

The Gospel 2

The Gospel

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Please take your Bibles with me and turn to Colossians 1. Over the past several weeks, months now, we've been walking through an overview of the Bible. Before we dive into a specific book of the Bible, we've been asking what is this book about. What is the Bible about and we've come over the past two weeks to consider the single most important message in the Bible and that is the gospel. I want us to think about the question: what is the gospel? You hear the word "gospel" thrown out quite a bit, don't you? You have gospel music; you have people perhaps that you talk to that will say, "I love the gospel." But what do we mean when we talk about the gospel? What is the gospel? This is a very, very important question for us to consider because if we get everything else right as a church and we get this wrong, then we miss the entire point. If we have thousands and thousands of people coming to this church and singing loud but we as a church don't understand the gospel, then it's worse than pointless, dangerous and damnable. If we get everything right, this is a vital question for us as a church because if we somehow get everything else right but we get this wrong, we miss the entire point, you miss the entire point, I would miss the entire point.

This is an important question for us, what is the gospel, because really it's impossible for us to get everything else right as a church if we get this wrong. It's impossible. This is the fundamental question for us. It shapes everything we are about as a church: what is the gospel? And so we're working our way through one of Paul's summaries of the gospel which is found here in Colossians 1:13 and following and we're making some observations. What can we learn about the gospel from this passage? Let me read it and then I'm going to call your attention to six words. We talked about three of these words last week and we're going to focus on one specifically but six words that will help you understand the gospel. So, let's read Colossians 1:13 and following together. Look down there with me. Paul here is speaking of God the Father in verse 13 and he says,

“13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. 21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

Paul in this passage summarizes for us the gospel and we're working through six words that help us understand exactly what he says about the gospel. Last week, first of all, we said if you're going to get the gospel, you have to understand that it is news. The gospel is news. We know that from the word itself. The word “gospel” means “good news.” It was a word that people used to describe the victory on a battlefield. We also know that the gospel is news from the way Paul describes it. It's not a philosophy, it's not self-help, it's not advice, it's a report of something that happened in history that changes absolutely everything else.

Second, we said that if you're going to get the gospel, here is another word: God. You have to hear the gospel as news, second we said last week, if you're going to understand the gospel, you have to see that it begins and ends with God. God is the subject of the verbs in this passage. He is the one who delivered us. He is the one who transferred us. He is the one who reconciled us through the death of his Son. The gospel, this news report, is not first about what you and what you do to get right with God, it's about what God has done to provide peace for those who put their faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, if you're going to understand the gospel, you have to understand that you are not the headline, God is.

Third, we said “Jesus.” If you're going to understand the gospel you have to hear it as news, you have to see that it begins and ends with God and third, that you have to see that the gospel ultimately the best part of the good news is the exaltation, which is a big word for lifting up, the gospel is about magnifying Jesus Christ and we see that here. Paul spends so much time in verses 15-19 talking about the person of Jesus and he spends so much time talking about the person of Jesus because he knows that you can never understand what Jesus came to do until you are first gripped by who Jesus is, by the glory of Jesus Christ. In fact, in 2 Corinthians Paul talks about the gospel as the good news of the glory of Jesus Christ. One of the differences and this is something I'm praying for our

church, one of the big differences between someone who really gets the good news and someone who doesn't: the person who doesn't get the good news desperately wants everything to be about himself, even religion. And he'll try to take the good news and use it as a spotlight to lift himself up whereas the person who gets the gospel sees that the best part of the good news, the gospel tells us a lot about what Jesus did for us but the best, the highest, the greatest part of the good news is what the gospel says about the exaltation of Jesus Christ. The gospel-getter, the person who gets the gospel, he's learning to love Jesus Christ. God, the Holy Spirit, is taking his eyes off of himself and his fascination with self and he's getting his eyes on the reason the universe was created and the reason Jesus Christ came into the world and defeated death, that in him, he might be made preeminent, that he might be preeminent or first place in all things.

Now, today the fourth word that we want to talk about and we're going to spend all our time on this word today and the fourth word and my heart is really burdened about this and you can even pray as we look at what God's word has to say, you can pray that God helps us hear this because in the world, everything is against us hearing what I'm going to say today. The fourth word today to understand the gospel, the fourth word you have to understand is the word "sin." To understand the gospel, you have to understand the word "sin." To get the gospel, you have to feel deeply the consequences of sin. By sin I mean disobedience to God's law. I'm talking about what Adam did way back when. God gave him a law to obey and he rejected that law and did his own thing instead and I'm talking about what you and I do every day of our lives when we ignore or rebel against what God has told us he wants us to do. By sin I mean any time you don't believe God's way is best. By sin I mean any time you turn from what God's word says to do, to do what you want to do instead, to think what you want to think instead, to say what you want to say instead. Or by sin I mean not only when you do, say, think the wrong thing but also when you don't do, say or think what God's word calls you to do.

