

Five Words of Gospel Hope

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There are two contradictory maxims that the world uses; one is out of sight, out of mind; and the other is absence makes the heart grow fonder. And I just want you to know after 10 years after leaving Grace Community Church to go to Cincinnati to establish Truth Community Church, that my affection and my love and my commitment to the people of Grace Community Church, the people of Grace Life, and especially to Pastor John MacArthur are deeper and stronger than they have ever been. It's a delight to be here, it's a privilege to be here seeing faces familiar and new, I was going to say seeing faces old and new, then I realized that had implications that I did not intend, but it's a privilege for me to stand in this pulpit; I'm grateful to Phil and to Mike for giving me the opportunity and I'm grateful for all of you to be here. Ultimately I'm here to preach the word of God but also I would just want you to know that I'm here because you people are dear to me, I'm here because you matter to me, I care about you, and it's a delight to open the word of God to you here this morning.

We are about preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is an announcement of good news about God from an act in history by his Son Jesus Christ, and if you look at 1 Corinthians 15, we're just going to open with this passage, we're not going to stay here for long, I know it's familiar but I want to set something in your mind as we begin. In 1 Corinthians 15, the first four verses, the Apostle Paul said,

1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

The gospel of Jesus Christ tells us that Jesus Christ, who is God Incarnate, lived a perfectly righteous life in full obedience to the law of God, that he offered that life to God as a blood sacrifice for sinners just like you and me. He bore the sins of everyone who would ever believe in him in his body so that they could receive his righteousness as a gift and the forgiveness of their sins to be received by faith alone, and God raised him on the third day showing that he had accepted the sacrifice of his Son on behalf of his people, and now the call goes out to repent and believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ,

Mark 1:14-15. And it's really a wonderful, you know, the longer I preach the fresher this gets to me, the longer I preach the message of the gospel becomes sweeter and sweeter to my heart as the years and decades now go by, to just remember that guilty sinners of all kinds, in all places, from California to Cincinnati, to Malawi and all points in between, guilty sinners of all kinds, in all places, can be reconciled to God, a holy God, and receive eternal life and the forgiveness of their sins from him as a free gift. God's justice is satisfied in the person of Jesus Christ. We will spend eternity marveling at the wonder of that truth and the implications of it as untold ages unfold into untold ages and we delight in the glory and the mercy of God on our souls.

The gospel reveals that to us and it reveals something else to us as well that is really more the focus of what I want to say to you today. This is only the second time that I've preached this message. I first preached it from my own pulpit some four years ago, four and a half years ago, and the truth that we're going to look at today has just had such a powerful impact on my own soul that many many times in the act of preaching, the things that you and I are going to look at today have come to my mind with fresh power even as I'm preaching completely unrelated texts. And so these things that I am going to share with you today are things that you poke me and this kind of lifeblood comes out, and so I'm delighted to be able to share these things with you and what I want you to think about, what we're going to consider today, is that the gospel reveals untold wonders about the character and the attributes and the perfections of God to us. The fact that there is a gospel tells us marvelous things about the nature of God. The gospel that I just described to you reveals the nature of God to us. It tells us that mercy can be had, that conscience can be cleansed, that kindness is available to all from a good God through his wonderful Son, the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ.

And here's the question that I would frame the rest of our time together with here today: what would prompt a wholly offended God to offer forgiveness to the very sinners who had rebelled against him, to those who were not righteous, to those who were not seeking God, what would motivate God to seek out sinners by coming to earth in the person of Christ, what would motivate God to send his Spirit after the ascension of his Son to seek out sinners in order to draw them by name to himself? Why would he do that? You could talk to Arminians who would say, "Well, you know, my faith, He saw that I would have faith and He, you know, He was prompted to do it because He saw that I would respond." That's an exact reversal of the truth and the nature of things, and that's a more deadly approach to the gospel than it might even seem at first because it gives the credit to the motivation to something inside of us and, beloved, there was never anything in us to cause God to seek us for our sake, there is not now anything in us that would prompt him, and there never will be, there never would be if there were 10,000 eternities in front of us. There never would be because we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. There's none righteous, not even one. There's none who seeks for God, dead in trespasses and sins. And since that's what we're like by nature, then what is left to explain God sending Christ, what is left to explain God having a gospel for unworthy people like you and me, such wonderful grace being sent and proclaimed through his own magnificent word? What would explain that?

