

Christ and him Crucified

1 Corinthians

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And the greatest hope that I have for every single one of you is the same, that you would know Christ Jesus as your Lord and Savior. So let's look at the word of God this morning and unpack the heart of Paul.

1 Corinthians 2:1.

1 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. 2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Let's go before the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, we are looking at things that are far too wonderful for us to see and comprehend. Lord, I feel a particular weight right now in walking on very holy ground, where we will be considering what your Son came to accomplish. Lord, in this moment I ask that you would remove me from the equation, that you would get me out of the way and make your gospel plain. Lord, would you open the hearts and the minds of sinners to know you and their need of you and to trust in you in a saving way. Help us now to glorify you in the things that are spoken and the thoughts that we have and in our response to your word. Be with us, O God, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Over the last few weeks, the last few sermons, we have had the joy of hearing from Pastor Ty several wonderful messages. Over the course of, I think, about four weeks, we were thinking about "The Stabilizing Power of Christ," and in that, we talked about the insanity of sin, how sin within us causes us to think and act in absolutely insane ways, how our sin has impacted us to the very heart where we are not walking in faithful obedience to him, where we are not trusting in him, where we look at the things that he has designed us for, and we go the absolute opposite direction. We spit in his face and reject his law. We also heard the supreme beauty and compelling power of a life well lived. Again, it's the importance of right and biblical thinking, that even though we are sinful in our nature, God has called us to think rightly about the world around us, to think rightly about who we are, and to think rightly about who he is. And what Pastor Ty ended

with last week was the truth that our only hope to be freed from the bondage of sin is in the truth that Christ Jesus came to save sinners, from 1 Timothy 1:15.

As we have seen so faithfully over the last few weeks, our greatest problem, our greatest reality is our sin but not only our sin, the problem is we are sinful and we can't do anything about it in and of ourselves. There is nothing that I can do to save myself, so this is a great problem, but praise be to God that Christ Jesus came to save sinners. And yet there will be gathered together this morning in our city thousands upon thousands of people who will fill seats of sanctuaries and auditoriums, sing feel-good songs, sit under teaching, and will go having never heard the power of the gospel, having never heard that their only hope in this life is the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. There will be in pulpits all around the world today sermons that are preached that tell people how to be better versions of themselves, that tell people that this life was made for you, that you were made to prosper, to get whatever you can get. Or they will preach about cultural ideologies that are completely opposed to the word of God.

And why is that? I think in some cases it's because they are like the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2. They have abandoned their first love. They have rejected Christ, their first love. But in another real sense, it is likely because they never knew him at all. But so we don't think that that is the only problem that is out there today, there is another growing danger in evangelical churches, and that is churches that are producing scholars and intellectuals whose hearts have grown cold to the hope of the gospel and the beauty of the cross, who are all about growing and building up smart people who have never really been changed by the good news of Jesus Christ, and I think in large part it is because they are more concerned with producing filled heads at the cost of empty hearts.

So that is a problem. Neither of these models are what we are called to as the church, is it? In Romans 12:2, Paul states that we are to renew our minds so that our hearts can be transformed, but you cannot have one without the other. You must renew your mind so that you can be transformed. You cannot have a filled head truly and an empty heart, and you cannot have a filled heart and an empty head. Our knowledge of God drives into our obedience to God. His word leads to transformation.

So the solution, we need to talk about the solution this morning. How do we press back against those churches that do not preach the word of God? How do we press back against those churches that do not know and proclaim the hope of the gospel? And how do we press back against those who have grown cold to the hope of the gospel at the cost of knowing more things? Are you caught up in a Christless gospel? Look to Christ and him crucified. Are you caught up in the foolishness of today's culture? Look to Christ and him crucified. Has the gospel become merely an intellectual exercise to you? Look to Christ and him crucified. That is what we will be doing this morning. I want us to experience the cross of Christ anew. To see Christ for who he really is and for what he really did. To remember with great joy when we first believed in the accomplished work of Christ on the cross.

