

The Goal of the Gospel

By Richard Goswiller

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Romans 3:9-22
Preached on: Sunday, September 28, 2014

Living in Christ Ministries

15 Churchill Dr.
Elverson, PA 19520

Website: www.licministries.com
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/licm

On behalf of Doris and myself, thanks to Pastor Dave for inviting us and just look forward to enjoying this Lord's Day with you.

I want to bring a word this morning to you that I hope will be helpful, a very simple word and yet I trust it'll be a very helpful word. It certainly is an encouragement to my soul and I trust it'll be the same for you. What I want to do is begin by praying, so if you would bow your hearts with me, let's pray and ask the Lord's blessing.

Our Father, we thank you for this wonderful and glorious Lord's Day. Thank you for the opportunity to gather together in your house with your people to sing your praises and to worship you in spirit and in truth, and now, our Father, as we turn our attention to the word of God with our Bibles open before us which we believe to be the very word of God, God-breathed, totally inspired and inerrant and infallible, we pray, Lord, that we would hear the voice of God and not the mere voice of a man. So we pray that you will come and give utterance; that you will bring great unction to the truth that it might impact our hearts, it might find a lodging-place within us and we might know something of its transforming power. So bless us, we pray, Father, as we give you our undivided attention. We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

I'd like to ask you to open your Bibles to Romans 3 and there's an outline in the bulletin if you want to perhaps get that out in front of you. You can follow along this morning. We're going to look at several different texts, or at least some of them are reading or hearing, some of them I'll ask you to turn to, but the heart of the message this morning is going to come from Romans 3, at least a portion of it.

Let me begin by saying this and I don't have to remind you of this or bring this to your attention, I know you're fully aware of this, we live in a world nowadays where there seems to be very little good news. No matter where you look for it, you just can't find it. If you look at the individual, people are sinful, dysfunctional, restless, frustrated and anxious. If you look at the family, the family unit is being undermined in our day and we no longer can even properly define marriage. Look at the nation, we live in a post-modern and post-Christian era where we have great decline in our culture and great degeneration. We are no longer the culture we once were. We're no longer the nation we once were and we haven't plateaued, we're on a descent that's going to take us who knows

where in the days and years ahead. If you look at the world, there is unrest everywhere. There is tyranny and oppression. There's terrorism and wars, and in recent days the kind of brutality that is only known in the Dark Ages. It's absolutely incredible. If you look at the church, the church today is divided. It's lukewarm. It's compromised and it's ineffective.

So wherever you look and whatever news broadcast you would turn to, or radio station you would turn to, you're going to hear a great deal of very grim and very bad news, and yet in the midst of all of that turmoil and upheaval, there remains a message of incredibly good news, and thank God for that, and that message or that good news is found in a timeless message and that good news is all about a glorious person, and that is my theme today. We're going to talk about the person of Jesus Christ and we're going to talk about the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ because that's the only place, as far as I'm concerned and as far as I know, that's about the only place you're going to find real good news, and it's the only place you're going to find any lasting good news of eternal value.

But I have to begin at the beginning and give you the reason why this message is such good news and that's why I want you to be in Romans 3 and my first point I call: the problem, the black hole of sin. The black hole of sin. That's the problem that is facing us as individuals, as people collectively, as families, as nations, there is this thing called sin, the black hole of sin, and Paul addresses that in Romans 3, beginning at verse 9, and this is his description of the human race in many ways.

9 What then? [he asks] Are we Jews any better off? [And he answers] No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, 10 as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one;

Take that to heart, please. None is righteous, no, not one. But he goes further.

11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." 13 "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." 14 "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 in their paths are ruin and misery, [not a good picture] 17 and the way of peace they have not known." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

That's really the heart of the matter, the fear of God has departed. There is no fear of God in our hearts and because of that, we have fallen into what Paul describes here.

19 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. [here is the reason] 20 For by works of the law no human being [no person] will be justified in his [God's] sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

That's a serious indictment about the human condition. Those words of Paul are actually a concluding statement. He has spent the better part of three chapters declaring and proving that all human beings are sinful creatures as they stand and as they are compared to an infinitely holy God. If you compare yourself with yourself, you might pronounce a good verdict upon you. If you compare yourself with other people that are worse than you, you can applaud yourself. But if you compare yourself with the law of God, if you compare yourself with the character of God, if you compare yourself with an infinitely holy God, you are undone and that's what Paul is saying here. We are sinful creatures.