Well, beloved, the only possible explanation is that there is something in God, there is something in his character that explains that and this is what I want to share with you here this morning. We're going to look at a few different texts here today. It's a little different than the way that I normally preach. The gospel reveals to us five interrelated attributes of God, you could say. The gospel is like having a 100 pound perfect diamond that you hold up and the light reflects different brilliance back to you as you look at it from different angles and you see the beauty from different perspectives, the same diamond revealing different colors as the light hits and shatters into the prisms of color that are made clear. So it is with the gospel of Jesus Christ and what does it tell us about the nature of the God who made such a gospel available to us? Well, we're just going to kind of go through it far too quickly here, but it tells us, first of all, if you're taking notes here today, you could title this message "Five Words of Gospel Hope." In one sense, I don't care what you title it because I want you to get the substance of it, but that's what's on the top of my page here on my notes, "Five Words of Gospel Hope," so you might as well conform it to what I've got as an expression of unity, that would be good.

First of all, the gospel tells us that this God of the gospel is a God of love. He is a God of love. Turn over in your Bible to 1 John 4, after the book of Hebrews, after James, after Peter's epistles, you come to 1 John. Scripture tells us that God is love, a term that comes from the familiar Greek word "agape," and in 1 John 4:7 and 8 it says this,

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Now let's stop there, pause there for just a moment. It's easy to forget in the superficial culture in which we live, that when the Bible talks about love it is not talking about sentimental feelings as though the gospel were somehow a variation of a Hallmark Christmas movie. No, it's not like that at all. When the Bible speaks about the love of God in the gospel, when it speaks about the love of Christ in coming for us, it means that he has sacrificially given of himself on our behalf. Love sacrifices for the well being of the object of the love, that's the sense in which the Bible speaks about the love of God, and you can see this in the immediate context of the text that is in front of us.

Go on to verse 9 and, remember, we're talking about the manifestation, the appearance of the gospel of Jesus Christ here, so that in verse 9 it says,

9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that [here's the content of the love, this is how you can define the love of God as shown by what he has done] that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

The cross of Christ is a revelation of the love of God. This gives us a sense of the disposition of God toward unworthy sinners, that in this present age we can see the love of God revealed, you can look at the cross of Christ, see the infinite measure of his

sacrifice on behalf of unworthy sinners like you and me, and you get a sense of Christ's willingness to secure the well being of his people even though it came at great personal cost. Jesus Christ loved us, fellow Christians, brother and sister in Christ, Jesus Christ loved us with an infinite commitment to our highest good, to our eternal good, and without that love of his we would be miserably doomed and miserably lost without hope ever to ever grace our lives. The love of God revealed in the cross of Christ, showing his willingness to sacrifice for our good.

You don't need to turn there for the sake of time but in Romans 5:6 you see the exact same motivation from the heart of God, from the character of God being expressed in Romans 5:6-8 where it says,

6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

The love of Christ, the love of God revealed in the gospel was an action of God that he made on behalf of undeserving people. One writer put it this way, he said, "The supreme expression of God's goodness is the amazing grace and the inexpressible love that shows kindness by saving sinners who deserve only condemnation and saving them moreover at the tremendous cost of Christ's death on Calvary."

What is the key for now? The key for us to see is that it was the love of God that made the gospel possible, not anything in us. It is rooted entirely and exclusively in his goodness, in his love, nothing in us, and by that measure and many others, God alone gets all of the glory and it extols the love of God, the goodness of God, the nature of God to care for his people like that. We step back from that conscious of our unworthiness, and at first we bow our head and acknowledge our unworthiness, and then we lift our eyes up and we give praise to him, "O God, thank You for Your great love for my undeserving soul." The key is that God's love prompted salvation, not anything in us.

Now you can keep going as you explore what Scripture says. Scripture speaks so much about the gospel and what was about God that prompted the gospel, and you can go on and you can find a second point, not only that he is a God of love but you can see, secondly, that he is a God of kindness. He is a God of kindness and in this violent wicked world in which we live, this is a wonderful antidote to the violence of the world in which we live. He is a God of kindness. There is a gracious goodness in God.

