the spirit of earnest concern, earnest love and seeking their well-being that is willing to overlook the mocking that we might get in response, that is willing to accept the rejection that might come because we realize that we are not vested in the way that they perceive us, what we really want is for them to come to a saving knowledge of Christ and that we want that so much that we're willing to speak and we speak because we love them in addition to loving the God who sent us. This is absolutely vital for us to grasp.

Now I've said that God uses means to save souls, well, here's a second point for you this evening and we're just going to go through several passages far too quickly, and we're going to put it this way, it's really just a summary of what I've already been saying, is that God uses warmhearted evangelism to save souls. God uses warmhearted evangelism to save souls and I'm going to give you seven different subheadings here, seven different passages to look at, and before I do, let me just preface it by saying this: what we're about to see is not a checklist to mechanically check off and say, "Okay, number one, I've got that. Number two, I've got that. Number three, I've got that." That's entirely the wrong way to think about it. What we're seeing here, what we're going to see from Scripture laid out before us here are prevailing, prevalent, dominating heart attitudes that shape life for us, that shape the way that we think, and so that's what we want to see, is that we're looking at multiple aspects of the expression of the love that we should have for sinners; that this matters to us and that we recognize, we accept the fact that some will reject Christ, Jesus said the gate is small, few who find it who enter in, but we look at that and we don't say, "Ah, okay, well, that's, okay, not too many go in so no big deal." No, we look at it and say, "Oh, the gate is small. The gate is small and it concerns me and I would have you enter in." And this is the way that we should be thinking about this.

So first of all, what is this multifaceted love that animates true evangelism? Let me say this, number 1, we gladly evangelize. We gladly evangelize. We're glad to do it. Look at Romans 1. The biblical pattern is to be eager to share the Gospel, not reluctant. Paul had this in mind as he desired to come to Rome to preach the Gospel, he said in verse 14, he said, "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish." He says, "Whatever spectrum which people fall on, I've got an obligation to all of them, from those farthest to the left, those farthest to the right, on whatever spectrum you want to use, I'm under obligation to preach Christ to them." And he says in verse 15, "So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome." I'm eager to preach the Gospel to you who are in Rome. He wanted to. He does it gladly. It's with eagerness that he embraces the opportunity.

Now secondly, and like I say, we're just going to go through these really quickly here this evening, setting forth things for your later meditation, and these things have certainly challenged my own heart and been a matter of my own need to change, let's say. I need to change in response to these things even as I preach them. Secondly, not only do we gladly evangelize, we grieve for them. We grieve for them. The plight and the eternal peril of those that we know that are lost should be something that consumes our heart,

that concerns us to the point that it affects the way that we feel about things and the way that we react.

Look at Romans 9. This same apostle who was eager to preach the Gospel spoke of a different aspect of the emotion of love as he considered those who were unsaved. In verse 9 he said, "I am telling the truth in Christ. I'm not lying. My conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart for I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises," and on and on he goes. He's speaking about his fellow Jews who are still outside of Christ that are resistant to the Gospel. He is describing what his attitude is toward them. He goes to the outer limits of human language to express it. He's in great grief. He is in great sorrow over them and the idea in verse 3 when he says, "I could wish that I myself were accursed," it has the idea and he's speaking sincerely here, he says, "I am so concerned for them and I am so burdened for their spiritual well-being that if it were possible, I would sacrifice my own salvation if I could just know that they would come to Christ. I would give up my own position in Christ to make room for them if only I could." That is how seriously he took it, how much he wanted them to be saved. It was overturning and overwhelming his heart as he contemplated the reality of it.

Now this is the same apostle who teaches us about the doctrine of election. It's the same apostle who teaches us about the eternal purposes of God, but when it comes to processing that in his mind and seeing the way that it works out in those that he cared about, those that he loved, those who were his kinsmen, it was not a matter of cold indifference to him where he could just kind of brush them off like so much lint on his coat and say, "Hey, they must not be elect. Not a problem for me. I'm going to heaven." Do you see, beloved, I realize that none of us would speak quite like that but you get the gist, you get the spirit of what I'm saying, that if we can just easily cast aside the thought that someone we know and love is on their way to hell, that something, it's not just that something is wrong with them, something's wrong with us, something's wrong with us that motivating compassion of Christ, that that motivating compassion of Paul is somehow absent from the way that we're thinking about it ourselves. And so we gladly evangelize and when people are refusing Christ, their peril as they are perishing, it affects us and it grieves us to contemplate the reality of it.