So this morning we will look at the resolve of Paul. The resolve of Paul, the one thing that he knew. The title of this message is simple, "Christ and Him Crucified." I'm not very creative. I don't need to be creative. Paul did it for me. Christ and him crucified. The first thing that we will look at, number 1, is the reason for his resolve. He was resolved to know only one thing and that was Jesus Christ and him crucified. So why was he resolved? Underneath that we need to understand the context of his resolve. What is he writing about? Who is he writing to?

So it says in verse 1 of chapter 2, "And I, when I came to you, brothers." Well, when in the world did Paul come to them? Let's look over really quickly at Acts 18. Paul on his missionary journeys left Athens and we will find in Acts 18:1 that he is going to arrive in Corinth. Verse 1,

1 After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, 3 and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks. 5 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. 6 And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." 7 And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. 8 Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. 9 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, 10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people." 11 And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Paul has arrived in Corinth for the first time. This is not when he is writing the letter. This is when he first came to them. He left Athens where he was ministering, has now come to Corinth because he heard Priscilla and Aquila were there and because he knew Timothy and Silas would soon join him, and his role or task in going there was to preach the good news of Jesus Christ. So every Sabbath he would travel to the synagogue. He would show up in there and immediately all he wanted to talk about was this man from Galilee, Jesus Christ who came to die on the cross for sinners, how they had rejected him. And it says that he was reasoning with the Greeks and the Jews, and we'll come to that in just a moment.

Later on the Lord will appear to him in a vision saying, "Keep going. Keep pressing on. Keep preaching the good news." This was his task as he went. Now later on in the verses we'll see that he gets arrested for doing so. They put him on trial because they're angry at

him. The Jews, that is, are angry at him for proclaiming the gospel, for preaching Christ crucified and yet he is seen to be not guilty and so he is freed. Now Paul stayed there for 18 months. Boots on the ground there for 18 months and the only thing that he did was preach the gospel. Silas and Timothy joined him. All they did, preach the gospel. Make Christ known. That was his task.

Now what was Corinth like? Corinth was a young and yet very important city in the Roman Empire. It was the capital city of the province of Achaia which covered most of Greece and it was perfectly placed on the isthmus of Corinth. So it was the center of both trade and land and on sea. It's this small stretch of land. They're right on the edge of it where the seas come in on them. Trade literally had to pass through there. There was no option. That's where the trade went and because of that you had a large gathering of people, some have estimated several hundred thousand in this city filled with Romans and Greeks and Jews, made up of soldiers, the wealthy elite, merchants, sailors, slaves, philosophers and so on. You get the picture. There's a lot of people here from a lot of different backgrounds. It is a cultural melting pot and yet at the same time it was an extremely pagan city. There they had the temple of Aphrodite at its center, the goddess of love, which will hint you into why he will later on call out their sexual sins several times. It was a pagan city. It was not friendly to the gospel. It was not friendly to Christians.

Now the second thing that we see within this context is the opposition of his resolve. Paul was opposed while he was in Corinth. Now looking at the list of people that was there we're not surprised that he was opposed, but there were two main opponents of his message. The first would be the Greeks. The Greeks were opposed to him. The Greek culture was well known for producing philosophers, for being thinkers. They thought in worldly terms. Their philosophy was typically focused on an attempt to understand where humanity came from, how did we get here, asking deep philosophical questions of how we got here, why we're here, and then from that they created a lot of their own ethics and morals and so on. The Greeks were known for being thinkers, for being wise in their own eyes as Paul will call out in 1 Corinthians. The message of the cross to them was foolishness. It was foolishness because they had reasoned their own ways of salvation. They had reasoned their own ability to be right in their own life and so when they looked at the cross, this truth that someone came to die for them, it didn't fit their model and they opposed Paul.

But the other group that was opposed to him were the Jewish leaders that were there. To the Jews the cross flew right in the face of everything that they had anticipated the Messiah being, and we'll talk about this more in just a moment. But they had plans and they had the idea of what they thought this man from the line of David would be. They thought he would come in and conquer and reign over all, establish a kingdom in that moment. This is not what they had expected and so they were vehemently opposed to the message of Christ and him crucified. But what I find interesting if you look at the verses just before in 1 Corinthians 1 is how Paul engaged with them. He did not meet them on their own terms. He did not meet them on their own terms. He did not try to engage with the Greeks with their own philosophy and reasoning. He did not try to argue with the Jews based upon their understanding of what the world would be.