Now we are sinful by imputation, we are sinful by nature and we are sinful by practice. We are sinners because of what we do wrong, we are also sinners because of what we fail to do right. We are sinners not only in our outward action but we are sinners in our heart, in our affections, in our mind, and in our will. We are sinners also outwardly. We sin with our tongues. We sin with our eyes. We sin with our hands. We sin with our feet. We are sinful in our behavior because that is simply an expression of the sinfulness that dwells within us. The theological term for this is total depravity which some people have a real problem with but that is a biblical doctrine. It doesn't mean that you are as bad as you can possibly be, you can be worse, but it does mean that we are sinful to the core and we are sinful in every aspect of our humanity, and because of that, we can't do anything that is not somehow tainted by sin and sinfulness.

That is why I call this problem the black hole of sin. You know what a black hole does, right? A black hole has such powerful gravitational pull that nothing can escape its influence. In fact, light cannot even escape the clutches of a black hole. The gravitational pull of the black hole is stronger than light's ability at the speed of light to escape it, and so the black hole clutches everything within itself and there is no way out of it. Well, sin is our black hole, as it were. We have been captured by the gravitational pull of sin and it holds us tight in its clutches, it clasps us in its grip and try as we might, want to as we might, we are caught in its trap. We cannot escape its deadly influence.

That's just the way it is as we come into this world and live our lives from our birth to our death. We are trapped by its penalty because the wages of sin is death, not just some day when we end life, the wages of sin is death so there's a death sentence upon us and there's a death process at work within us, not just in our physical body but in our humanity. We are trapped by its power. The influence is so strong that it has gained the mastery over us and we cannot get out from its grip or escape from its power. We are trapped by its presence. We're entangled in it. We're caught in its web, to change the analogy. It's always present.

What I'm trying to describe here, brethren, is that we are in a mess. That's what God says about us. It doesn't really matter what you think about yourself, what matters is what God says about you because he knows you far better than you know yourself. We are in a mess. The problem is we are ruined in ourselves. We are undone. We are lost. And even worse, we are helpless. That's the problem, the black hole of sin, and we're caught. We can't get out.

Now, is there a solution? Left to ourselves, the answer is an emphatic no. No solution, left to yourself, so is there any hope? Is there any way out of this predicament? Well, there is because of my two favorite words maybe in the whole of Scripture: but God. But God. When you come across that in your Bible, right now I have shivers on my back. Those are two fabulous words because if we say, "But you," you're stuck. Thank God there's a "But God," and the text continues with that, not those words but with the idea.

Look at verse 21 and 22, "But now." You see, he's described all of that dilemma and problem and the catastrophe that has come upon the human soul,

21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it-- 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

Indeed, brethren, there is a problem because God himself has determined to come to the rescue and to perform a work on behalf of helpless sinners. He's provided a solution by accomplishing a work of redemption and that work that God has accomplished is revealed to us in a very simple message, the message is called the Gospel and Gospel simply means good news. So to all that bad news that God just gave us which is the truth about ourselves, there's also this incredibly good news, "But God who loved the word he gave his only begotten Son," and you know the rest of the text. But God looked up us in compassion and mercy. But God determined, "I'm not going to leave you in that state. I'm going to come and I'm going to accomplish your redemption and I'm going to rescue you. I'm going to send my Son on a search and rescue mission to seek and save those who are lost." That is the Gospel. That is God's answer to man's need.

Go back to Romans 1. Keep your finger there for a moment but go back to Romans 1 for just a moment and I want to pick up Paul's narrative at verse 14 where Paul, after he introduced himself and makes a few more comments, he wants to get to the heart of what the book of Romans really is all about and he says in verse 14, "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish." Basically, "I'm under obligation to everybody." We all fit in that class somewhere. And because of that in verse 15, "So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome." So Paul is saying here that, "I am under divine constraint to all people. There is a moral compulsion upon my soul with regard to all of humanity, and because of that compulsion, I am driven with a single-minded desire and that desire is to preach the Gospel to all people; to give them who are lost in that condition we describe, this incredible good news from God."

"So, Paul, why do you not hesitate to give them the Gospel?" Well, he answers that in verse 16, "I don't hesitate because I'm not ashamed of the Gospel."

