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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

**February 28, 2021**

**Enemies of the Cross**

**Philippians 3:13-21**

**Prayer:** *Father, I just thank you again for your grace. I thank you again for the gifts that you've given to us, the many gifts that you've given to us. And Lord, among those is your word and your Spirit. And Lord, we unpack these each Sunday morning and we just thank you for them. And so I pray as we are looking into a difficult part of your word this morning that you would help us to unpack it, by the power of your Holy Spirit help us to make it of permanent value, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well our scripture this morning is *Philippians 3:13-21: Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I*

*have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*

Well if you remember Paul opened up this chapter, he was dealing with the legalists. I mean he went after those who preached the gospel plus, the plus being some work that you had to add to the perfect work of Christ on the cross. And the areas that he went after were the areas that the Judaizers had focused on which was circumcision as necessary for salvation. If you remember Paul called these folks dogs, mutilators, evildoers. He said that because he was passionate about what they were doing to his gospel.

Now we're at the end of this chapter and Paul goes full circle. Instead of attacking the legalists, he's now going to attack the libertines, those who purported to be part of the church who saw living holy lives, sanctified and set apart for Christ as something that was strictly optional. In their view Christ had paid the full penalty of their sins on the cross and so what they did with their bodies didn't matter at all. They had carte blanche, so they

thought, to live lives of outright debauchery. And Paul knew that such an attitude was a mark not just of bad theology or mistaken understanding but rather instead of unbelief. Paul had absolute confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit to transform the lives of those who were truly saved. He had seen it in his own life how God had turned attitudes and actions that were directly opposed to the gospel right side up. And he knew that anyone who was truly a child of God who had the Spirit of God within them would be hearing and responding to the same message with the same power in their lives through the same Holy Spirit. Hence he could say: *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.*

Now Paul wants us to hold true to what we have attained because he's seen on both ends of the scale folks who have appeared at one time to have this glorious truth only to reveal themselves to be unbelievers. I mean the Judaizers gave up the truth of the gospel alone to a different gospel, to a gospel of legalism, of earning their way into heaven. Paul had seen it before and he understood what a damnable heresy it was and that's why he said in his letter to the Galatian church who was suffering the very same scourge of the judaizers, he said: *I am astonished that you are so quickly*

*deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel. Well now he wants to direct his attention toward those who are turning to a different gospel of a different sort. Before he takes on the libertines though, he directs the Philippian believers to be imitators of himself. He says: Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.*

And now you might be wondering, doesn't it take a giant ego to tell people that you are so together, that you have so clearly arrived that folks need to be imitating you? Well, that's not what Paul is getting at. In fact if you remember he's just finished telling the Philippians the exact opposite, that he has -- quote -- "not yet arrived." In verse 12 he says: *Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own.* Well Paul, if you haven't made it your own, if you haven't obtained this, then why are you having us imitate you? Well it's because Paul understood and lived out the process and not the product. And because he understood the process and not the product, he was in a perfect position to have people imitate him. And the product that we're talking about is something that nobody could ever produce. The product is perfection. That's what "arriving" truly means, that's what

obtaining this actually means. And Paul very clearly said "*not that I have obtained this or am already perfect.*" Just as I said last week, Paul knew exactly what to do with the process with all of the shortcomings, past, present and future, that he had. He took them to the cross. And like I said last week, Paul had so many things that were behind him at this point, things that were absolutely awful and things that were also spectacular and miraculous, things that advanced the kingdom of God immensely and Paul had the task of dealing with these things both and he had basically to deny himself the ability for his past to fill him with guilt and to rob him of energy and joy and power. But he also had to resist the temptation to be prideful about the marvelous things that God was doing in his present. Paul had the perfect solution. He brought all of his past, his present and his future to the foot of the cross, recognizing that God himself loved him enough to take all of Paul's sins and make them his own on the cross. There the very idea that the king of the universe -- quote -- *did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* That the one to whom all honor and glory, the one who would *humble himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross* in order to pay the price of his sins, well that put every part of the process into its proper perspective for Paul. So Paul says his boasting is not directing inwardly, his desire that people

would imitate him, it's a desire for the Philippian church to have the full realization of what it is they have in Christ. It's not something that Paul insisted was exclusive to him. What he wants for the Philippian church is for their eyes to be directed to all those who fully understand what a gift it is they have in Christ.

