



SERMON SERIES STUDY GUIDE

Ministers of Reconciliation, Pt. 1

Pastor John Riggs

Main Scriptures:

- 2 Corinthians 5:14-21
- 2 Corinthians 5:5
- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- 2 Corinthians 5:19
- Galatians 6:11-15
- Galatians 2:20
- Titus 3:4-7
- Titus 3:5
- John 3:3-5
- Ezekiel 36:25-27
- Psalm 51:1-7
- Ephesians 1:13
- Ephesians 4:17-24
- 1 Corinthians 3:16
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
- 1 Corinthians 11 (Communion passage)
- John 5:24
- 1 John 5:12
- Revelation 2:17
- John 14:6
- Romans 8 (alluded to regarding creation groaning)
- Genesis 1 (alluded to regarding the creation account)
- Genesis 17 (alluded to regarding God's covenant with Abram)

KEY POINTS:

- Reconciliation is entirely the work of God through Christ, not the result of human religious effort or works. God came down to man rather than man climbing toward God.
- The moment a person trusts in Jesus Christ by faith, a miraculous work of regeneration occurs -- they are washed, given a new heart, filled with the Holy Spirit, and become a new creation.

- The Greek word for "creation" in 2 Corinthians 5:17 refers to an act of creation, something only God can perform, paralleling the original creation account in Genesis.
- The word "regeneration" in Titus 3:5 comes from the Greek words meaning "again" and "from birth," pointing to an entirely new beginning that is wholly God's work, not man's.
- Being born again of water and the Spirit, as described in John 3, corresponds to the cleansing and renewal described in Ezekiel 36:25-27, where God promises to sprinkle clean water, give a new heart, and place His Spirit within His people.
- The old man -- the pre-conversion self -- has been crucified with Christ, though believers still contend with the flesh and must deal honestly with ongoing sin through repentance.
- The Holy Spirit takes up permanent residence in every believer at salvation, sealing them and serving as a guarantee of eternal life.
- Cultural Christianity in the West has dangerously reduced the gospel to a form of consumerism, stripping it of its transformative power and producing nominal believers who show no evidence of new birth.
- Every Christian is commissioned as a minister of reconciliation, entrusted with the message that Christ alone can reconcile sinful humanity to God.
- The urgency of sharing the gospel is heightened by the lateness of the hour, the hardening of hearts in culture, and the reality that there are no second chances after death.

NOTES:

Question and Answer:

Pastor Riggs draws a sharp distinction between humanity climbing toward God through religious works versus God descending to humanity through Christ — how does this distinction challenge the way you personally think about earning or maintaining your standing before God?

Paul's language in 2 Corinthians 5 describes believers as 'new creations,' and the sermon connects this to the Genesis creation account — in what specific ways have you seen evidence of this new creation at work in your own life since coming to faith?

Scripture describes regeneration as something entirely initiated and accomplished by God, comparing it to the fact that we had no part in our own physical birth — how does this truth affect the way you understand your own conversion experience and your confidence in your salvation?

Ezekiel 36:25-27 portrays God promising to cleanse, give a new heart, and place His Spirit within His people — how does understanding these promises as already fulfilled in believers shape the way you approach your daily struggle with sin and temptation?

The sermon argues that cultural Christianity has reduced Jesus to little more than a 'get-out-of-hell card' rather than the very source and substance of a believer's life — in what ways might this reductionist view have influenced your own understanding or practice of the faith?

David's sin with Bathsheba and his subsequent cover-up involving the murder of Uriah illustrate that no person can hide or resolve their own sin before God — what does David's example in Psalm 51 teach us about the posture we should take when confronted with our own failures?

Pastor Riggs emphasizes that every believer has been commissioned as a minister of reconciliation, yet also acknowledges that hearts in our time are increasingly hardened — what practical steps can Christians take to faithfully carry this message without allowing the hardness of the culture to silence them?

Revelation 2:17 promises that overcomers will receive a new name from Christ, suggesting that a believer's identity in Christ is still being fully revealed — how does the promise of a future, personal new name deepen your understanding of what it means to belong to God?

Scripture draws a contrast between the sin that the old nature loved and the conviction that the Spirit-indwelt believer now experiences — how do you personally distinguish between the convicting work of the Holy Spirit and mere guilt or shame, and why does that distinction matter for spiritual growth?

Pastor Riggs warns that advancing technology and artificial intelligence will intensify deception in the last days, making the proclamation of the gospel more urgent — how should the reality of these accelerating changes motivate and shape the way believers engage their families, neighbors, and communities with the message of reconciliation?

