

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

September 2, 2018

He Went Out Bearing His Cross

John 19:17-18

Prayer: *Father God, we just again thank you for the gift of your Son. We just again want to pray this morning for the ability to perceive anew at a deeper level what it is you've done for us at the cross. We just again pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit, guide us through your word, guide us through a renewed appreciation of the gift you've given to us in your Son and his willingness to die for us. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Again, this is the first Sunday of the month, this is the day we remember Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples and there had the last, celebrated the last Passover supper with them and *Matthew 26* describes it. It says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this*

fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." So Jesus took the bread and he took the wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and his blood and then he asked his disciples again to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. And he asked them to repeat this sacrifice on a regular basis and that's what we call "the Lord's table." Different places do it differently. We celebrate it once a month and we do it by meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us at the cross, we do it by examining ourselves, asking God's Holy Spirit to point out areas in which he's convicting us of sin and then by confessing our sins and participating in the elements. *John 6:53* says: *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Well we've been working our way, I think it's the last maybe four, five years through the gospel of John and we're up to the 19th chapter, and if you remember the last time out we looked at the hideous opening line of that 19th chapter, it was: *Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him.* So we followed the story in John's gospel up to the point where there's an enraged and frustrated Pilate and finally we have Pilate saying: *"Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the chief*

priests answered. Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. This morning we want to look at the actual event itself. We're at verse 17 of John 19, it says: And he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

Now to say that crucifixion is diabolical would be an understatement. I mean it was not only designed to maximize the pain that the victim experienced, the word that we use, "excruciate," I mean we talk about pain that's excruciating, the word itself means "from the cross." It is by definition where pain, extraordinary and extreme pain comes from, but it's also designed to strip the victim of any shred of dignity that he might have ever had. See a large part of what crucifixion was all about was shame. Jesus's crucifixion was designed by the devil to include the most physical agony you could ever imagine with five particular areas of shame: There was the shame of expulsion, there was the shame of association, the shame of identification, the shame of poverty, and the shame of nakedness. And in every one of these shames the devil made his move intended to maximize Jesus's shame and God demonstrated over and over again that he was in complete charge of each and every intended event to bring shame and

that he was capable of turning each one into an object of glory and honor for his Son.

So the first shame that we're looking at this morning was the shame of expulsion. *John 19:16* says: *So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.* Well the first thing we notice about Jesus' execution is that it took place outside of the city. Verse 17 says: *And he went out bearing his own cross.* Well "out" in this case means outside the city, outside the camp, and it had an extremely different meaning in Jesus' day than it did in ours. I mean in Jesus' day "the city" meant safety and security. The city was a place that had gates and sentries usually manning the gates and to be inside was to be safe, was to be accepted. To be outside, well, that was to be lost. You see, outside the camp, outside the city was where the sin bearing animals were slaughtered. It's where the garbage was thrown, it's where God said you were to go to do your business. It's where Deuteronomy said you were to go if you become unclean. *Deuteronomy 23* says: *"If any man among you becomes unclean, then he shall go outside the camp. He shall not come inside the camp."* To be taken outside the camp was the equivalent of being cast out like refuse or dung or some unclean thing. Now it was the intent of Rome and certainly

the desire of the Jews to have Jesus treated like some refuse or garbage and being fit to be thrown outside of the city as refuse, and Satan certainly wanted that as well. What he didn't count on was the sovereign hand of God stating over and over again that Jesus, God himself would so thoroughly identify with us in our sin that he would be willing as our sin bearer to be treated exactly the same as the sacrificed animals, those ones who symbolized exactly what Jesus had come to do. God had certified that those animals were to be slaughtered outside the camp and in Hebrews 13 he says: *For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.* See, the Jews and Rome and Satan, they all thought they were heaping reproach on Jesus by marching him outside of the city for execution. In reality they were demonstrating how perfectly he fulfilled the role of the Lamb of God sent to take away the sins of the world. That first shame, the shame of exclusion, Jesus bore for us.