If you look over to Romans 2:4, as you're turning there, what was it that prompted repentance in you when you came to Christ, if you have indeed come to Christ? What was it that prompted repentance in me 37-38 years ago after a dreadful night of debauchery? What was it that prompted repentance in your heart? Was it something that you thought up that you thought was a good idea when you were walking in darkness dead in trespasses and sins? No, that doesn't explain it at all. That's a theological

impossibility. It's a biblical impossibility. So that in Romans 2:4 you see this and the Apostle Paul says,

4 ... do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

You see, it's not just a mathematical calculation, it's not just a matter of God doing something; what we want to understand is why he did it, what prompted him to show kindness to us. It's because it's who he is. It's intrinsic to his character. It's one of his attributes.

Kindness comes from the original word "chrestos" and it means God has shown generous favor to us. Generous favor. You could say that his kindness is useful because it provides a benefit to us, and what greater benefit could there be than the reality of the gift of eternal life and the granting of forgiveness of our sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to our account. How kind is that? How unbelievably generous is that? And the idea of kindness has the sense that God has done something for us that helps us.

Now I realize that when we talk in these small monosyllabic words, single syllables, and the simplicity of sentence structure can obscure the marvel of what we're talking about. God has helped us in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is so kind of him to do when we had nothing but guilt on our account. And you know, beloved, even for people who will never believe in Christ, people who were born as rebels, lived as rebels, will die as rebels, and live in hell as rebels forever and ever, God has shown kindness even to them. Scripture says that he causes the sun to shine and rain to fall on them equally with the redeemed, and throughout their earthly life they enjoy benefits from God even though they never give thanks to him. They never give thanks even though Scripture says compellingly that in their conscience and in their heart and in the skies and in the world around them they see the nature and power of God revealed but they never give thanks, and yet God still shows kindness to them for decades during their lives. For us who are the redeemed, infinitely more kindness shown to us. God's kindness having prompted the gift of salvation to us when there was nothing in us to prompt it, nothing to deserve that, and it shows us, the key here, the second key here, is that it shows us the kindness of God, the love of God to us, and I hope that what is happening by the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart is there's a sense of a curtain going up and you're starting to see something of the majesty of God being revealed. When God provided salvation in Christ, he was not doing this on a stingy reluctant basis. It was not something that he had to be persuaded to do. The fullness of the magnitude of his goodness is the only possible explanation that there is a gospel, it is because of the love and kindness to God flowing spontaneously from his very essence.

There's a third aspect of it. This just keeps going and going. A God of love. A God of kindness. The gospel also shows us that he is a God of mercy. He is a God of mercy meaning that in the gospel of Jesus Christ, meaning that in your salvation God has had compassion on you. He looked on you in your drunkenness, he looked on you in your

carnal life, he looked on you in your bitterness, he looked on you in your godlessness and in your rebellion and in your hypocrisy, and any of 10,000 other sins that we could list that marked our life before Christ. He had compassion on us. He saw us wandering in darkness. He saw, as it were, as we were stumbling toward the brink of hell ready to stumble in without awareness of the danger in which we were in, seeing us suffering under the weight of guilt, the affliction of Satan, the blindness that was supernaturally inflicted upon us and what did God do? In his mercy, he relieved our suffering. We didn't even realize the full extent of our suffering but God in mercy acted in a compassionate way to relieve our suffering.

And I'd like you to turn to the book of Ephesians now, Ephesians 2. Paul, of course, in the first three verses had talked about how man was dead in sin, dominated by the devil, and doomed to suffer the wrath of God, and in Ephesians 2:4 once again you have the attributes of God being set forth to explain the existence of salvation in the elect so that verse 4 says,

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Mercy. He is rich in mercy, especially in the writings of the Apostle Paul when it talks about these wonderful attributes of the goodness of God, it doesn't simply state them, it speaks about God being rich in these attributes, pouring them out in surpassing measure to us, the surpassing riches of his kindness. This is expressed in superlatives, not in a cold dispassionate way. It is talking about being swept up in the wonder of these attributes and exalting in the love and the kindness and the mercy of God.