To get the gospel, to hear the gospel, this is a great message. All of you who are here would say, "I love the gospel," but to really get the gospel, you have to feel deeply the consequences of sin. It's kind of like this: if I come to you and I say I have great news, you wouldn't believe the news I have, somebody has set you free. Would that be great news to you if you don't think you were enslaved? It's kind of like this: if I come to you and I say I have great news, somebody paid your debt. Will that be great news to you if you don't think you had a debt? It's kind of like this: if I come to you and I say I have great news, somebody has made it possible for you to have peace with your enemy. Would that be great news to you if you don't think you have an enemy? No, to get the gospel, to even understand what this message is about, you personally have to feel deeply the consequences of sin.

Then we sort of emphasizes this before we even look at this passage. Let me sort of emphasize this because I go around and I talk to a lot of people about the gospel. It's one of the great things about being a pastor is you get to sit down with people and just talk to them about the gospel and I can't tell you how few people ever bring up the idea of sin. People who say they've been Christians for years and years. I'll say, "When did you become a Christian?" And you know, they'll very rarely ever talk about a conviction of

sin and I try to be a nice guy so I like to ask all sorts of questions because I think to myself, "It must be in there. Maybe." And so I'll try to ask all kinds of questions to get people to say something about sin. I'll say, "Why do you love Jesus?" Or I'll say, "What is special to you about Jesus' death?" Heartbreakingly so, time and time and time and time and time again, people fail to say anything about sin. You know, sometimes when they do, there might be some times when people do finally bring up the concept of sin but very often it's almost like it's an afterthought, something that they just felt like they had to mention but no big deal really.

That's a big problem because you cannot, I'm going to be very straight up with you: you absolutely, 100% cannot understand the gospel unless you understand what the Bible teaches about the seriousness of your personal sin. Look, there may be some of you here today who say that you're Christians but you've never come face-to-face with your own sinfulness. You will not understand the gospel until you do. There may be others of you here today for whom Jesus and the cross are slowly becoming just words and they're losing the significance and you're not seeing why this is such a great message that this guy would get up here and speak so loudly about Sunday after Sunday. Part of the reason for that may have something to do with the fact that you're losing sight of the seriousness of your own personal sin. To get the gospel, you have to feel deeply the consequences of sin, your sin.

To prove that, we just need to look at the way Paul talked about what Jesus came to do here in Colossians 1. With Jesus becoming man, we have God becoming man and God became man for a reason. It wasn't because he was up in heaven wondering what it was like to be a man. That's not why Jesus came a man because he thought, "Well, it looks fascinating down there. I wonder what it's like to wear clothes and have a body?" That's not why God became man. God, the Creator of the universe, became man for a reason, he became man to do something and if you look at the terms that Paul uses here to describe what God's Son came to do, you see that those terms mean nothing unless you understand the consequences of sin. Look at it. Let me show you, verse 13 and 14, speaking of Jesus Christ it says, "He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption," put that in bold print. What is redemption? One of the reasons Jesus came was to provide for us redemption but what is redemption? The word "redemption" was a word from Paul's day, a secular word, not just a Bible word but a word that people used to describe slaves being set free, paying a price to set someone free from captivity. They would even use it to describe prisoners of war being set free.

Now, how are you going to understand that Jesus came to set you free from captivity unless you understand what the Bible teaches about sin? To be redeemed, you have to have been a captive first. You. Enslaved. For somebody to pay the price to set you free, you had to first be held captive by something. If you haven't felt that, what would the word "redeemed" mean to you? Nothing. Or the next word, verse 14, "the forgiveness of sins." In him you have the forgiveness of sin. What is forgiveness? It has something to do with disobedience to God's law, that being erased, wiped away. How can you understand

forgiveness and what it means to be forgiven unless you know you need to be forgiven and have felt that?