"Paul, why are you not ashamed of the Gospel?" He answers that in verse 16, "I'm not ashamed of it because it's the power of God for salvation unto anyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

"Well, Paul, what makes this message the very power of God to save sinners?" And he answers that in verse 17, "It's the power of God to save sinners because in it," in this Gospel message, "in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'"

"I want to preach it and I want to because I'm not ashamed of it. I'm not ashamed of it because it is the power of God that can rescue sinners from that terrible plight." And how does it do that? "Because it reveals the righteousness of God by faith."

Think about the sinner we just described in Romans 3. There are three things that every sinner desperately needs. Three things. Since they are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, they need life. When you go and talk to somebody, you share the Gospel with them, you're talking to a spiritually dead human being. What they need above everything else, they can change their life, they can quit smoking, they can start going to church, they can pray 24/7, it would be meaningless because they're doing it as a spiritually dead person. What they need is life.

Secondly, since they are legally guilty and righteously condemned, they need to be forgiven. They have violated God. It's not just that they've messed up their life and they're doing some things wrong and they need to improve and change things around and turn over a new leaf and apologize to some people that they've offended. No. They've offended God and the one whom they've offended needs to forgive them.

They need life, they need to be forgiven, and since they are totally ungodly and thoroughly unrighteous, what they need is righteousness. They need life, forgiveness and righteousness. Well, it's that aspect of the Gospel, that last one, they need righteousness, that Paul is addressing in this text in Romans. The righteousness that we lost in the fall. The righteousness that you and I don't naturally have. The righteousness that you and I no matter what we do could never acquire. No amount of good work is ever going to acquire the righteousness that God requires of us. We don't have it. We will never get it. But if we don't have it, we will die in our sins eternally.

Now, just to make sure you get this, I want you to really get this, I'm going to say four things about this righteousness and these are in the outline for you, and these are incredibly important. This is what you need to share with people who don't know the Savior.

First of all, there is a righteousness that God requires. Now notice my wording there. There is a righteousness that God requires. There is a standard of righteousness that God himself demands. He is unalterable in that. He is uncompromising in that and the standard that he requires – listen – is absolute perfection. Absolute perfection to the revealed moral law of God. He doesn't grade your life on a curve. He doesn't care about your good intentions. Almost making it does not count. Trying your best will never be sufficient no matter how hard you try because God demands an absolutely perfect righteousness. If you're going to stand before God and not be consumed and judged with

everlasting condemnation, you must have an absolutely impeccable perfect righteousness. Period.

If people believed that, they'd be fleeing to Jesus in droves but they don't believe that because they think what they're doing is good enough. They think they're okay. They think that God will surely wink at my sins and have favor on me. I'm somehow kind of an exception. Oh, I'm not perfect. I won't dare say that, but God understands. Well, God says, "To be in my presence, you must have a perfect righteousness."

I recently read a story of a Christian counselor who was at the bedside of an elderly woman and the woman was denigrating the exclusive claims of Christ and that he was the only way to God. You don't want to be like this on your deathbed. This is what she said, "I think that God is different than all that picky theological theology that small-minded people believe. I think that God is an all-tolerant cosmic energy in which we all participate. At death, all of us are merged back into blissful light. There are many ways to God and God is only as you understand him, or it, or her. As long as you have faith in something, that's all that matters." Foolish. Dead wrong. That is a lie straight from hell. God is God, he is Almighty, he is infinitely holy and he requires absolute perfection whether you believe that or not. That's the truth.

The second thing I want to say about this righteousness is the righteousness that God requires, secondly, it's a righteousness that God achieves and here is the glory of the redemption God has accomplished for us: the very righteousness that he requires of us, he has also achieved. How did he do that? Well, it's his righteousness alone and only God can achieve it. You can't achieve his righteousness. You must have it but you cannot achieve it. God has to achieve it and the way he achieved it was by sending his Son into this world in the way that he did, and that Son lived a perfect life of obedience and he died a perfect, atoning, substitutionary death, and so he lived a life that you and I cannot live and he died the death that we deserve under judgment, and through that work 2,000 years ago, the people just disregard or mock or think light of, in that work, God was accomplishing this redemption, he was achieving this righteousness. What you and I can't achieve, in his Son, God achieved perfectly.