The message for each one was the same and I think so often we fall into the trap of believing that we have to know everything about someone's belief system before we can talk to them, that we have to be perfectly informed, know every little nuance of what they believe before we can engage them, and that's just not true. When I was in high school, I used to sit with a very interesting group at lunch. I was a public school kid and I would sit at the lunch table every single day with the weirdest gathering of people you could ever imagine. You had me, which is already strange enough, and then you had, let's see here, trying to go through the list, we had several Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and a couple atheists. And we would all sit around the lunch table and we would debate. It didn't matter what it was over, we were going to debate and we were going to argue. And at that time, my only goal was to be right. So I would go home and I would get all of these books and I would learn as much as I could about what they believed so I could have some sort of gotcha moment where I could talk to them on their terms, hit them with something that they believed that wasn't right and have an aha, I beat you moment. And that's not what we're called to do. Our calling is not to just absolutely plaster someone and have a gotcha moment so we can defeat them. Our calling is to preach Christ crucified, the only hope for sinners.

So for Paul and the other apostles, the central message of their life and ministry was the same, Christ and him crucified. Now this does not give you an excuse. Don't hear me in saying that you don't act prepared and you don't study and you don't grow in your knowledge. That is not what I'm saying because if you go out and try and witness with certain people and you have nothing in your back pocket, you're in trouble. It's going to be difficult. We are called to grow. We are called to understand the world around us. We are called to know God's word. We are called, as Peter says, to be prepared to give a defense of our faith. But at the same time, the only message that we need to be proclaiming to the world around us is Christ on the cross, the hope of the gospel. You can have all of the wisdom in the world and all of the knowledge of every other religion, and even we can have a great understanding of theology, and yet without Christ, it is absolutely meaningless. Without the message of the gospel, it is worthless.

So we need to understand Paul's resolve but what was his resolve? What was Paul's resolve in this life? It was this and it's the message of the entire sermon: Christ and him crucified. You are going to find me very redundant during the sermon and I'm sorry, but that's all we have to talk about this morning is Jesus Christ and his accomplishment on the cross. Here's what it does not mean. Paul is not arguing for a lazy approach to theology and to Christian living. It is a joy as Christians to open the word of God, to know the word of God, to grow in our knowledge and understanding of who he is, of why he made us, the purposes behind our life, what we were called to, how we are sinners in need of grace. We need to grow in our understanding. So when Paul says, "I decided to know nothing," it's a little hyperbolic here because he knew a whole lot. He knew a whole lot about God and his word.

So he is not calling for a lazy approach to theology but this is a problem that we see in a lot of churches, especially in our area. They punt on their responsibility to grow in their knowledge and understanding of God for the sake of being more focused on the world, for being more welcoming, or some of them believe that since they are now Christians,

they have arrived and there is no need to continue to grow. No, Paul is not saying that we should put sound doctrine to the side, that we should only know this one thing. How do I know that? Read the book of Romans. That will put that thinking to bed very quickly. Paul's writing is saturated with incredible theology, with rich doctrine. I mean, he basically wrote our textbook on systematic theology.

So he is not calling or articulating for a lazy approach to only know one thing and then give up on learning the rest of it. Here's what this does mean, though, that the cross of Jesus Christ is the central message of everything that we do as Christians. It is the central theme of our life. It is the main point of our living, and without it we have no hope. And for Paul, this is his missions effort. The theme of his ministry, the theme of his missions, the theme of his church planning is to know Jesus Christ and him crucified. His resolve was simple, without Christ his life is meaningless, his life is worthless. In Philippians 3, he will later talk about, "If anyone had reason for confidence, I have more," and he gives this great list of all of his accomplishments and achievements in life, sets them to the side and say, "It's all rubbish compared to knowing Christ."