The word "mercy" is from the Greek term "eleos," and it expresses compassion, that he showed kindness to our spiritual distress by rescuing us out of trouble and condemnation. These things start to overlap for a while but, you know, there are different words that are used, again holding up that diamond to see the rays of light being reflected from different perspectives.

And so there you were, beloved, without Christ, Scripture says without hope in the world, strangers to the covenants and promises of God. You were captive to supernatural evil powers, blinded by Satan, condemned as a son of wrath, dead in trespasses and sins, utterly hopelessly lost. Do you understand that? Utterly totally lost, dead on the side of the road, rotting as a spiritual corpse under the searing heat of guilt and the looming wrath of God on your soul, and then God in compassion, just as the good Samaritan in that New Testament story, God in compassion, God in mercy, comes alongside, as it were, picks you up – I'm speaking metaphorically here – picks you up, breathes new life in you and begins to shower you with kindness in the new life that he gave to you in Christ. This is utter mercy. This is utter compassion being shone upon us, being shone

upon his people. Corpses have nothing to offer to the living. Spiritually dead sinners have nothing to offer to the living God and yet God reaches down, as it were, in the tender spiritual hands of the Holy Spirit, takes out your heart of stone, fashions in you a heart of flesh, forms in you the person of Christ, as it were, and makes you alive to God, makes you a new creation in Christ, and sets you on a path of transforming you into the image of Christ that ultimately ends in glory. What can explain that except for what God is like? The love and the kindness and the mercy of God and, once again, the whole point here is that the key to all of this is that it was God's mercy that prompted salvation, nothing in you, and certainly nothing in me.

But then Scripture goes on and we saw more even in the passage from Ephesians 2, the gospel of Jesus Christ reveals that he is a God of grace. He is a God of grace meaning that God has shown undeserved favor to us. All of this is undeserved and you see it expressed there, we'll just stay in Ephesians 2, there in verse 5 where he says,

5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, [He] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

And in verse 7,

7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

By grace, charis, that theme is the point in this passage. As you read on, you see it in verse 8, grace, grace, grace. Verse 8,

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

And so we see that in grace God freely, freely bestowed undeserved blessing on us. He drew us to Christ and accepted us in Christ, pardoned our sins, counted us as righteous for the sake of his Son, and he did all of that even though we were unworthy. Not just unworthy but we were under righteous condemnation. God could have condemned us and been perfectly just to do so and never looked back. And never looked back. And yet here you and I are, those of us that are in Christ, we are in Christ and we are in the realm of this blessing. What I plead with the Spirit of God to work deeply into your heart this morning is to realize what that tells you about the nature of God and how good he is, how wonderfully kind he is to do this when it wasn't deserved. That's the whole point. We deserved the opposite and we got Christ instead. We deserved hell and got heaven instead. We deserved Satan and the kingdom of darkness and got Christ and the kingdom of light instead. We deserved misery and suffering and got blessing and goodness and eternal well being instead. Not for anything that we had done, not by any works of these sinful hands that have been done, or yours, but out of the sheer goodness, love, kindness and grace of God. That's what prompted salvation. That's what made this gift available to us. It's what God wanted. It's what God sought. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke about it in

those terms, "I've not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost and it shows us what he is like.

One of the ways that we would righteously repent in light of these things is to repent of our unworthy thoughts about the goodness and kindness of God, the things that would cause us, prompt us to think unworthy thoughts, to think he's not favorably disposed to us, to think that he's a harsh unbending God that is indifferent to our condition. Nothing could be further from the truth. If God was unconcerned about our condition there would be no gospel of Jesus Christ for us to exalt in. We would not be in Christ.