Next step, third, this is a righteousness that God reveals. That all happened 2,000 years ago, right? But you would never know that that's what God was doing in the death of Jesus of Nazareth, right? What he did there was reveal to us, God achieved a righteousness and that is revealed to us in a Gospel message. You see, that's where that's made known. Nobody knows that unless somebody tells somebody this is what God did. God makes that known in his word, puts it in the mouth of his people, and sends them forth to declare it, but it's found only in that message. It's not found in the revelation of God in the world around us. There's evidence of God in that revelation but there's nothing in that revelation that tells us that God achieved a righteousness for sinners. It's not found by going deep within yourself on some kind of inward journey of discovery, like we're taught today. That's where you find God and what have you. It's not found in the religions and philosophies of the world. It's found in only one place.

This message is revealed in the Gospel. That is why the Gospel is good news. That is why Paul was not ashamed of it. That is why Paul wanted to preach it. And that is why you and I must go forth telling others about it, because they have no way of knowing that there's good news and they don't know what that good news is unless we present it and define it for them. The righteousness that God requires and that he has achieved is revealed in the Gospel.

Then the fourth thing I want to mention: this is a righteousness that God bestows. Having achieved it, having revealed it, the incredible thing is God freely gives it. Do you see what we've done so far? Paul has described us as not having it, but you must have it, you can't possibly ever get it on your own, God achieved it, reveals it, and gives it to you as a free gift. To whom? To anyone who will simply believe because the Bible says anyone, all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

There's only one reason why you would call on the name of the Lord in relation to what we're talking about here and that is because God has brought you to the point of desperation where you finally realize you don't have it and never will and then you say, "God, is there mercy for me? Is that gift really possible for me because I'm dead without it?" God says, "Yes, it's for you." "Then I'm taking it! I believe what you have said." And a person is saved.

You see, anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord because he's come to see his ruined condition, his desperate condition, he realizes his helpless condition and takes what God gives to him in the Gospel. That's why the Gospel is the power of God to save. You can't do it, somebody can't do it for you, it's revealed in the Gospel and when you take what the Gospel is offering you, you're saved. The power of God is operative in the presentation of the Gospel.

The essential point here is that God really gives it. If you can earn it, then you don't need God even in the equation, right? Now most of us in the world today don't think that I can earn it entirely on my own, but God will help me a little bit and then I'll be okay. Or as a pastor in Houston likes to say, it's in the Bible that God says God helps those who help themselves. It isn't God helping you, it's God saving you as a dead person who can't make a contribution, who simply receives what God is giving because they recognize their need for it.

That's what the parable of the publican and the Pharisee is all about. The one guy stands all haughty before God and doesn't need, he's talking to God supposedly, really he's talking to himself, but he doesn't need God. "I'm doing just fine, aren't I? And I'm sure you're really proud of me, unlike this jerk over here." But the jerk over there is crying out to God, "Be merciful to me, a sinner." Only one of those went down to their house justified and it wasn't the Pharisee, it was the one who knew his desperate condition.

I ask you, my friends, where do you stand in regard to this matter? Are you really personally convinced of the reality of the black hole of sin in your own life? You can't just generalize that. You have to personalize that. You can't just say, "Well, I guess I'm a

sinner because God says everybody is." No, it's got to come down where you're pricked in your own heart, "I'm the man. I'm in need. I don't like to admit that about myself but I agree with God that it's the truth, and I also realize I'm not going to be able to change it. I really thought I could. I hoped I could. I thought as the years went by I would improve, but if I'm honest, I haven't and I'm running out of time. God, I need you." You have to personalize it. Are you personally convinced that God is the only solution to your problem?

I quote verses 21 and 22 again, "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it." It's consistent with law and prophets. It's "the righteousness of God through faith." God achieves it. He gives it. I receive it. The righteousness of God through faith "in Jesus Christ for all who believe."

We've seen the problem. We've seen the solution. Now I want to conclude with the results. The ultimate reality experience. What does God intend to accomplish by all of this activity and our reception of the Gospel? What is it that God is after? What is the goal of the Gospel? Well, I want to mention what it is with three words.