I mean notice the pronoun that Paul uses here. He says: *Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.* And "us" is all those who are in the Philippian church who truly understood that the process of the gospel, that could produce the product of perfection. That God himself became one of us, living out his life perfectly and then offered up his life on a cross so that we by faith could gain his righteousness, his perfection and have it as our own. And that by faith alone in Christ alone, we would now become worthy of heaven itself. So Paul knew that the only boasting a Christian will ever want to participate in is boasting in Christ. This is Paul's own words. He says: *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.* See, the reason why Paul is directing the eyes of the Philippian believers to himself and others is because he recognizes that the church, like every single church, is constantly under pressure from the enemy, that there's always going to be wolves in sheep's clothing striking from both

ends of the spectrum, the legalists on one side and the libertines on the other. Paul goes on to say: *For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.*

So Paul's now going to direct our attention to the libertines, that's to the folks who proclaim to be Christians but who live lives that are rooted in the flesh. Paul starts out by saying these folks aren't just misinformed, they're not just missing the mark, these folks are literally enemies of the cross of Christ. And you note the first thing that we see in Paul's attitude is that he describes these folks -- quote -- *with tears*. Charles Spurgeon pointed out something about tears and the apostle Paul. This is what he said. He said: "I never read that the apostle wept when he was persecuted though they ploughed his back with furrows. I do believe that never a tear was seen to gush from his eye while the soldiers scourged him. Though he was cast into prison, we read of his singing, never of his groaning. I do not believe he ever wept on account of any sufferings or dangers to which he himself was exposed for Christ's sake. I call this an extraordinary sorrow, because the man who wept was no soft piece of sentiment, and seldom shed a tear even under grievous trials."

David Guzik notes: "Spurgeon thought that Paul wept for three reasons. First, on account of the guilt of these enemies of the cross of Christ. Second, on account of the ill effects of their conduct. Finally, on account of their doom." He says: "The work and the end of these enemies was that they, in their disregard for God's holiness, gave ammunition to the legalist's accusation that Paul preached a cheap grace that required no commitment of the life. This is what grieved Paul so at their teaching."

Well, many of us have felt exactly what Paul felt at hearing the news of the life of Ravi Zacharias. Ravi died of cancer last year to the deep sadness of everyone who saw him as a powerful voice for the truth of the gospel. He had an absolutely unique ministry. He would go onto college campuses, he would rent out a large hall and set up microphones and he would just field questions, some of them incredibly hostile, from college students asking why in the world should they believe in this gospel of Jesus Christ. Well those answers would inevitably be brilliant, engaging and oftentimes compelling. He was known worldwide as a prominent defender of the gospel. But after he died, rumors began to circulate that Ravi wasn't all that he was purported to be. There were accusations that he had padded his resume and did not have the degrees that he claimed to have. Far more seriously, a woman claimed that he had sexually abused her, that he forced her to remain silent under



threats of destroying her. She was followed by another accuser, then another and then another. And finally his ministry, RZIM, hired an outside agency to examine all of the claims and they came to the sad conclusion that Ravi Zacharias had led a double life. In effect his life mirrored the very people that Paul is speaking about in our text this morning.

David Deane knew Ravi Zacharias personally. He had ministered with him, even wrote a chapter in one of his books. He said this in a *Gospel Coalition* article: "I cannot say I ever really knew Ravi (though I suppose those who did, are now wondering the same thing). Nevertheless, I found myself struck, time and again, by Ravi's kind and gentle demeanor. I looked up to him. I wanted to be like him. He seemed like the 'real deal' both on stage and off. He seemed so... genuine. Genuine?! Less than a year ago Ravi was eulogized as 'the greatest Christian apologist of this century' by the Vice President of the United States. Today, the 'greatest apologist' has been heralded 'the greatest fraud' in a catastrophic betrayal. Today, some nine months after his death, it is tragically clear that 'genuine' is simply not the right adjective to reference Ravi's character."

Speaking of a devastating investigative report detailing all of Ravi's activities, Deane said -- quote -- "Ravi's (sin) was global,

calculated, guarded, organised, predatory, and enduringly cruel. 'Blasphemy' -- the carrying of God's name for ungodly ends -- is the summary word that came to mind when I finished reading the report."