Go down to verse 20, Paul said that God came to “reconcile all things to himself through Jesus.” What's reconciliation? Reconciliation is a term we use in relationships to describe what happens when two people who had problems with each other become friends again. If you have two people who are enemies because there's something in between them and you deal with what's in between them so they can have a relationship with each other, you say those two people are reconciled. If you notice, looking back down at verse 20, Paul helps us understand what reconciliation is. He says Christ's work of reconciliation is “making peace,” having made peace. Reconciliation involves making peace which, of course, assumes there has been a problem. If I say to you Zimbabwe and DRC have been reconciled, you don't say that unless DRC and Zimbabwe were fighting before. In the same way, Paul wouldn't say that Jesus came to reconcile us to God unless there was something first in between us and God.

Now, can I get personal? Can I come after you a little bit? And I'm pleading with you: have you ever felt that? Have you ever looked at yourself, have you ever looked at yourself as a slave to sin? Has there ever been a time when you looked at yourself and you realized, “I'm held captive to disobedience of what God desires?” Has there ever been a time where you looked at yourself as desperately needing God's forgiveness? Has there ever been a time where you stood on the brink of hell and you looked and you said to yourself, “This is what I deserve unless God pardons my sin?” Has there ever been a time when you looked at your life and you saw the way sin stained every single little last part? How you couldn't even obey the best commands to love God and to love your neighbor? How you couldn't even obey that and you see how sin stained every little part of your life and you've come before God and you said, “God, against you and you only have I sinned! This is my problem! This is my fundamental problem.”

Now, that's true of somebody else. Has there ever been a time where you, not just sin is a problem for other people but the time where it was you and God? You and God and you came before God and you repented of the things you did wrong and you repented even of the ways you tried to do right and you realized, “My righteousness and my sin is all stained. God, I've got nothing to offer you. All I deserve is your wrath.” Has there ever been a time in your life where you felt that your problems were bigger than not having a place to sleep? Not having much in your bank account? Not having a car to drive? Has there ever been a time where you saw very clearly that your fundamental, the biggest problem that you have is the way that you have sinned against God? You won't get the gospel until you have because, you see, the gospel is not just that God became man and that he died, the gospel is that God became man and he died for a reason: to deal with the consequences of your sin.

Now, come back with me to Colossians and check out the way Paul described the problem sin created. I know for me one of the things that concerns me the most about my own spiritual life is the way that I can make sin seems small. So Paul here, he magnifies, that means he makes big the problem of sin. He shows us the kind of problems that sin

created in verses 20-23. First, if you're saying, "Man, I don't feel the seriousness of sin," well, look at the way Paul magnifies this. First in verse 20, he talks about the consequences of sin in the world. If you want to get a feeling in your heart for how big a problem sin is, Paul says look at the world you're living in, look at what sin has done to this world. Verse 20, Paul says God had to send Jesus to reconcile all things to himself and then he explains what he means by that saying whether things in heaven or on earth. You remember the word "reconcile," it assumes there's a problem. The fact that God had to send his Son to reconcile all things to himself indicates that the problem of sin runs so deep that it affected the entire universe. And you know that because we've been doing our overview of the Bible. You remember Genesis 3:18? After Adam sinned, God came and pronounced judgment and what was the specific judgment that he said to Adam? He came to Adam and he said, "Cursed is the ground because of you." And what was God doing there? He was actually even pronouncing a curse on this universe, on the ground because of Adam's sin. That's a proclamation of judgment.

Paul in Romans 8, he highlights this. Romans 8:20, listen to this. Listen, you have to listen carefully. You can either look there or listen but I'm trying to explain to you the problem sin created. Paul says in Romans 8:20, "For the creation was subjected to futility." That means God pronounced a judgment, a futility, an emptiness, a frustrating on the creation itself. "Not willingly but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its slavery to corruption." There Paul says the creation, the created universe, it's like it's a slave to decay, corruption, futility, emptiness, frustration because of sin.

We sometimes think of sin against God as a small thing but, guys, if you want to see sin for what it is, look at the problems it brought into this world. Realize that every single earthquake, every single tsunami, every single disease, it all came after and as a result of Adam's disobeying God. There was not of that in the world God originally designed pre-sin. Every time you watch the news, every time you see devastation in the world, every time you hear someone got cancer, every time you hear about someone dying, this is the world itself shouting out to you, "Sin is serious. Don't be mistaken. Rebellion against God is a horrifying thing. Look at what it's done to the world, the perfect beautiful world that God created." Come on, sin isn't a big deal? Man, look at the world. Do you realize that every tsunami was a result of Adam's rebellion against God. Come on, lying a big deal. This is small. No, look at the world. Here is this amazing planet that God created and sin brought all this pain and emptiness into it. Do not allow yourself to believe the lie that sin is small. Look at the world. Think about your friends who have cancer. Think about the pain that you've seen. This is the result of Adam's sin.