The first word is reconciliation. Okay, first and foremost, God accomplishes through faith in Jesus Christ a reconciliation between God and sinner. There was a war between God and sinner. The sinner was hostile to God. God is hostile to the sinner. A reconciliation has to take place and that's what God accomplishes in the Gospel. Listen to these words from the Apostle Paul. Don't turn here but it's in Ephesians 2, "remember that you were at that time separated from Christ," and here we are as individual sinners, as Paul described them, you are separated from Christ. You're outside of him. In fact, you want nothing to do with him. Your back is to him, or if your face is to him, it's with a fist. You are separated from Christ, you are "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel," the people of God, "and strangers to the covenants of promise," you see, you're outside of all of that, "having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." You see, that's reconciliation. That alienation is gone. The estrangement has been overcome and God and I are now reconciled. We were dead in trespasses and sins, but God saved us by making us alive in Christ. We were totally lost, far away from God, without any hope, and he saved us by his blood. We were separated and estranged by God and he reconciled us to himself.

You see, all of that is a description of what God has done when he achieved our salvation, when he achieved this righteousness and applied it to us and we received it by faith. We are now reconciled to God. He has solved the problem. You see, God has to step out of heaven, as it were, and come to us and meet us where we're at and he did that personally. How? In his Son. He identified with us in our humanity. He lived the life that we could never live and the righteousness that he achieved is imputed to us. He died an atoning death whereby our sins might be forgiven. Then God raised him from the dead to validate that, that he's well-pleased with that. He was successful in what he came to do

and because of that, you are saved. You are reconciled to God through the blood of his cross.

Now that's a glorious thing to be reconciled to God, but there's another word, sonship. It's one thing to be reconciled to your enemy, the war is over, the hostilities between the two parties have ceased, there's now peace between the two parties who were at one time at odds with each other. That's wonderful but there's an even greater blessing and that is to be adopted into the family of the person who reconciled you. Not only is there now peace, that's one thing and that's a glorious thing, but he takes the reconciled sinner and adopts him into his family and makes him a legitimate heir, makes him a family member. "I want you to come in and dine with me at my table. I want you to share my name. I want you to enjoy my life in my kingdom. I want you to be blessed by all of the blessings that I can bestow upon human sinners because you are a family member."

Galatians 4, "In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law," okay, for what reason, "to redeem those who were under the law," reconciliation, "so that we might receive adoption as sons." We believe the Gospel and receive the righteousness that comes by faith but we are also adopted into the very family of God. Reconciled, yes. Wonderful. Sonship on top of that? Yes. Even more glorious because the implications of that and the benefits and blessings of that are extraordinary.

Go to 1 John. You know this text but I've got to show you this text. 1 John 3 talking about sonship. Look at 1 John 3:1, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us," what's the result of this, this love is what prompted him to accomplish this redemption and achieved this righteousness to what end, "that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now," right now this moment reconciled and adopted, you're a child of God, "and what we will be has not yet appeared," we are already but there's a not yet that's coming, "but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." You see, he has saved us to reconcile us, to make us blood-bought children and legitimate heirs in order to recreate within us his likeness. He's begun that work, that's what sanctification is. When we see him, that work will be completed and we will be like him forever with no possibility of sin or ever falling.

So the results that God intended include legitimate membership in the eternal family of God. Can I take it one step further? There's one more word, it's called friendship. Reconciliation blows me away. It's wonderful. Adoption and sonship, too incredible to be true. But you can be a true member of the family and not always enjoy the blessings and benefits of the family, right? For example, your rebellious child will always be your child. It's impossible to change that reality. You brought them into the world, no matter what they do, they will always be your child, but your rebellious child in that state of rebellion may not be experiencing your smile. They may not know the friendship of the moment. There will be no sweet communion at that time between parent and child.

So there's something more than just being reconciled to God, which solves a great problem, and being a blood-bought child, that there's something more than that and that is actual friendship with the person of God himself. Think of where we started in Paul's description of us as sinners and we moved all the way through what God has achieved and bestowed upon us by faith, and now we're into the realm of, "Me? That sinner that you just described being intimate friends with God?" Yes. That's exactly what I'm describing.

Jesus put it like this, "You are my friends." If you've heard those words from Jesus actually, your life would never be the same, but he's telling you that in his word. You. You people, reconciled. Adopted and in the family. Jesus is saying, "I'm calling you friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you." You can't be rebellious and experience this. "No longer do I call you servants for the servant does not know what his Master is doing. But I call you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you."