The second shame is the shame of association. Luke's gospel gives us another detail of what it was that we just read in John's gospel. John's gospel simply says: *There they crucified him with*

two others, one other either side, and Jesus between them. Well, Luke's gospel adds a crucial detail. Luke's gospel says in *Luke 23:32*: *Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him.* Now we don't know if this association was Pilate's intent or the intent of the Jewish leaders. Pilate may well have wanted to insult the Jews and their so-called king by executing him among common criminals. And on the other hand, it may well have been the Jewish leaders who wanted Jesus' death to be associated with anything that would sully his reputation. Now Pilate had already frustrated them by saying after a thorough examination: *"I find no guilt in him"* and yet still Jesus was crucified between two thieves. And so we don't know if it was Pilate or if it was the Jewish leaders who insisted on this shame by association, but we can reasonably assume that it was Satan who was behind it. God had demonstrated many, many years beforehand through the prophet Isaiah that he was fully aware of what either Pilate or the Jews or Satan was going to do with Jesus' crucifixion. God also showed that he intended to use it to identify Jesus' complete and total identification with those who were prisoners of sin. That's us. Speaking of Jesus' crucifixion, the prophet Isaiah said this in *Isaiah 53:12*: *He poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.* The amazing thing is that Isaiah under the prompting of the Holy Spirit wrote these words

some 700 years before Jesus was even born, and so it doesn't much matter whether it was Pilate or the Jewish leaders who were responsible for Jesus' association with transgressors, they were just bit players in the drama that God had planned and orchestrated from the dawn of time. It was God's intent and it was Jesus' desire to so thoroughly identify with us as sinners that he endured the shame of association for us.

Now the third shame was the shame of identification. *John 19:19* reads this, it says: *Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek.* And once again we don't really whose decision it was to have Jesus identified the way he was. We know for a fact that Pilate was extremely frustrated at being outmaneuvered by the Jewish authorities who forced him into a corner and they did that by stating that any mercy whatsoever shown to Jesus would be interpreted by them to Tiberias as disloyalty to Caesar. Pilate hated that and he hated the fact that he was backed into that corner. And he certainly didn't miss the irony of a sign written in three different languages above the head of this so-called king of the Jews. It was his way of demonstrating his absolute disdain for the Jews. It was also his way of showing his absolute disdain

for Jesus even though he knew he was innocent. He also recognized that putting the sign over the broken, bloodied and naked Jesus hung between two common criminals was basically shouting out in three different languages: This is your so-called king! I mean the Jews knew all too well that's exactly what Pilate wanted to communicate. They were deeply offended at what he did and so they said to Pilate in verse 21: *"Do not write, 'The king of the Jews' but rather, 'This man said, I am the king of the Jews.'"* Pilate answered, *"What I have written I have written."* See at this point Pilate knew that the Jews had won but he also knew that they could no longer use him as a pawn, that they could no longer use the threat of disloyalty to Caesar as a means of forcing his hand. See Pilate's hand had already been forced and the result was Jesus Christ hung on a cross between two criminals. Pilate was not about to let this opportunity to display his contempt for the Jews go to waste. And so he says: *"What I have written I have written."* Pilate insisted on a public display for every local tribe and tongue to understand exactly what was taking place here. But again, little did he know that he was doing exactly what God's sovereign hand had designed. God says in *Colossians 2:15: Having disarmed principalities and powers, He (God) made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.* See Jesus disarmed the principalities and the powers by removing from them their ability to accuse us of sin and he did that by becoming our

sin-bearer. Having lived his life perfectly, having done what no other human being could ever do, Jesus willingly went to the cross to pay the price of our sin. So hanging outside the camp between two common criminals heavily advertised as being the king of the Jews was in fact the real King, not just of the Jews but of the entire universe. And whether it was Pilate or the Jews thinking they could heap shame on Jesus this way, it was God's sovereign hand that turned yet another attempt at shame into a public spectacle calling all of the universe to witness the glory of a God willing to die for his people.

Now the fourth shame, the fourth shame was the shame of extreme poverty. You know wealth represents power and to have no wealth at all is to be absolutely powerless. Understand Jesus had the greatest wealth and power there ever was. There is literally no way to describe the wealth of Jesus, I mean, there is wealth, there is mega wealth and then there is the ownership not just of the planet or the solar system or the galaxy but of the entire universe. Jesus owned all of it and for our sakes he willingly parted with it all. *Luke 9:57* says: *Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to him, "Lord, I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."* I mean Jesus, the owner of all things,

didn't have a house, didn't have a bed, didn't even have a pillow. He owned absolutely nothing but the clothes on his back and even that was taken away from him. *John 19:23* says: *Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece.* See there was no extreme that God was not willing to go to in order to identify totally with the very least of us as he went to the cross to pay the sin debt for all of us. *2 Corinthians 8:9* says: *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich.*