Now thirdly, these are in no particular order from here on out, anyway. Thirdly, we reason with them. We reason with them. We talk with them. We explain truth to them to whatever extent that they're willing to hear it.

Look at 1 Peter 3 with me, just after the book of Hebrews and James. 1 Peter 3. We said we gladly evangelize, we grieve for them, you could say we gently reason with them. We gently reason with them. In verse 14 Peter says, "even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. Do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but," instead, by contrast, "sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you,

yet with gentleness and with reverence." To be able to explain these things in a gentle reasonable way that lays out truth for them in a manner that they can understand. For some, they need drops of the gentlest of milk to help them understand. For others you can go into other different kinds of discussions. But there is this sense of making a reasonable defense of the Gospel and doing it with gentleness.

Look at Timothy 2 along these same lines. 2 Timothy 2, this gentle reasonableness, this willingness to be insulted for the sake of Christ and for the sake of their souls. 2 Timothy 2:24. By the way, this was the last letter that Paul wrote, you know, before he died and this is the most mature reflection of the most mature apostle giving his final instructions to his disciple Timothy, giving Timothy the prescription for what his ministry should look like going forward as he deals and faces opposition. Verse 24 he says this, he says, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will." And you see the fruit of the Spirit woven throughout that entire passage, don't you? The gentleness of it. The patience of the Spirit. Those dynamics of a Spirit-filled life, that Paul is emphasizing the kindness and patience that attends a presentation of the Gospel.

Now look, I know that some of you trip over this just like I tripped over the bad step that's through those double doors just a few moments ago, we trip and we tend to stumble on these things and we just need to pull it out and let the ugliness of our soul and mind some time be brought out into the light so that God could shape it, clean it off for us and replace it with something better. Some of you are far too interested in winning an argument. Some of you when people disagree with you or contest what you're saying, you start to get angry and you start to boil and bubble up and what follows is an argument and you just want to win the argument and to crush the opposition that's coming to what you say. That is entirely the wrong attitude. That is entirely the wrong perspective. Yes, we should be zealous for the truth but, beloved, you have to understand something very very important in this context: it is not our goal to win an argument, it is our goal to win people, it is our goal to win men, to win women, to win boys, to win girls to Christ, and very few people are going to respond to an angry argumentative spirit that calls them stupid or morons for not getting it, or whatever else comes to pass. I don't believe any of you would actually speak that way but you know what I'm saying and what I'm getting at here. We have to be mindful of the fact that we are trying to win these people and we are trying to win them because we love them for the sake of their eternal soul, and even if they don't see it, we understand that that eternal soul is in danger of eternal destruction in the torments of hell and it overwhelms us and grieves us to think that that might be the ultimate final destiny of the one that's in front of us, and we let that sink in and as they respond badly as they often do, our minds just go up, "O God, have mercy on them. God, I was once this foolish and argumentative myself and, God, I'm getting back what I used to be and, God, You had mercy on me. God, have mercy on them too and give me the gentleness I need to respond to them in a way that Christ would find pleasing, and use my gentle words, Father, to bring them to their senses that they might escape from the snare



of the devil who has held them captive by him to do his will." It says in 2 Corinthians 4, you know, the devil has blinded them so that they can't see; the devil has stopped up their ears so that they can't hear. Well, can't you as a born-again Christian have compassion on people who are in a condition like that? Can't you find something in your heart that would say, "Oh, this is just so awful and it's what I used to be like," and to grasp something of the magnitude of the stakes that are at hand and to care about the ones that we're talking about, the ones that we care to, the ones that we speak to?