So our call is to know Jesus Christ and him crucified. Paul's only hope is Christ and him crucified, his only joy, Christ and him crucified, his only confidence, his only reason for living, his only reason and hope in suffering is the same, Jesus Christ and him crucified. The message of the cross of Christ was the only thing that mattered to him, and it should be the only thing that matters to us. Can that be said of you though? Is the cross of Christ everything to you? Is it your only hope in this life? Or are you lost in the weeds of the wisdom of this age and the pressures that our culture puts on us to be more like them? Are you too focused on being the smartest person in the room? When was the last time that you were brought to your knees meditating on what was accomplished on that tree? I fear that for some of us we have forgotten the beauty of the cross. It has lost its grandeur to us. We have forgotten its importance. We have forgotten our need of it. Or maybe we have become so puffed up with knowledge that we have started to reason that we somehow deserve that cross. Now for many of you in this room, it is a joy to know you and to know your hearts, the cross has never lost its luster and getting to talk to you and hear the stories of your life and your salvation, how God has worked in this body, it is clear that this church is built upon the cross of Jesus Christ. But whatever the case may be, I think the best thing that we can do in the next few moments is remind ourselves of what was accomplished on that tree. In this moment, we need to know only one thing, and that is Jesus Christ and him crucified.

We have heard all morning long about the story of the Holy Week, what happened, what unfolded, what Christ came to do, and what I want to do in the next few moments is just work through that together. So we're going to turn over to John 18. Now don't panic, I am not going to read all of the verses of 18 and 19, though I probably should to just let the Lord speak for himself. John 18. Before we begin reading there, let's work through really quickly what this week symbolizes. So this morning, as you've heard mentioned several times, is Palm Sunday. As Jesus came into Jerusalem, people started to gather around, taking off their coats and grabbing palm branches and laying them on the ground. And he came in on a donkey to arrive. They call it the Triumphal Entry. As we heard in the song that was sung, they start crying out, "Hosanna!" They're celebrating that the Savior has

come and as Ted referenced earlier, it's mentioned in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9 and also Psalm 118. Palm Sunday these people are excitedly proclaiming their Savior has come. He is here. The Messiah is here. The King from the line of David has finally arrived. He is about to establish his kingdom. They're thrilled and their joy would last for about 24 hours. It would be gone in a moment's notice.

On Monday, so tomorrow, we will remember that Jesus entered the temple and would drive out those who were turning the temple into a place of commerce. This is a place that was supposed to be holy and reverential, where sacrifices were offered to God and they're making money off of it. They had become flippant and calloused in their approach and so Jesus formed a whip, flipped over the tables of the money changers and drove them right out. For the Jews, that was strike one against him.

On Tuesday, Jesus will call out the Pharisees and the Sadducees in parables. He will call out their false understanding of who God is. He will start to tell about his death and say that they have rejected God all along. That would be strike two.

On Thursday, we have the Last Supper. Jesus gathers with his disciples. He sits around the table. They share a meal together. He talks about the truth that he is the bread of life. Also, his blood would be the cup that was poured out for them. After the Last Supper, Judas goes and begins to betray his Lord. We see what happens in Gethsemane, the high priestly prayer, where Jesus goes before the Father and prepares for what is about to come. And then on Thursday evening, he is arrested.

In the span of a couple of days, they went from praising him and worshiping him to having him arrested in hatred and that now brings us to the Passion account, what would happen and transpire between Thursday night and Friday afternoon. The first thing that happens, as is recorded in John 18:13, actually we'll back up and read verse 12. John 18:12. "So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him. First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people." Jesus is placed on trial first before Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas. This is the first thing that happens. They tie him up. They drag him late at night to the father-in-law of the high priest to ask, "What should we do?" This is the first of his trials. And immediately he is sent to Caiaphas, who is the high priest. Now we see in other gospels, not in this account, that during his trial before Caiaphas, there would be false witnesses that were brought against him, those that would come in and say, "He did this and he did this." Now they were all proven to be lies, but people were doing whatever it took to have him arrested and put to death.