This is terrible news. This is just an awful thing to discover. And as I was listening to this and as I read this, I instantly thought of Paul's words to the religious leaders in the book of Romans. This is *Romans 2:22*. Paul says: *You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."*

So what are we to make of this, and why am I bringing it up? Well, Paul is describing folks who are part of a church community in name only. And whether they were there on the legalist side such as the Judaizers were or on the libertine side such as this enemies of the cross were, the point is these folks were tares and not wheat, and that's exactly what Jesus predicted for his church. Jesus repeatedly said that his church would consist of believers and unbelievers who would live together in such a way that it would be very hard to tell who is who. Jesus used the parable of the wheat and the tares to illustrate how just this was going to unfold.

This is Matthew 13. It says: *Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'"*

Now the tares that Jesus is referring to in this story, a tare is a unique type of wheat in that it looks exactly like wheat as it's growing up and it's only at the harvest time is it revealed to be a useless imposter. So Jesus is delivering this prediction in a parable. If you remember usually he would speak a parable and the disciples had no idea what he was talking about. They just didn't get it. They didn't understand. And so once again he delivers this parable and the disciples ask him to explain it. So he takes the disciples apart and this is what he says, it says: *He answered*

*and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"*

So I think the question that most of us should be asking ourselves about Ravi Zacharias is, okay, is it one of wheat or tares? And ultimately that is a question that only God can answer, and he tells us so. I think most people are trying to figure out whether or not Ravi's just a sinner saved by grace or an enemy of the cross like Paul is describing here. So how does this relate to Ravi Zacharias, how does this relate to us? Well, first of all, we have to understand that no human being has the right to make that kind of final judgment on any other human being. God makes it perfectly clear that we are not in a position to cast final judgment on anyone and that's God's decision and no one else's. That's what

God meant when Jesus said, *"Judge not, that you be not judged."* You see our culture has gone full speed in the exact opposite direction. In fact there's only one great sin in our culture and that is the sin of judging, of judgmentalism. Folks love to quote that one scripture: *"Judge not, that you be not judged"* as precluding any and all judgments of any and all behavior by any and all people. That couldn't be farther from the truth. God calls on us constantly to exercise good judgment. In fact only five verses later in that text where Jesus is talking about judgment, he says: *"Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces."* How in the world are you able to do that without understanding, without judging, if you will, between dogs and swine and sheep?

The problem with Ravi Zacharias is a problem for all of us. You see, Ravi was successful at hiding his sin all the way up to and including his own death. And on the surface this flies in the face of understanding what it means to be born again. You see when you're born again, the Spirit of God enters into your spirit, takes your heart of stone out of your life and then replaces it with a heart of flesh that now wants to obey God. This is what Ezekiel says. God says: *I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from*

*your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. See the result of this new birth is that the Spirit of God now dwelling in you will respond to the sin in your life by making you miserable. And the misery doesn't come from God pounding on you, no, the misery comes from a war going on between the Spirit of God, God's Holy Spirit who now lives inside you and the spirit of the flesh, and the spirit of death that we all have, we all know is going to be a lifelong struggle between the spirit and the flesh. Paul described it as a war that was going on within himself. This is what he said in Romans 7. He said: So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. So I have no idea if Paul's description fits Ravi or not. I mean, as a man struggling to serve the law of God with his mind but in his flesh serving the law of sin or someone fitting this other description that we're looking at in our text this morning: For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end*

*is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.*

Well, we do know three things about these kind of people. We know first of all that their God is their belly. I mean these are people committed to satisfying the desires of their flesh. Sensuality defines their lives. And secondly, their mind seldom if ever focused on the kingdom but instead on earthly things. And thirdly, they glory in their shame. The sad possibility is that Ravi didn't glory in his shame only because he was committed to covering that part of his life up and that we only got to see certain parts of Ravi that he let us see. Perhaps the women that he abused would have a different view of whether or not he gloried in his shame. The bottom line in all of this is that God alone knows whether or not Ravi was saved by grace or was an enemy of the cross, whether he was counted among the wheat or the tares.