Fourthly, we appeal to them. We humbly appeal to them. Look at 2 Corinthians 5, and all I'm doing here tonight, obviously there's no detailed teaching on any of these passages, all I'm giving you is just an overview of the different aspects that are expressed by the apostolic writers in terms of how they addressed people who were lost, and what they thought and what they felt and how they spoke to them, realizing that in this is a pattern for us as well. I'm not too sympathetic to pastors, preachers, to ministries that just want to be really hard and confrontational all the time, and that are absent of this sense of tender appeal of loving outreach that shows genuine concern for what happens. I'll say it again, I don't mind repeating myself here: it is not enough to win the argument if you don't love the person that you're talking to. And even if you win the argument and they walk away unsaved, that's a pretty hollow victory, isn't it? Isn't that a hollow victory? You say, "Well, he had no answer for what I said there." Oh, but he walks away and he's still rejecting Christ. What's been gained here?

Look at what the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17. He says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." Then he says this in verse 18, "Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." Look at the pattern there, beloved, God graciously reconciled us to himself through the Lord Jesus Christ. We are on the receiving end of something that happened at a prior point in time to us. God saved us, the Spirit regenerated us, we were brought to Christ and now we've been reconciled to the God from whom we were once enemies. Now we pivot and having received this from a gracious God we say, "Oh, the ministry that was given to me now I take and I minister it to others as well. God was gracious to me, all I can do in response horizontally is to be gracious to men who are in the same condition that I once was."

In verse 19 he says, "namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation." Oh, the magnitude, the weight, the privilege, the prerogative of that. He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Now look what he says in verse 20, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ," we speak on his behalf, we speak for him, "as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." He casts aside all pretense, all sense of personal pride and he goes to those who are without Christ and he says, "I'm begging you to be reconciled to Him. I am pleading with you. I'm asking you. Please respond. Please don't turn away my words. With all my heart I'm begging you to hear and

to respond." Was it because Paul didn't understand the doctrine of election? Did he not know that it wasn't that important to get worked up over, after all, God will's going to be done? I don't think that's it. I think what we're seeing is that as the love of God is poured out into believing hearts and we are reconciled to him and we recognize the magnitude and the amazing nature of grace that has been poured out upon us, that we look out and we say, "We don't want anyone to miss this." So we go so far as to beg if it will help.

Now on the other side, we realize that there's a lot at stake here and point number 5 here on the means that God uses or, you know, the warmhearted evangelism that he uses. We said we gladly evangelize, we grieve for the lost, we reason with the lost, we appeal to the lost even to the point of begging, we recognize as we've said and I won't spend any time here because we were just talking about it on Sunday, we recognize, point 5, that there is a sense in which we are commanding them. We are commanding them in the sense that the Gospel is a command from God that calls for obedience, and we come and we say, "My friend, Jesus Christ commands you, repent and believe in the Gospel. My friend, don't disobey Him. Don't sin against Him by refusing His call on your soul because He's commanding you." And this element of the nature of the Gospel call keeps us from an opposite error, you might say, an opposite thing of getting too sentimental about it and simply making it something that is based wholly on feelings and things like that. No, we realize that there is an objective command, Mark 1:14 and 15, Jesus said, "Repent and believe in the Gospel." So we communicate to them that this is serious. "Yes, I care about you. Yes, I speak to you gently. Yes, my prayers are for you. But understand that in the midst of this God is calling and commanding you to come," lest they trivialize the truth that is being presented to them.

Sixthly, we follow the pattern of Christ and we warn them. We warn them of the consequences of the Gospel. Look at Luke 13. For those of you that paid attention to the news from California where nine people perished in that helicopter crash on Sunday, this gives us a sobering perspective on it as we contemplate the living. Luke 13:1 through 5. "Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to [Christ] about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.'" Verse 4, "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." He warns them even as I warn you tonight that the truth of the Gospel cannot be diminished by an undue fascination with people that have already died. Yes, they're gone. Yes, that was sad. Yes, that was tragic. But wake up and understand that that doesn't affect you directly as much as the need that you have to repent, and that if you don't repent, you will perish miserably just like they did. You will perish and be lost also. So rather than focusing on the human tragedy exclusively, learn what you are to learn from that, what you are to take from that is that death is coming for us all and therefore it is urgent for us to repent that we might be reconciled to a holy God and not die in our sins.