After the trial, they mock him. They begin to laugh at him. They spit on him, which is the greatest act of insult. And then we see the first of his physical abuse, where they begin to beat him. After his trial with Caiaphas, we see in Luke 22:63 to 64 that he is beaten in custody by those who arrested him. They have him waiting for his next trial. It is late at night, and they begin to strike him on the head with rods. Then he is put on trial before the Sanhedrin in Luke 22:66 to 71. As they are questioning him, they say, "Are you the Son of God?" And he will not deny it. For them, that was strike three. He had driven

them out of the temple. He had called them out in parables, and now he is claiming to be the Son of God. The only thing that they wanted for him was him to be dead, to be gone. This is the same man that they were worshiping not a few days earlier.

Soon he would be taken to Pilate. So the end of his Jewish trials and now on to the Roman trials. The Jews found him guilty. They said, "He is guilty of claiming to be the Son of God. He is guilty of blasphemy. He is guilty of calling us out, stirring up insurrections." Now the Jews could not put him to death though, because the Romans were in charge and so they took him to the Romans on the charge of saying he was stirring up crowds, he was causing division, basically, he's an insurrectionist.

So they take him bound to Pilate. It was not an easy walk. At this point, he has already been beaten multiple times. He is tied up and being dragged before Pilate. Now what's interesting, the first time that he appears before Pilate, Pilate finds him not guilty because they can't find anything wrong with him. There's nothing that he has done. But again, the Jews are calling out saying, "He stirred up the crowds. He's causing divisions. We want him gone. We want him dead."

So then Pilate sends him over to Herod. He is questioned before Herod and then mocked again. It's just this back and forth, over and over again. And then as he is put on the stand before Herod and mocked, he is then sent back to Pilate again. Look with me at chapter 18, verse 28, actually chapter 19, sorry, chapter 19, verse 1. So he is put on trial again. In the verses just before this, there was a custom where Pilate would release someone on the Passover and so Pilate gives them the option, "You can either have Jesus being released and set free, or you can have Barabbas, the insurrectionist. Which one do you want?" One was an innocent man, and one was a guilty man. They chose Barabbas. They call out, "Not this man, but Barabbas." He was a robber, an insurrectionist. And then in verse 1,

1 Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. 2 And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. 3 They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands. 4 Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him." 5 So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!" 6 When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him."

For Jesus to be put on trial for having done nothing wrong, and beaten and mocked, and then flogged, which for those of you that don't know what a flogging is, I'll spare you some of the gory details. They took a whip, they called it the cat-o-nine tails. It was leather straps, and in it there were lead beads, bits of glass and bone and they would swing it against your bare back and legs. Over and over again it would bruise your body, it would rip the flesh off of the body, to the point in which there were just mangled flesh hanging off of him. But that was not the worst of it. Then they put a crown of thorns on him. They are mocking him, saying that he was the king of the Jews. Now this crown

would have been forced down onto his head, a very painful and gory way where blood would have been running down his face. They beat him again, and then they said, "Crucify him." Crucifixion was the worst way that you could die. It was the most humiliating and most painful death. Often people would last on a crucifix for days at a time. It was a terrible suffering.

And so they march him to Golgotha. They take him outside the city walls and they crucify him. They drive nails between his hands into the wood and his feet. They stand it up, and as you're being crucified, not only is there the pain and the agony of the nails going through your body, but your weight is pulling down on it. So Jesus was hanging up there with his weight pulling down on him, causing the wounds to open up more and more. In order for him to breathe, he would have to push up on it. He would get a gulp of air and immediately fall back down. His muscles would tighten up. They would begin to cramp. It was an excruciating and painful death.

But in this moment, they continue to mock him. Look with me at verse 23. When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they take his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier and also his tunic.

23 When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, 24 so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did these things, 25 but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" 27 Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. 28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." 29 A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.

We'll read verse 30 in just a second. When we look at the Passion account, it should bring us to our knees to consider what this man went through, what the Son of God bore for us. There was nothing in this story that he deserved. There was no beating that he deserved. The mocking and the reviling, the people spitting on him, he did not deserve it. The charges that they made against him were false. He was not guilty. He was an innocent man. And yet they drug him to that cross. They put him up on that tree. They mocked and reviled him. And yet in that moment, that is not even the worst of what Jesus is experiencing because all the physical pain that he felt in that moment paled in comparison to bearing the wrath of God for us. In that moment, Jesus Christ took on our sins.