Now it's certainly not a fail proof test but I've seen that God often exposes his own when they attempt to cover their sin. God says in *Numbers 32: Behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.* I'm sure we've all heard that scripture before. And I've always regarded this as a loving discipline that God exercises toward his own sheep, that is to say if you're one of his sheep, God oftentimes will call you out if

you're attempting to live a life of deception. But that's not always the case. And because Ravi lived his entire life with a deception that was only exposed afterwards, we can only guess where his heart really lay. People have compared Ravi to David and his sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Bathsheba's husband Uriah. And David himself went for weeks living a similar double life before the prophet Nathan called him out. But there's a difference between David and Ravi. You see, in David's case we have a record of the battle that waged between David's sinful spirit and the Holy Spirit of God within David when David tried to cover his sin up. And it reads like an epic battle between two forces that are living within one person. This is what David wrote, reflecting on the time in his life when he was living a double life. David said this, he said: *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.* See, as terrible as David's sin was -- and it was indeed terrible and we're talking about adultery and murder -- as terrible as that sin was, David is giving us ample evidence of the fact that he was one of God's own by describing how the spirit within him reacted to his sin. And no matter how hard he tried, he simply couldn't ignore the war that was going on with his spirit and God's Spirit within him. *For I know my*



*transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.* We have no record of that kind of conflict taking place in Ravi's life. In fact we do know that at some point he was confronted with his sin.

And again David Deane writes this. He said: "When Nathan confronted David and charged 'Thou art the man!' David crumbled in brokenness and repented before the Lord. Why? Because he 'knew his transgressions and his sin was always before him' (Psalm 51:3). Ravi was confronted multiple times and we have no evidence that he ever repented and multiple instances where he doubled down and went on the offensive. Add to all of this the fact that Ravi himself preached on the moral failures of David, and we have to ask the question: What degree of cognitive dissonance are we talking about here?"

See, the bottom line when it comes to Ravi Zacharias is that the cross of Christ is great enough to cover any and all sin and God doesn't have to explain anything to us. As to whether or not Ravi was one of his own locked in a pattern of sin or an enemy of the cross, what we only know and we know without a doubt is that he did great damage to the cause of Christ and to the kingdom of God. And we know that people will be looking for a long, long time at anyone in leadership and wondering, well, how do you know that he's not living a double life?

So we would all do well to pause and examine the three characteristics of the enemies of the cross who Paul described as doomed to destruction. We need to ask ourselves, number one, is God my belly? Do the things that matter in my life all stem from satisfying my physical needs? Do I live to eat or do I eat to live? Have I built my life around satisfying my physical needs at the cost of my spiritual health? Number two, do I glory in my shame? We live in a culture today that specializes in glorying in shame. I've said it many, many times, America's answer to shame is shamelessness. And we've all seen it play itself out. But what that has done is it has desensitized us to things that are genuinely shameful that we no longer treat as items of shame and sometimes we treat as items of pride. When politics becomes idol worship, that's shameful. When abortion is celebrated as a civil right instead of a national tragedy, that is shameful. When we argue about whether or not men claiming to be women can compete in high school and college athletics, we've gone past the point of considering how shameful such outright defiance is. So we have to ask ourselves is there anything in my life that I glory in that I really should be ashamed of? And thirdly, do I have my mind set on earthly things?

Now I once heard someone say if you want to know where you're at spiritually, just ask yourself what occupies your mind when your

mind's not occupied? How often does God and his kingdom occupy your thoughts? I mean, if the only time that you think about God and his kingdom is Sunday morning church time, I have to tell you something's seriously wrong. Paul says that the people whose God is their belly, whose glory is their shame and whose mind is set on earthly things are headed for destruction. But it's not because they've reached some kind of critical point where God is finally fed up with them. Instead it's because it's clear that they've never entered into a relationship with him wherein God's Spirit would indwell them. One thing I need you to understand, it's very important that you understand that you never get to a point where your sinning kind of exceeds some kind of limit and then God now abandons you. That's not how God's gospel works. Jesus made it crystal clear that no one comes to the Father except through him and that he loses absolutely none of those that the Father has chosen. If you belong to Jesus, you've been given to him as a gift from the Father to the Son, and it's a gift that the Son promises he will never lose. Listen to how he puts it in *John 10*. He says: *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."* What that means for Ravi Zacharias is that the question is not and never has been is your sin too great to be

covered by the cross. There's no sin too great that Christ's blood could not cover it. Rather the question is: Are you one of Christ's sheep? Have you heard his voice? Do you follow him? Whether Ravi was a sheep or a goat is a question that none of us will get the answer to until we get to heaven. But it's a question that we can each ask and answer about ourselves today.