Small Group Guide: The Ministry of Reconciliation

Based on 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Overview

This session explores what it truly means to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. The sermon unpacks the biblical reality of regeneration, the new creation in Christ, and the responsibility every believer carries as a minister of reconciliation. This guide will help your group move from head knowledge to heart conviction and practical action.

Key Takeaways

- 1. Reconciliation is God's work, not ours.** Every major religion in the world involves man climbing toward God through religious effort. Christianity alone teaches that God came down to man. Salvation is entirely an act of God's grace, mercy, and initiative through Jesus Christ.
- 2. Being born again is a real and radical transformation.** Regeneration is not a metaphor or a feeling. It is a sovereign act of God in which He cleanses the believer, gives a new heart, places His Spirit within, and makes the person a genuinely new creation. The old self has passed away. Something has actually changed.
- 3. Religious activity is not the same as reconciliation.** Cultural Christianity, nominal faith, and religious routine cannot reconcile anyone to God. The question is never simply whether a person is religious. The question is whether they have been born again and reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ.
- 4. Every believer is a minister of reconciliation.** This is not a calling reserved for pastors or missionaries. Every Christian has been entrusted with the message of reconciliation and is commissioned to carry it into their home, their workplace, and their sphere of influence.

5. The gospel is urgent. There are no second chances after death. The hearts of people around us are hardening. Now is the time to share the message of reconciliation with those we love.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. Before coming to faith in Christ, what did you think it meant to be right with God? How has your understanding changed?
2. The sermon described the difference between religion and reconciliation. In your own words, how would you explain that difference to someone who had never heard it before?

Going Deeper

3. The sermon describes regeneration as a work entirely done by God, comparing it to physical birth. Read Titus 3:4-7 together as a group. What does this passage reveal about the role of human effort in salvation? What does it reveal about the character of God?
4. In Ezekiel 36:25-27, God promises to sprinkle clean water, give a new heart, place a new spirit, and cause His people to walk in His ways. How have you personally experienced these realities since coming to faith in Christ? Which of these has been most meaningful to you?
5. The sermon drew a sharp contrast between Jesus being a "get-out-of-hell card" and Jesus being one's very life. How does that distinction challenge the way Christianity is often presented today? How does it challenge the way you personally live out your faith?
6. Paul writes in Galatians 2:20 that he has been crucified with Christ and that Christ now lives in him. What does it look like practically for Christ to live in and through a person? Where do you find this easy? Where do you find it difficult?
7. The sermon noted that while the old man has been crucified with Christ, the flesh remains and will be a source of ongoing struggle. How do you personally navigate the tension between your new identity in Christ and the pull of the flesh? What habits or practices help you in that fight?
8. Read Psalm 51 together. David's sin was severe, yet his response was to cry out to God for cleansing and mercy. What does David's prayer reveal about what genuine repentance looks like? Is there anything in your own life that needs that kind of honest response before God right now?

Reflecting on Our Mission

9. The sermon emphasized that every Christian is a minister of reconciliation. Who in your life does not know Christ? Have you been sharing the gospel with them, or has that conversation been avoided? What has held you back?
10. The sermon acknowledged that sharing the gospel can create tension in relationships, even within families. How do you think about that tension? Does the eternal weight of what is at stake change how you approach those conversations?
11. The sermon warned that the deception and hardness of heart in our culture is intensifying. How does that reality shape the sense of urgency you feel about sharing the message of reconciliation with those around you?

Practical Applications

This week, choose at least one of the following:

- **Examine your own foundation.** Spend time in honest prayer asking God to reveal whether your faith is genuine regeneration or religious routine. Use Psalm 51 as a guide for that conversation with Him.
- **Write it down.** Take fifteen minutes to write out your testimony of how you came to faith in Christ. Focus on what changed when you were born again. Practice sharing it in three minutes or less so you are ready when the opportunity arises.
- **Pray for someone by name.** Identify one or two people in your life who do not know Christ. Commit to praying for them daily this week, asking God to soften their hearts and to give you a natural opportunity to share the gospel with them.
- **Have the conversation.** If there is someone in your home, your family, or your close circle of friends who does not know Christ, take a step toward that conversation this week. It does not have to be a formal presentation. Start by asking them genuine questions about what they believe and why.
- **Study the new creation.** Read through the following passages on your own this week and journal what they teach you about your identity in Christ: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, Ephesians 4:17-24, Colossians 3:1-17, and 1 John 5:11-12.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying together for the following:

- Gratitude for the gift of reconciliation and the new life you have received in Christ
- Honest acknowledgment of any sin that has hindered your fellowship with God
- Boldness and compassion to be faithful ministers of reconciliation in your daily lives
- Specific people by name who need to hear the gospel

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." -- 2 Corinthians 5:17

[illegible]

I do want to invite you, if you would, to open your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 5.