The world has a megaphone. You know what a megaphone is, right? Something that makes something louder. The world has a megaphone and it is shouting out to you and me day after day that sin is small. Some of you even have this megaphone in your house. It comes sometimes in the form of a little black box, doesn't it? That we center our whole homes around and we'll watch television shows that spend 30 minutes telling us sin is small. We'll even pay money sometimes to go and watch somebody on a big screen play with our emotions until we can even think adultery or something like that is small. Listen,

Satan has got all kinds of megaphones. Those are just some ways that he uses for evil and he's got all kinds of megaphones that are telling you sin is small but God's got a megaphone to tell you sin is big if you'll open your ears and hear it. It's this world. It's the pain in this world. The pain in this world is shouting out to you, "Rebellion against God is big!" Do not every minimize it.

But second, it's not just that, more specifically you want to get a feel for how big sin is, think about how it affected you. You see the consequences of sin on the world, Jesus had to reconcile all things to himself, he had to deal with the curse on the world through his death but think about not only the consequences of sin in the world but the consequences of sin in your life. This is verse 21. Paul writes, "And although you," that means he's talking about you and me. He doesn't say although some of you, although a few of you here and there. No, although you so put yourself right there. "Although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds." So you find three descriptions of how sin affected you here. What are they? The first one Paul says is you were alienated. What does alienated mean? It means excluded; it means separated, cut off. He's saying you were separated from life with God, from peace with God. You can picture the Garden of Eden where God had to take man out of the Garden and even set the angel there. In the Garden he had fellowship, God took him outside the Garden and he was separated from that peaceful relationship with God and that wasn't just Adam, that was all of us. We weren't born in the Garden of Eden, we were born in the enemy's camp. There was a monster barrier separating us from a right relationship with God, like a wall. No matter how hard we might have tried which we didn't try but if we were to try to break that wall down, we couldn't on our own. We were alienated.

Paul says not only were we alienated, look at the next phrase. He says we were hostile in mind. Now, what does that mean, hostile in mind? That's you. Remember, I'm talking about you and me. He's saying you were born with a mind that hated God. That's what he means. You weren't born sweet and saying, "Hallelujah, worship God." No, you were born with a mind that was against God. Think about that. You were so controlled by desire to do what you wanted that you hated the most important, most loving, most wonderful, most beautiful person in the entire universe. What do you think when you know someone who is really pure and kind and someone else is constantly against them?

That was you with God. God made you and you hated him. God showed you mercy by letting you live, you hated him. God made himself obvious to you and shouted out his greatness in the world around you and you hated him. God gave you good rules to help you live your life. They were good for you and they glorified him and you hated him. God gave you his word, you hated him. God actually set his rules in your heart so that your conscience would shout out to you when you were doing the wrong thing and you hated him. God sent his Son to die for sin for the way you broke his good rules and you hated him. God sent men and women throughout the world to tell you about what he had done so that you might have eternal life and you hated him. You hated him by preferring lies over truth, by choosing darkness over light. You hated him by listening to any crazy idea instead of God's word. You hated him by making up a god in your own image that you could control instead of believing and submitting to the God who actually rules over

the universe. You hated him by ignoring the truth so that you could sin. You hated him by putting your fingers in your ears so you could do the wrong thing. You hated him by making up all kinds of excuses for sinning. If someone came to you and pointed out very clearly that God's word says this, you hated them because you hated him. You hated him by giving greater honor to gifts that he gave you than to the Giver. You hated him by putting your trust in stuff instead of him. You hated him by longing and loving money more than you loved God. You hated him by putting more interest in a thing than in the one who made you, designed you and died for you. You hated him by complaining when the littlest thing went wrong in your life. You hated him by not even being willing to acknowledge him in your life. You hated him by going days and days and days and days and weeks and weeks and weeks and weeks without thinking about him. And the only times you did think about him was when you could somehow find a way to try to manipulate him to get him to do what you wanted.

You'll never understand. This is not just you, this is me, this is all of us, this is the condition of humans. You'll never understand why Jesus came until you see and feel deeply the consequences of sin on the universe, on you. Have you felt it? You are alienated from God, you are hostile in mind. Paul says you were engaged in evil deeds. Your life was committed to disobeying God's word. You say, "No, I don't think it was. I don't think I was committed to disobeying God's word." Well, let's give a simple command that we've talked about all the time here: loving your neighbor as yourself. Loving your neighbor as yourself. We'd all agree with that command. Even unbelievers agree with that command. But if you look at the way you love yourself. Think about how you think about yourself. Think about how concerned you are when you don't have anything to eat. Think about the way you take care of yourself. Think about the way you provide for yourself. Think about how you love to talk about yourself. Think about how you love to hear about yourself. Have you ever loved anyone else in the universe the way you love yourself completely 24/7?