Paul follows his discussion of the fate of these enemies of the cross with this statement. He says: *Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.* See what Paul's doing here? He's drastically but mercifully changing the subject, and frankly it reminds me of the Super Bowl. See there's a Super Bowl tradition. There's a statement made by the victorious team's most valuable player. It's actually a very clever advertising ploy to take the greatest moment of the greatest sports victory to single out the greatest player who's achieved that victory and at the very height of his celebration in the most important part of his life, have him imply that there's only one thing that would be greater than this when he turns to the camera and he says, "I'm going to Disney World." Apparently there's only one thing in the world

that's greater than this moment the athlete is enjoying, that's of course, Disney World. Paul ends this dismal discussion of the enemies of Christ in his church, whether legalists or libertines, by making a statement that puts everything into perspective: *But our citizenship is in heaven.* In essence what Paul is saying is we're going to heaven. I mean, we stumble and stop to think that that little sentence changes everything.

I mean just this week I came across a column in *WORLD Magazine* by Andree Seu Peterson and she's got a wonderful perspective on life itself and she's a person in my age bracket, so we think alike. This is what she wrote about heaven this week. She said: "We are going to heaven soon. That's it. That's our secret. It is so simple that one hardly hears it mentioned anymore. Now for the practicality. Heaven is forever and ever. But suppose we could put a numerical figure on it, like a trillion trillion years to the 10th power! Compare that duration to the number of elliptical loops around the sun" -- that's a 24-hour day -- "that remain in your flu prone, irritable bowel syndrome susceptible matter, and you can readily calculate that there's a bigger proportion of the hereafter than the here. What, will you not give up with a smile for a deal like that?"

See when things begin to look grim, it really helps to grab a

heaping dose of perspective. I mean I wouldn't blame you for thinking that the church is under siege from those that Paul identifies as enemies of the cross, from the legalists on the one side to the libertines on the other side, and you add to them an unbelieving world that now considers us as bigots and haters for simply believing God and his word. So what do we do? What do we do? Well, we would do well to follow Paul's advice, the same advice he gave at the very beginning of this message. *Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.* So we imitate Paul. And to imitate Paul is to imitate and embrace his perspective. See, the whole of Paul's life was marked by the fact that he always maintained this split screen vision of life itself where he had one eye on earth and one eye on the kingdom that he knew he was going to inherit. And it was that vision that enabled him to understand and withstand every and all things including these attacks on his beloved church. We, too, are entering into a period of trial not even remotely as extreme as the one that Paul was in the middle of and yet we, too, would benefit greatly from having a perspective that shouts, "I'm going to heaven!" As Paul put it: *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.* We

all know Paul's idea of light and momentary included beating with rods and scourgings and stonings and near drowning and starvation and nakedness. Our trials of this moment appear to be a diminution of our free speech right and some name calling. Nonetheless, we are entering into a period that we've never seen in the last twenty or thirty years and we would be well served to remember Paul's words. He says: *But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.* Let's pray.

*Father, I grieve for the family of Ravi Zacharias, I grieve for RZIM, I grieve for all those who were just stunned to learn that he had lived a double life. I have absolutely no idea whether or not Ravi is a wheat or a tare. That's something that you know, it's something that you reserve for yourself and not for us. And so I pray, Lord, that we would have the opportunity, if ever, when we hear people saying, "Oh, look at this guy, look at this situation, look at this circumstance and how duplicitous and two-faced these people are," to understand that this is exactly what Jesus predicted, that he even told stories about this happening, that there would be enemies of the cross, whether it's on the libertine side or on the legalist side. And Lord, that we know we are his own, we know we are his sheep and that we follow him, not that*

*we're leading sinless, spotless lives but that we have the presence of his Holy Spirit within us who speaks to us when we do sin. And the misery that we have when we are engaging in sin is a part of that battle between the Spirit of God within us and our own flesh. Lord, if we don't have that and if you don't have that ever happening in your life, it's time to speak to somebody, it's time to get it right, it's time to understand exactly what it means to be born again. And so I pray for opportunities, Lord, something as bad as this, Lord, you have the ability through Romans 8:28 to turn it around and use it for good, and I pray you would do just that and that we could be part of that. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*