Now I believe this is the ultimate intention that God is after and this ultimate reality for a human sinner, and this is glory. This is why God created Adam, put him in a garden, and really, "I want to have communion with you. I want to have fellowship with you but I want us to be friends, Adam. I want us to be friends." What is friendship? It's not just an idea, it's not an abstraction, it's also something that can't happen long distance. I'm not talking geographic distance, I'm talking about long distance in terms of interaction. Friendship occurs in close relationship, in transparency, in vulnerability and in intimacy.

When you have two friends, you no longer have game playing or formalism or hypocrisy or pretense or facade or insincerity. All of that is broken down. It's not there. There is open-hearted intimacy, open-hearted interaction, openness and sincerity, transparency and honesty, familiarity and intimacy. In other words, there is nothing hindering the fellowship. There is nothing blocking it. Both parties are on the same page. Both parties are engaged in the depth of their being. That's what God achieved and wants each of his children to experience.

I came across these words by Geerhardus Vos from another era but listen to what he says. Listen closely. "To be a Christian," listen, "To be a Christian is to live one's life not merely in obedience to God," a slave can do that, right? And that is one depiction of the Christian life but it's more than that. "To be a Christian is to live one's life not merely in obedience to God, nor merely in dependence on God, nor even merely for the sake of God." You see, all of those sound, those are great things. "It is to stand in conscious reciprocal fellowship with God, to be identified with him in thought and purpose and work, to receive from him and give back to him in the ceaseless interplay of spiritual forces." Do you see what he's talking about there? "According to this, the covenant means that God gives himself to man and man gives himself to God for that full measure of mutual acquaintance and enjoyment of which each side to the relation is capable."

You see, it's not just being a dutiful servant or having your head crammed with a bunch of right theology, even, or performing certain rituals or any of this kind of stuff. It's the

giving of the entirety of your humanity to God as he has already given the entirety of himself to you in his Son, and you live in constant exchange of that and interplay of that, is what he's saying. Out of that, I guarantee you will come a life of fearing God and worship and obedience, but that's a fruit, that's a byproduct. God is after something so much better.

Henry Scougal once wrote a book called "The Light of God in the Soul of Man." Dear brethren, this is Christianity. We have turned it into duty or rituals or moralism or theological truths. That's not Christianity. Christianity is a living reality going on in the depth of your being which we are called to work out first with God, and then with the brethren, and then with the world around us.

That's what God is after in the Gospel. That's what God sent his Son for. We've gone from problem to solution to the results and I believe that sonship and friendship with God is the ultimate of biblical Christianity and the goal of the Gospel. You see, God didn't send his Son to pay the price that he paid for your sins just to give you fire insurance in your back pocket so that you won't go to hell some day. He also didn't send his Son to save you that you might just be a change agent in the world. And I could say a hundred other things. He sent his Son to buy you lock, stock and barrel, reflected in your heart. He gave you his heart in his Son and he wants your heart that you might enjoy friendship with him.

That's why Paul concludes his discourse in Romans, the doctrinal section, at what he says in Romans 12:1. What else can he say? "I urge you, I beg you, I appeal to you by the mercies of God that you present your body, the entirety of your humanity, as a living sacrifice which is your reasonable service." He's saying that makes perfect sense in light of everything that we've just talked about. What else can you do? Don't hold it back. Give it to him that you might walk into a life of friendship with God. That's what he intends for his people, all of his people. He intends it right now, today. He intends it on your worst day. He intends it on your dying day and this is what we will experience and nothing other than this every day in glory for eternity. You've got to get the Gospel in right perspective or else we will never live it out in the way that would be a blessing to God.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we thank you again this morning for holy Scripture and we thank you for Scripture because it points us to yourself and to your Son because, Lord, this is not all about us, it's all about you, it's all about your Son, it's all about what he did and we thank you that he did it for us. May we remember, Lord, that we have been reconciled because you have given us the righteousness of your Son. May we remember that we are heirs with him and members of your family and may we really begin to realize the depth of the possibility and reality of friendship with you, the living God. May that not make us frivolous or casual with you, but may it make us hopeful and may we long to enter into a deeper measure of this great reality that cost you so much to give to us. We thank you for Jesus. We thank you for the Gospel. We thank you that you had mercy upon us and we pray in his worthy name. Amen.