Fifth and final point that I want to bring out about what it says about God, what the gospel of Jesus Christ reveals to us, is that he is a God of patience. He's a God of patience. Beloved, before you and I were saved by grace, God, a holy God, he endured a lot of our sin and rebellion against him. It pains me to remember what I was like before Christ, sometimes it pains me to remember what I'm like now in Christ. But what a blasphemer I was, what a carnal, proud, angry man I was before Christ, and all of this for a long period of time while I was professing to be a Christian, I wasn't, but there was that carnal aspect to my life, and then on the, you know, on the absence of positives. I had no love for the word of God. I had no regard for him. I did not pray to him except when I really wanted something. Oh, the offense that my life was beforehand and your life with a different soundtrack playing the same tune, and God overlooking that in his eternal plan, overlooking that knowing that he had appointed a time where the Spirit of God would apply redemption to your heart and he would adopt you into his family and make you his own. For God to do that is a display of remarkable patience in the face of the unbroken provocation that our lives were before we were in Christ.

Look at 2 Peter 3:8 and 9, which is not a passage that proves anything about universal atonement. Verses 3:8 and 9,

8 But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved,

It's wonderful the way Scripture speaks to us in those terms, beloved, little children, even the vocatives, the terms of direct address that Scripture uses to speak to its readers are an expression of the kindness and the disposition of God toward us. Peter is writing to believers and he refers to them as beloved, and as he writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit this is not merely a human disposition from the Apostle Peter, this is an expression of the disposition of God to his own. He speaks to us and he addresses us as beloved.

beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. 9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

In the course of your unsaved life and in mine, God looked upon our rebellion with a sense of patience. God was not willing for you to perish as you deserved, but there was

this overriding purpose of God established before time began that he would show kindness to you, he would show grace and love and mercy to you and lead you to repentance and it's what God wanted. He chose you before the foundation of the world so that you would know this grace, so that while you were living in rebellion and while I was living in rebellion, God patiently waited for the fullness of time to come for the Spirit to apply redemption to your heart. That's amazing. I mean, there just comes a time where your tongue is inadequate to express the glories of what all of this means.

The word for "patience" is the Greek verb "makrothumeo," I like the way that sounds so I'm going to say it again, makrothumeo. I think that sounds cool. It has the idea of being forbearing. It has the idea of being willing to wait. God was self-restrained in the face of sinners' provocation against him. God did not hastily retaliate. God did not strike back each time we offended him, each time we sinned against him. You know, metaphorically speaking, we tried to slap the face of God, he didn't slap back. He patiently overlooked it with a full divine awareness and purpose that he was going to save us one day, that he was going to draw us to himself, draw us to Christ one day. And so he patiently overlooked all of our sin in order to bring about that long term eternal result. God did not promptly punish us when we deserved it.

So the key, once again, is seeing that it is found in the perfection of God, the perfection of God is what explains the fact that there is a gospel of Jesus Christ, and the perfection of God explains why you partake in the benefit of it, beloved. It is about his love, it is about his kindness, his mercy, his patience, his goodness. That explains it and that alone. And so God is a God of love toward sinners, a God of kindness, a God of mercy, a God of grace, a God of patience. Beloved, when God saved you, he did not do so reluctantly. He did not do so grudgingly. It was not with a resentful spirit that said, "All right, come on." It wasn't like that at all. You look at the person of Christ, you see him leaving heaven, you see him living a perfect life, you see him suffering on the cross, you see him buried, you see him triumphantly raised from the dead, you see him ascended to God on high, interceding for his saints at the right hand of God, one day coming back to receive us as his own that we might enter into that place that he has been preparing for us for 2,000 years, John 14, and you realize that there is a fullness of kindness that alone explains it.

Let's talk about what that means for you and me and, beloved, this has really practical implications for your Christian life. It really does. Understand this: God never accepted you because you were worthy of him because you weren't. God never accepted you because you were so obedient. God did not accept you, God wasn't prompted to reach out to you because he saw a satisfactory level of works in your life. None of that existed. That could not possibly explain why you are in Christ today. Jesus Christ receives sinners like you and me because he is gracious, because he is merciful, and his character never changes. He is immutable. He cannot change. The nature and essence of God cannot change. So God did not grudgingly save you. Do you know what that means today? Praise God, praise the Son, praise the Spirit, it means that he does not grudgingly keep us either.

Look at Romans 8:31. Actually let's go back to verse 28.