So we warn them, say, "My friend, there are consequences if you refuse." I would say it to you here tonight that are apart from Christ, there are just so many consequences for you to walk away indifferent, cold and rejecting Christ after hearing about him again. This is just unthinkable. It would be a tragedy of incalculable proportions and you don't know what tomorrow brings, you don't know what tonight brings. Kobe Bryant was not expecting to die 30 minutes after he stepped into that helicopter, but he did. So did his 13-year-old daughter. My friends, unless you repent, you'll perish also, and so we warn them.

Point 7, there is an enveloping spirit with which we do all of this, is that we pray for them. We pray for them. Romans 10 in verse 1 he says, thinking about the Jews he says, "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." You could pray that exact prayer for the 1.27 billion people that are lost in Roman Catholicism. They don't know about the righteousness of Christ that is revealed in the Gospel and they try to establish their own. "O God, have mercy on the billion of them that are doing and stumbling over the very thing that the Jews themselves did, trying to establish their own righteousness in Your sight." But we don't have to do it in that magnitude of 1.27 billion, it applies to those of our own flesh and blood who are rejecting him now. "God, I pray for them. God, have mercy on them. God, I know that my children are now adults and I know how hard and sinful their lives have been but, God, have mercy on them. My desire, my prayer to You is for their salvation and, God, while I have breath and while they have breath, I'll bang on the doors of heaven until You answer. And God, while I'm banging on heaven's doors, God, forgive me for all of the times where either I didn't pray or that I just tapped once in prayer and showed by my weak, ineffectual prayers that it really wasn't that important to me after all; that somehow my faith in Your ability and Your desire to save was weak, or my love for their souls was weak. Father, somehow in there, somehow I'm missing it if I'm not pounding on the doors of grace, pounding on the doors of," speaking metaphorically here, "the doors of Your throne room waiting for You to open up and answer and pour out Your blessing."

Brethren, we pray for God to spread his manna of salvation generously and abundantly upon people, and we ask it earnestly if the Gospel has rightly taken hold of our thinking and of our hearts. Why do we pray? It's because we understand that we're dependent on God for the results. "God, I can speak, I can share, I can say everything right but, God, if Your Spirit doesn't do a work in their heart, it's all in vain." That's what we were just singing just moments ago. "All is vain unless the Spirit comes down. All is vain unless the Holy Spirit does a work in their hearts and, Father, I understand that and so, Father, I pray to You, I ask You, I beg You, I call upon You." Enough from this lispings, stammering tongue tonight. My prayer is simply that God would give all of us more of Spurgeon's spirit when he spoke to the lost that were in front of them, speaking about his preaching that day he said to them, "Is it all in vain? Will you not now come to Christ? The message that you are rejecting is a message from the Christ who loves you and it is given to you also by the lips of one who loves you."

Let's pray together.

*Father, we ask for a wonderful work of Your Holy Spirit in our hearts, that You would enlighten our understanding to understand and embrace the fact that You use the means of Gospel preaching, Gospel speaking to save souls. Give us understanding in that way and then, Father, go further, we need more than just an illumination of mind, we need an illumination of our heart that we would care about souls enough to actually speak to them, O God. Forgive us for the many times where we've just stayed silent because it was inconvenient or it was embarrassing or whatever our miserable excuse was in the moment, Father. Instill in us these principles where we gladly evangelize, where we grieve over souls that are lost. Give us the ability to reason with people that You bring into our path and appeal to them to be reconciled to You. Help us to express it in a way where they understand that this is a divine command, a divine call on their souls, and that we would warn them of the consequences of rejecting it. And Father, tonight even as we're closing, we pray for You to give fruit to our results individually, with our families, as a congregation, as a church. And Father, for those dear souls that are in front of me tonight that have rejected Christ up to this very moment, Father, I pray for them and I pray that Your Spirit would draw them to Christ even now, that they would respond in repentance and faith to that One, that great Lord, that great Christ, that great loving gracious Savior whose arms are open to them, that One who suffered on Calvary for sinners just like them, buried, rose again, ascended on high. Father, may the majesty of His being, the wonder of His love and a true conviction of sin be that which causes them to flee to Him and cry out, "O Lord, won't You save me too? I want that which I have heard of. I've rejected it so many times before now but, God, now I really and truly come and invite and ask Christ to save me." That Father, is the response in the heart of dead lifeless sinners that we pray Your Spirit would produce in response to Your powerful word, Father, expressed through powerless men. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*