As the elders distribute the bread, I would like us to take a couple of minutes to ponder, ponder some of these, these are minor details of what took place during the passion of Christ but just ponder the exquisite detail that God went to to accomplish what he accomplished in the cross. Consider the shame that mankind and the devil hoped to heap on this flawless Son of God and consider God's wisdom in turning that very shame into glory. And as we say each time, consider also this morning God's warning about communion. Let me read it to you. This is *1 Corinthians 11*: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and*

drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. I repeat this each time. I say communion is extremely serious business and to enter into communion in an unworthy manner as to literally court disaster. And I said if you're not overly absolutely confident that you're a child of God and you haven't by faith trusted in Christ as your Savior or perhaps you need to be reconciled to your brother or sister before you bring this sacrifice of your life to the altar, then don't take the elements, just pass them by. Nobody's going to think ill of you. I mean on the other hand, we want the opposite to not be true as well. We can make the mistake of thinking that unless we're spotlessly perfect, well then we're unworthy to receive communion, and that, too, is a mistake the devil loves. You see being a child of the King doesn't mean that you don't sin and that you never fail. What it does mean is that you recognize that salvation is a gift and that no one is ever capable of earning that gift by being good. It also means that when we do fail we are aware that we've sinned because God's Spirit is inside of us. When you became a believer, God took up residence inside you and so he is the one who's convicting us, and so we grieve when we sin because we know we have a Father who longs to forgive and cleanse us. God says in

1 John 1:9: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So being a child of the King does not mean that we have no sin. It means that we understand that when we do sin, we have an advocate with the Father, someone who is literally in heaven right now speaking on our behalf. 1 John 2:1 says: My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. So it's only because we have Jesus Christ's righteousness and not our own that we are free in the first place to eat from his table. So if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the price and the privilege that Jesus purchased for us. I mean he lived the life that we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserved to die in our place so that we could be made worthy of heaven. So consider that this morning, consider our focus this morning is on the deep shame, the shame that God sovereignly turned into a profound glory.

1 Corinthians 11:23 says: For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." So take, and eat.

I wanted to take this last shame, this fifth shame separately because it's a deep shame that anyone can identify with, and to this day it's considered controversial, there's some people that say yes, some people say no. The fifth shame is the shame of nakedness. You know modesty demands that we avert our eyes and suggests that God couldn't possibly have endured that shame, but history points to Jesus being stripped naked. InterVarsity Press's Bible Background Commentary says this about the common practice that those condemned to be crucified endured. It says: "Condemned criminals normally carried their own cross (the horizontal beam, the patibulum, not the upright stake) to the site of the execution; the victim was usually stripped naked for the procession and execution as well, although this full nakedness must have offended some Jewish sensibilities in Palestine." It's doubtful that the offense of nakedness was greater than the Jews' contempt for Jesus and their desire to express that contempt through the shame of nakedness. So I want to talk a little bit about what nakedness is all about because the very first thing we understand about shame and nakedness is that they're the very first result of the very first sin. See, Adam and Eve for as long as they lived in the garden, we don't know how long that is, but as long as they lived in the garden before the fall, they were naked. They were naked and they were not ashamed. But after eating the fruit all of that changed. *Genesis 3* describes it. It says this: *Now the serpent*

was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

See the very first result of sin was nakedness. I mean it can be said that Adam and Eve were blissfully unaware of themselves, so caught up were they with each other and with the perfection and beauty of the garden that was given to them but as soon as they sinned, their consciousness went from other to self, to themselves. I mean it can be said they sin brought about the very start of self-consciousness. I mean the birth of sin simultaneously brought about the birth of self, and every single one of us has been locked

in a battle with that creature known as "self" or "ego" or "that little voice inside us" that tells us that we're the most important person on the face of the earth. To the extent that you're able to defeat the demands of self or ego will be the extent that you are able to live a God-glorifying life. And it should be noted that Jesus says that life itself comes only when we're willing to put self to death. In *Luke 9:23* it says: *Then he said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it."* You see, self is associated with sin and the first external sign of the effects of sin was nakedness. After the fall, Adam for the very first time looked inward rather than outward and thus saw his own nakedness and ever since then nakedness has been associated with shame. But understand what we're saying here. What we're saying is that Jesus so identified with us in our sin that he was willing to accept the shame of nakedness. I mean modesty has forced us to view the cross as something that took place giving Jesus at least the bare minimum of decency when it comes to nakedness but even that decency would have been foreign to Rome. I mean Rome's purpose was to inflict the maximum amount of shame and degradation. Even the Jews, even though they might have had qualms about such things could easily be seen as being willing to see Rome's degradation of Jesus as worthwhile. *John 19:23* says: *Then*

the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments.