Brothers and sisters, do you realize and understand that's where you belong? You have sinned against God. I have sinned against God. We have rebelled against him. We have spat in his face and say, "I don't want what you have called me to. I don't want to be obedient to you. I want to do what I want to do." Romans says that the wages of sin is death. We deserve to die and yet Christ went willingly. He did so in love. He took the beatings. He took the mocking. He took the reviling. He marched to the cross. He went joyfully so that he could stand in our place.

Why did Jesus come? To save sinners. Jesus Christ came to save sinners. That was his mission. So how did he save sinners? It was on the cross. On that cross, Jesus stood where you and I deserve to stand. On that cross, Jesus stood in our place, bearing the penalty of sin, feeling the full weight of the wrath of God poured out on him. He took it all. The glorious news of the gospel for us that are in Christ Jesus is that we have been pardoned from sin and a transaction occurred in that moment. We gave him our sin, and he gave us his righteousness. Through the cross of Christ, we are now not guilty. We are declared innocent as we stand before God because Christ atoned for us.

He stood in our place, bore the wrath of God for us. He made a way of salvation and it had to happen this way. There was no other option. When you look at the Old Testament and the blood that ran through those chapters as they offered sacrifice after sacrifice after sacrifice, trying to atone for their sins only to have to do so again and again and again, that is because, as the author of Hebrews says, the blood of bulls and goats is not satisfactory. It is not enough. And yet the blood of Jesus Christ was more than enough. It fully and totally accomplished salvation.

30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said [Tetelestai], "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Brothers and sisters, the greatest phrase that we can read is that one right there, "It is finished." Salvation has been accomplished. This is the greatest news that the world could ever know and this week we are preparing our hearts for that moment. Good Friday, Christ goes to the cross. He cries out, "It is finished." Salvation has been accomplished. And then on that Easter Sunday, he rose from the dead, securing victory for you and for myself.

It is finished. Christ had to die. It was the only way. He was the only one who could take the wrath of God, for he was God himself, God in the flesh. He took on flesh to ransom us. Salvation has been accomplished. When was the last time you reminded yourself of the hope of this? When was the last time that you preached the gospel to yourself? When was the last time that you came face-to-face with your beaten and bloodied Savior who bore the wrath of God for you? Have you forgotten your first love? Have you forgotten who this Savior is, what this Savior did, how he paid the price for our sins so that if we repent of our sin and trust in him we have eternal life? Have you forgotten him? Is Christ your all? Is he the reason that you live?

You see, for Paul, he knew that the only message that mattered in this life was Jesus Christ and him crucified because the cross of Christ is the only place where sinners are set free. There is hope in no other but Jesus Christ. Is your life centrally focused on the cross of Jesus Christ and him crucified? I would ask you this morning to consider where you stand before the Lord. Do you know him? Are you trying to come to him on your own terms? Are you trying to gain salvation based upon what you can do? I would call you to repent and trust in Jesus Christ alone. He is the only way of salvation. For those of you in this room that know him, do you echo the words of Paul and say the only thing that you want to know is Christ and him crucified? Is the central purpose and the central message of your life Christ on the cross? And will you look at the rest of the world who is lost, without hope, and run to them proclaiming the accomplished work of Jesus Christ on that cross? Jesus came to save a people for himself and, brothers and sisters, he accomplished that work.

Let's go before the Lord in prayer.

Lord, we do not in our flesh deserve your kindness. We do not deserve the salvation that you have given us and yet, praise be to your name, that you have given it freely. Lord, we thank you for the cross of Christ, and I pray that it would never lose its lustre, it would never lose its power. It is the only way of salvation for sinners. Christ's mission in coming to this earth and taking on flesh was to save sinners and that mission was accomplished when he cried out, "It is finished." We praise you, God, for what you have done, that you sent your one and only Son to take on our sins to bear your wrath that we might stand before you righteous and clean for all of eternity. Lord, I pray that we would preach the gospel to ourselves every moment of every day, that we would remind ourselves of our desperate need of you and that we would magnify Christ in everything. Help us, O God, to know you all of our days. We thank you and we love you and we praise you. In Jesus' name. Amen.