Jesus says to me to look at my most committed relationships, my wife. Love my neighbor as myself. I love my wife with everything I've got but you know what? I fail time and time and time and time again to love her with the same kind of commitment that I have to myself and that's the most obvious committed relationship. Jesus said to love your neighbor as yourself and it's not just for husband and wife, it's for everybody in this room and I've spent my whole life disobeying that one obvious command that I agree with. Think about how you came out of the womb. You came out of the womb committed to your own good and being willing to do whatever you could to get your own good even if it meant hurting others. You didn't come out of the womb, you looked cute, some of you looked cute at least, maybe not right when you got out of the womb but a couple of months later. You came out of the womb thinking about yourself. For example, I've had lots of babies in our home. The mom takes care of it all day, changes the nappy, provides all kinds of things for it, constantly thinking about it but the moment a baby isn't fed what does that baby do? And it wants food? Does the baby say, "Mother, I long to serve you. My whole life as a baby is about you. Take your time, Mom." No, that baby says, "Mom, feed me now! You exist to serve me, Mother. That's why everybody on the planet is here. For me."

That's what we're born with, this selfish desire, committed to self. Even my little buddy. That's an illustration. We love Moozy, the sweetest kid you could ever meet. I mean, just a sweet little, gentle little guy. But Moozy, obviously because of his sickness has to have a nappy and sometimes in the middle of the night he's not able to control his you know, what's going on there and so he wakes up and it's the medicine he takes which makes him go all over himself. The nappy can't keep it in so I'll open that door and I have to close it real quick and be selfish and run to the kitchen and pretend like I didn't smell anything and then Marta will come because she is unselfish and she'll go into that room which I don't know how she goes in with that smell and she gets Moozy who has all that stuff over him and she has to get herself kind of messy to give him a shower because she wants to get the stuff off of him and you know what Moozy does? He hates showers. Marta puts him in the shower and she warns him what's coming, she explains what's coming. She turns on that shower and, "Waaaa." You have rarely seen a kid get that angry. I mean, flailing his arms. He hates it and he's going to take out his wrath on Marta for trying to clean him. She doesn't want to give him a bath because she doesn't want him swimming in that stuff so she gives him a shower and he takes out his wrath on her once she's serving him.

That's not just Moozy, I can say that about Moozy because that's what's in all of our hearts. Moozy's as sweet a little guy as you'll meet and you know, we're all born with this desire for self and this commitment really to disobeying God's word and God's law, even commands we agree with. Look, you have to hear me on this one because it's very hard for you to hear. Most of you like to think of yourself as a good person. You know, with old photos, I do this with old photos all the time. Somebody will show you an old photo and you'll say, "No, that is not me. I cannot believe that I can be that ugly." So, they'll show me a photo and I will want to just ignore it or you'll try to get a compute program where I can photoshop it so at least I can look good and I think if I get rid of all the bad photos, then they didn't exist.

We sometimes do this with this message from God. God comes and he says you are alienated, you are hostile in mind, you are engaged in evil deeds and we say, "No, that's not me." Because we like to think of ourselves as good people and we're willing to do anything, we're committed to thinking of ourselves as good people. I mean, we'll hang on to the smallest thing to believe that we're good. Some of you might be watching pornography but you'll say at least I'm not living in adultery. You may be living in adultery but you'll say at least I don't have one-night stands. You might be having one-night stands but you'll say at least I feel bad about it. You magnify the importance of the good things you do to minimize the seriousness of the bad things you do. You talk to someone who's a racist and he'll say at least I attend church. You talk to someone who is a prostitute and she'll say at least I'm a good mother. You might be lying bold-face but you'll say at least I'm nice, I'm thinking about other people's feelings.