Most of us have had the uncomfortable experience of going to the doctor's office and the hospital and being told to disrobe and being given one of those skimpy little hospital gowns. I mean it's doubtful though that any of us has even remotely experienced what it's like to be forcibly stripped naked in front of a jeering crowd. It's almost impossible to imagine the distance that God was willing to travel from the highest height that he occupied as the creator and sustainer of the universe, as the very one to whom the sun, the moon, and the stars, and all of the created universe offered constant worship to, to be brought to the place not only of condemnation and execution but to endure the degradation of being stripped naked in the process. I mean it seems almost impossible to consider. I mean we would have an extraordinarily hard time imagining something like that happening to a high government official. I mean imagine a president, any president being stripped naked and forced to march in front of a jeering crowd. The very shame of it would provoke outrage. But we're not talking about a president. We're talking about God himself enduring the most profound shame we humans can imagine all on our behalf. I mean no doubt Rome was very pleased, no doubt the Jewish officials were pleased that this upstart Jesus would be shamed in such a way but again we see the prophetic hand of God working almost 1,000 years earlier in the life of David. David, who was king of Israel. And

we see this working to demonstrate that even this shame was all part of God's sovereign plan. I mean at one of the lowest points in David's life he wrote a Psalm that captured his profound grief as well as his sense of abandonment by God. And we don't know, perhaps David was reflecting on the fact that his own son had rebelled against him and was actively seeking to take his life, we don't know because David doesn't specify but we do know what David couldn't possibly have known, and that is that God would use the very same words of this Psalm to describe the heart and mind of Jesus as he went to the cross to bear our sins. We also know that Psalm 22 which we just read this morning speaks about details of the cross that David couldn't possibly have known because Jesus wouldn't be born yet for another thousand years. And those details include the actual act of crucifixion even though crucifixion was not known as a form of punishment at that time. In *Psalm 22:16* David says: *For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.*

David had no idea that he would be speaking a thousand years later for Jesus. I mean Jesus is hanging on the cross, he's pierced through his hands and feet. David had no idea that he's speaking for the one that would be expelled from the camp as shame number

one; associated with criminals as shame number two; identified while on the cross as a king either by Pilate to mock the Jews or by the Jews to mock his claim to be king was shame number three; extreme poverty, having nothing but the clothes on your back and even having those stripped away was shame number four; and shame number five was nakedness, being completely exposed to the crowd, to the world, and to the entire universe as an object of shame. I mean God himself says in *Psalm 22: They look and stare at Me.*

As the elders begin distributing the cup, I want you to consider what happens next. What happens next is this: The soldiers do something completely of their own will and desire that brings us right back to the sovereign hand of God working through the wills of people who are profoundly wicked and not at all interested in the things of God to accomplish exactly what God had set out to do. The soldiers notice that instead of four objects that prisoners normally have, they have the head gear, they had their sandals, their belt and their outer garment, Jesus was different, Jesus had five and one of those objects his tunic was woven in one piece with no seams. Now this presented a problem to the soldiers because normally four soldiers were assigned to an execution duty, so they would evenly divide the four articles of clothing the prisoner usually had. Jesus's fifth article of clothing presented a problem. Since it was seamlessly woven, it couldn't be easily

divided because it would lose all of its value. So the soldiers did exactly what you would expect soldiers to do. Recognizing that its value lay in staying whole, they decide to cast lots for a chance at getting the whole garment rather than a worthless piece. They had no idea they were doing exactly what David had prophesied they would do thousands of years previously. Verse 18: *They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.* See the soldiers simply thought they were cutting a deal as to who was going to get the garment; but the universe, the heavenly host and Satan himself knew otherwise. They had to have seen all the parts of this drama falling perfectly into place just as God had predicted. You see, God working through the free wills of these soldiers demonstrated that Jesus was no victim of circumstance and that all of the cross had been thought out, worked out and prophesied since the fall of Adam and Eve. God's sovereign power took every single opportunity for shame that the enemy had planned for and turned it into an opportunity to display God's love for his fallen creatures. The shame of expulsion which brought Jesus outside of the camp for execution actually identified Jesus with us as sinners cast out of God's holy presence by our sin. Again Hebrews told us Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. The shame of association which placed Jesus besides two common criminals actually identified him with us as breakers of the law. The shame