We've been in 40 days of prayer and fasting here at our church, and that will be coming to a close, I believe it's Friday this week.

Next Sunday we'll be having a feast celebration, so come prepared to eat and feast and fellowship and enjoy some time together with the brothers and sisters in the Lord as we meet after church for some food and fellowship.

I'm going to continue on with where we were last week, talking about the ministry of reconciliation.

You know, this is something we've all, probably many of us have read many times, but it's something I think is misunderstood in so many ways.

And that is this incredible, incredible experience that we've come to know this gift of salvation that we have in Christ Jesus.

And so this morning, we're going to unpack some more of this about what the scriptures teach about what it means to truly be reconciled to God.

Have you thought about that?

Really, the message that we have been given, that we are to share with the rest of the world, or those that we come in contact with in our sphere of influence, is that we are all ministers of reconciliation.

But what exactly does that mean for the Christian?

And for those that are yet outside of Christ, why is this such very important and good news?

Well, that's what we're going to look at this morning.

So in 2 Corinthians 5, I want to read with you together, if you'd join me, verses 14 through 21.

And then we're going to really spend some time together unpacking what this means for us as Christians and also why this is such an important message for us to share with the rest of the world that doesn't know Christ.

For the love of Christ controls us or compels us, depending on what translation you're using,

Because we have concluded this, Paul says, that one has died for all.

Therefore, all have died, and He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who for their sake died and was raised.

From now on, Paul says, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh."

Even though once we regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard Him thus no longer.

Therefore, if anyone be in Christ, he or she is a new creation.

The old has passed away.

Behold, the new has come.

Some of your Bibles might say, behold, all things have become new.

All this is from God who through Christ, key words here, all of this is from God who through Christ, here's the word, reconciled us to Himself.

God did all the work for us to be reconciled to Him.

Every religion in the world claims that their way is leading them to God.

In fact, every major religion in the world has their own way that they climb this mountain to reach God.

But only in Christianity and in the gospel and in the Word of God do we learn that it is the story where God came down to man.

There is a vast difference where mankind is working their way to God compared to Christianity is where we're not saved by works, but God came down to us in order that He would perform the work necessary to reconcile us to God.

God did all of this, and He did it through Christ the Son.

And He gave us, that is those of us in Christ, the ministry of reconciliation.

Paul says that is, here it is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their sins against them.

And entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, that is, God making His appeal through us.

We implore you, Paul says, on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God.

For our sake, He, that is God, made Him, that is Christ.

To be sin who knew no sin so that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

Now in verse 17, we read these words, if anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation.

I want you to really think about the power of what Paul is teaching here about the reality of what happens when you and I come to faith in Jesus Christ and are born again.

Christ, it's referring to our being joined with Christ by faith and

And when we are joined with Christ by faith, who is God the Son, the Creator of all things, we become a new creation.

This is very important that you understand this.

The Greek word for creation here is the word *katesis*.

And it refers to the act of creation.

In other words, something has happened in us that we cannot do now.

Nothing that we have part in is this recreation that takes place in your life when you, by faith, trust in Jesus Christ.

God, in Christ, the Creator of all things, we become, in Christ, a new creation.

What's interesting here is that the Apostle Paul parallels the new creation which comes into being when we are born again by faith in Christ with the creation account in Genesis chapter 1.

So put this in your mind.

When you are born again...

When you by faith trust in Jesus Christ and His work of atonement on the cross, whereby His sacrifice, we are joined to Him by faith, the wrath that we had that we deserved and earned by the meriting of our own sin was placed on Christ who became sin for us so that by our being joined with Christ, our sin and our penalty for that sin is completely done away with.

And we are justified or set right before God in that being in Christ we receive His imputed righteousness now.

And we receive and we merit by grace this gift of salvation by faith.

And this event that happens, this miraculous work is the work of God through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit where we are born again.

And Scripture tells us that we become a new creation in Jesus Christ.

Now this is very significant because in Galatians chapter 6, if you would like to turn there, we're going to be looking at verses 11 through 15.

Galatians chapter 6, 11 through 15.

We're going to look at a lot of scriptures today because that's what we've come to do.

We've come to learn from God's Word together, and that's our primary objective here as we gather here and open the Word of God together.

If you're used to three points and punting through the uprights of a Sunday morning, that's not what we do here.