No matter what sins you're involved in, people have an amazing ability to excuse them. Maybe you'll change the name of sin. You'll say, I don't slander, I share concerns. I don't gossip, I just want to help the people. I'm not proud, I'm self-confident. I'm no nasty, I'm

just intense. Or you'll use little sayings to justify your sin. You say, you've got to look out for #1. Or you'll say, boys will be boys. Or you'll say, a man's got to do what a man's got to do. Or, you only live once. You'll blame your actions on everyone else but yourself. You'll be caught in a clear sin and you'll say it's impossible, look at my circumstances. I have to disobey God's law. I have to steal. I have to lie. I have to live with someone who's not my wife. You'll blame your actions on everyone else but yourself. You'll use the world's opinion to justify your behavior. You'll twist Scripture to defend what you do. God forgives so what's the big deal?

You have this image and I have this image of myself in my mind as good and capable and most of us are willing to do anything to keep that image. In fact, that's why there's one thing we hate worse than anything else in this world: it's when someone comes into our lives and shows us the image is wrong. Someone comes into our lives and shows us this little image that you have, you think of yourself, this little picture you have of yourself, it's not true. We hate that. We want to think of ourselves as good and we want to think of ourselves as capable and what I'm saying to you is that is a big, big, big, big problem because the gospel message pulls the rug out from the one idea that most people cherish. It smashes to smithereens this picture of ourselves that we want to believe. The gospel tells you, you are not basically good and you are not basically capable.

You cannot fix your spiritual problems on your own. Far from it. You are alienated, hostile and engaged in evil deeds. It doesn't matter what family you grew up in, how spiritually privileged you've been. You're born a sinner. Sin has not only affected every one of us, it's corrupted every part of us. Bottom line: you and I apart from Christ, we have a problem that we can't fix by being really, really good. At the very foundation of all the gospel has to say is this one sad truth: that you on your own apart from Christ are lost in sin, alienated, hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds. And I realize, look, that you don't like to hear that. I don't like to hear that about myself but you have to look carefully at the picture the Bible presents of who you are and who you were and feel deeply the consequences of sin because there is a solution to this problem of sin. That's the good news. But you will not understand the solution that God has to your problem of sin until you realize the seriousness of your problem.

If you're an unbeliever here today and some of you may have been thinking that you've been Christians for a long time, you grew up in a Christian family but you never saw yourself as alienated, hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds. If you're an unbeliever here and you've never felt deeply the consequences of sin, I want you to just go to God this week and I want you to pray and say to God, "Please, please, I need you to help me. I need you to help me see that this is serious." Go to God's word and ask God, "Please open up my eyes that I might see how lost in sin I am apart from Jesus Christ." If you're an unbeliever here today, if all this stuff is kind of going over your head and it's just not affecting you, find someone who is a believer. You have a problem that is so much bigger than the problem you think you have. You could tell me your problems and you'd think it's this and that but I'm telling you, you have a much bigger problem if you're an unbeliever and it's called sin. You're going to stand before God not me. The Creator of the universe is going to judge you and on your own, what you deserve, God says he told

you, he's shouting out his help. So, if you go to God's word and you're just not hearing it, you're not feeling it, cry out to God that he would show you the seriousness of sin so that you might understand the glory of Jesus Christ because, listen, Jesus became man to die on a cross to take the punishment for your sin, for your sin, for my sin, so that it might be completely removed.

And if you're a Christian here today, all this stuff: alienated, hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, pray that God will help you remember what it was like for you so that you can rejoice in what God has provided because that's not you anymore. That's not you anymore. Paul says here in Colossians 1 that God has reconciled you, he's made peace through Jesus Christ and he did that and we're going to see this next week, he did that he said in order that he might present you holy, blameless, above reproach. You were alienated, hostile in mind, excluded from the life of God, engaged in evil deeds but God sent his Son so that one day you might stand before the King, the Judge and God the Father might say about you, "Holy. Yes, that's right. Blameless. Above reproach. That's my child." If you've been able to get a little glimpse of the glory of Jesus Christ, it puts everything in this life in perspective, doesn't it? Your biggest problem has been dealt with. God loves you and he sent his Son to die in your place, to take the horror of your sin upon himself that you might be forgiven.

Let's pray that God would help us not just to talk about the gospel but be people who really get it.

Father, this is a big word "sin" and yet it's one that we make small and our whole world makes it small. It acts as if it's no big deal and, Lord, you know I admit, I make it small in my life. I'll talk about disobedience or think about disobedience as no big thing. Lord, help us. We're on our knees before you asking that you would help us as a church be a group of people who take sin seriously so that we can really appreciate the love that you have shown us in Jesus Christ. You've given us the greatest gift of all but if we're going to know what you've given us, we have to know how bad we had it. Please help us through the Holy Spirit fall on our knees and recognize our need of Christ. We pray this in his name. Amen.