of identification which mockingly attempted to identify the crucified Christ as an unworthy king actually showed Christ willingly identifying with us as our crucified King. The shame of poverty which took the only possession Jesus even had, the very clothes on his back, actually showed him willing to become poor to make us rich. And again, *2 Corinthians: For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich.* And finally the shame of nakedness which was an attempt to compound and intensify Jesus' shame actually demonstrated a love for us that was so deep that he was willing to identify with us in the nakedness of our sin. Jesus humbled himself through expulsion, through association, through identification, through poverty, and through nakedness and it gives new meaning to God's charge to us. This is what God tells us, he says: *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.* So let's take a moment to thank him for bearing those shames.

1 Corinthians 11:25 says: In the same manner he also took the cup

after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." So take, and drink.

This is the part known as heart, hands, and feet where we try to have some kind of practical application of what it means to remember the Lord Jesus Christ. And being as we've been speaking about shame, I wanted to read you *Romans 1:16* which says: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* And I want to ask us a general question: Have you ever been ashamed of the gospel? I know for myself, I just said this is in me, from the moment that I meet somebody, if I know I'm going to have a conversation with you that's longer than 30 seconds, I'm wondering how I can get to the place where I can give you the gospel. I'm asking God for opportunities to share the gospel with you 'cause that to me is the reason why I'm here. Not only that, it's my greatest joy, my deepest satisfaction, put it crudely, it's the funnest thing I could do. I love doing that. And so I'm always looking for some kind of an opportunity or angle or whatever. But I remember years ago -- and I should also add that part of what I'm trying to suggest to you here is we don't pin people into corners and shove a gospel tract or the gospel down their throat. What we do is we ask God for opportunities, and we

extend the possibility for those opportunities to take place just simply -- it's something as simple as saying, "Oh, my church" and somebody could say, "Oh, you go to church?" or just as something simple as that. I'm not talking about backing people into corners. I'm talking about asking God for opportunities.

I remember many years ago God gave me this enormous opportunity and I didn't take it. And I didn't take it because I was afraid of what people were going to say and I came back and afterwards I thought about it and I realized I didn't take it because I was ashamed of the gospel. So what do you do with something like that? Because first of all, I think it's very easy to push it off to the side and say that was just not a good time. But God's Holy Spirit had convicted me, said, Tom, you didn't take that opportunity 'cause you were ashamed. And God had given me an opportunity you could have driven a truck through. So I understood. Here's what I did, I felt very bad about it which is what you should feel, then I confessed it, I said, "That was sin, Lord. I had this opportunity you gave me and I sinned by not taking it. But give me another chance. Give me another shot at it." And he's given me lots and lots of shots since then.

But I want to speak to one of the parts of us because we have a Reformed kind of a flavor. One of the dangers that we face is the

idea of becoming frozen chosen. The idea of well, you know, God's sovereign, he's going to do what he wants to do. If he wants to save somebody, he can save them, he doesn't need me. We've got ample scripture to back that up. Scripture says *we are saved by grace through faith, this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast*. Okay. That's true but do you want to believe that God is going to save somebody in spite of your disobedience? I mean if the choice is saying, you know, God's not up in heaven biting his nails saying, oh, no, Fred messed it up and Fred got afraid and now this guy's going to go to hell because Fred messed up? That's not the way God operates. God will never place our eternal future in something so wishy-washy as us. If we fail, God will raise up somebody else because his will will be accomplished. But do you want that to happen at the cost of your disobedience? So what I'm asking us to do today is stop and think of if there have been those times when God has said, "Here's your opportunity" and you've just been ashamed, and maybe you need to confess that. And maybe you need to ask God for another shot, another opportunity, because God will give you those opportunities. When you see somebody, you just start praying, God, give me an opportunity. You want to be the person that God is speaking about in this scripture. This is *Romans 10*, it says: *For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.* How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how

are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" My prayer for all of us is that we would have beautiful feet. Let's pray.

Father God, I just thank you for the incredible gift that you've given to us of your Son, of the cross, of his willingness to endure such profound shame on our behalf. Father, we are speechless and even the idea of nakedness is just so repulsive to us and yet, Lord, it seems very possible that that's exactly what you endured for us. And so I just praise you, I thank you, I thank you for the boundless love that drove you to take the shame and buy us salvation. And I praise you in Jesus' name. Amen.