28 ... we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Here's what I wanted to get to, verse 31,

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Beloved, if God showed you this incomprehensible goodness when you were lost in sin, how much more then now that we are in his family is his goodness and grace and kindness and mercy and patience going to continue to endure upon us? If he hasn't changed and he saved us for this ultimate glory, then apparently his purposes for us are all good regardless of the providence that we find ourselves in as we gather here today. And the implications of this for Christian living are incalculable. Look, I've been in ministry for a while and I've lived the Christian life for a while, and so from observation and from personal experience, I know that you live a life that often falls short of what you would want it to be in Christ, and I know that many Christians as a result of that live with a pervasive sense of guilt that comes from their struggles with their besetting sin, that come from their failures in spiritual life when the dark cloud of adversity breaks open in a thunderstorm of sorrow, Christians who have walked with Christ for a long time and then suddenly something happens and their sense of assurance is taken away from them and a sense of fear and foreboding comes about, and then it just starts a vortex going down saying, "Oh, I'm not honoring God. You know, these failures are such a dishonor. How could I be such a disgrace to the God that I thought I was saved by?" And at one time or another, we've all tried to get back into the good graces of God by doing what? By trying harder, right? "Okay, now I've going to get serious about my Bible time. Now I'm going to get up at 5 and read for two hours. I'm going to pray more." And on and on it goes looking for relief from what we can do but done in reliance on self, having overlooked the very character of God that prompted salvation in the first place, forgetting about his love, his kindness, his mercy, his grace, and his patience.

Look, I'm all in favor of Christians reading their Bible and praying, don't get me wrong, but if you find yourself in that spiritual desert with a parched throat, understand that you can try harder and harder, as you do the more your self-imposed rules operate the more they're going to condemn you because the rules, the rules will never show you mercy. But Christ will. Christ shows mercy to you even in your Christian imperfection, even in your stumbles, for we all stumble in many ways, James says. Christ shows mercy to you, Christ calls you, as it were, he whistles for you to come understanding that he will show

mercy to you even in your present condition. He'll do that and we know that for sure because that's who he is. "Come to Me, all ye who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me for I am gentle and humble in heart and you'll find rest for your souls."

Beloved, understand this: your performance never prompted the love of God in your life, and if you have strayed, you're so-called back-slidden today, cut through it all and just cry upon Christ for mercy and say, "I've heard about love and grace and patience and mercy and kindness today. I have nothing to offer You. I can't even repent adequately for the ways that I have offended You, but I come back to who You are in Your ultimate perfections and I ask You to have mercy on me again just like You did at the moment of my salvation." And come to God not based on your sorrow, not based on how sorry you are or how bad you feel or because you've paid your time of probation. Go straight to Christ now appealing to him on the basis of these perfections and find your rest. Your rest as a Christian is not found in being sorry, doing penance, crying tears of repentance or trying harder to keep the commandments. That's not where rest is found. That's not where restoration is found. Your hope is found in the cross of Jesus Christ which shows forth in undeniable splendor and glory his love and his kindness, his mercy, his grace, and his patience.

And for those of you that are here and you're not a Christian, understand that the basis upon which you can come to Christ is nothing about yourself. The warrant, you could say, the basis upon which you can come to Christ is based entirely on the fact that he is who he is, his character is like this, and he commands you to come. He says, "Come to Me." The reason that you come to Christ and the confidence with which you come is grounded entirely on who he is, what he has done, and the call that he makes when he says repent and believe. That's all you need to come to him and know that he will receive you favorably.

So my non-Christian and my Christian friend, by faith look outside of yourself today to Christ. Remember the perfections of his goodness that prompt the gospel of Jesus Christ. Remember it day by day and with each passing moment and you will find strength to meet your sins and your trials here. God bless you.

Let's pray.

Father, we offer You our praise for these wonderful majestic excellencies that define who You are, that prompted You to establish the gospel before the foundation of the world, to appoint us to enter into its riches before there was the first second of time, to send Christ to accomplish redemption, to send the Spirit to apply redemption, all revealing the majesties of the wonder of Your grace. We honor You for that here today and, Father, we pray for each one here suffering under the weight of guilt, the weight of discouragement, the weight of besetting temptations, the weight of sorrow and loss and recent good-byes. We pray for everyone, Father, to know this goodness of Yours and that You would show grace to each one even as You have shown it to me. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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