We open the Word of God and we study the Scriptures together to learn about what God teaches in His Word about these incredible truths.

Paul here in Galatians chapter 6, he's having to correct some false teaching that was prevalent in the early days.

It's prevalent today in our time as well.

And that these false teachers were teaching that external religious works were necessary to make one right before God.

Not only was this lie imposed upon the first century Christians by false teachers, this lie is still the foundation of cultural Christianity here in the West.

And Paul fiercely fought against the Judaizers, which is what he's addressing here, those that came out of Judaism.

They were saying, well, you've got to do Jewish things if you're going to be right with the Jewish God.

And Paul makes it very, very clear.

that God is the God of all humanity, and God is the God of the Jew and the Gentile, and all of them are reconciled to Him in one way, by one means, and that is through faith.

That's how it happens, not through works.

And so they were imposing on these Christians, these Judaizers, they were saying, yeah, you can do all this other stuff, but you've got to do all these things.

One of them was, you've got to be circumcised.

and you gotta keep the fees and the holy days and the sabbaths and all of these things of the old testament the law everything we have these elements of these works that were being done and they were telling these first century christians you gotta do all this stuff if you really truly want to be right with god

And Paul is addressing this lie these Judaizers were teaching.

And not only that, he faced the Gnostics.

And the Gnostics was a whole different teaching, which I've taught on that in the past.

And it's very prevalent today in our culture.

The question is not if a person is religious.

There's a lot of religious people in the world.

But here's the real thing.

The question is whether a person has been reconciled to God.

That is what we are after.

That is what really matters.

That's what matters in your life.

There's been a lot of talk about the passing of Dolly Parton.

We have different people saying different things about whether she's in heaven or whether she's not here.

God is her judge just as He is your judge and mine.

But here's the question we should be asking, not whether Dolly Parton is in heaven or hell.

The question we should be asking is, are we reconciled to God?

Have we been reconciled to God, or are we simply just religious people doing religious things, hoping to be right with God through our religious activity?

Listen what Paul's going to say here.

So what we're looking at here is whether or not we've been reconciled to God.

Have we been born again of the Spirit?

Have we trusted in Jesus Christ by faith?

Reconciliation is not about religious works or activity.

So important you know this.

But rather, reconciliation is about a relationship that has been regained with God by faith through Jesus Christ.

That's what we're after.

In Galatians chapter 6, 11 through 15, look what Paul does here.

He's expressing some frustration, but he's also trying to point out how serious he is in what he's saying.

See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

He must have increased the size of his letters here as he wrote this letter.

Stressing the significance of this, he says, It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised.

and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

Why?

Because they were actually adding works of Judaism to the cross in order that by the other Jews in their culture they wouldn't face backlash and persecution.

Why is that?

Because Paul did not preach that you needed to be circumcised to be right with God.

He received great persecution because he taught the opposite.

that the circumcision God was doing was not something that a man does by his own hands through a priest, but it is by the Holy Spirit who circumcises the heart of the individual.

It's entirely different.

Paul says they're only doing this because they don't want to be persecuted for just saying that the cross of Christ was sufficient for our being made right and reconciled to God.

For even those, Paul says, who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law.

What's Paul saying?

It's obvious that circumcision can't make you right with God because circumcision doesn't even help you keep the law.

You still break the law, Paul says.

Every single one does.

Whether you're circumcised, whether you go to the feast, whether you do the Sabbath and the festivals and the new moons and celebrations and everything, you still are falling short of

because everyone breaks God's law that's what Paul telling them but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh

But far be it from me to boast, Paul says, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision.

But here's what it is.

Underline this in your Bibles.

But a new creation...

That is what matters.

Have you been born again?

Have you become a new creation in Christ Jesus by faith?

Or are we simply still striving to be merited as acceptable to God by our works of religious activity?

We're not saved by works, we're saved by grace through faith in Christ who performed the only work that could be accomplished through Him, and that is the sacrificial atonement that He offered in Himself on the cross of Calvary.

And it was sufficient to what?

To pay for the sins of all in the world.

All of them.

The blood of Christ has covered all that.

Now, the new creation speaks of a new birth, being born again of the Spirit.

Turn with me to Titus chapter 3, verse 4 through 7.

We have a lot of verses.

I'm probably going to speed up as we move through here.

Titus chapter 3, 4 through 7.

But I want you to understand this incredible truth, Christian.

It's absolutely paramount that we get this to help us understand the significance of our ministry that we have been given by God, commissioned in this world to be ministers of this message of reconciliation.

This is so important, right?

It really matters not how many religious things that people do in the world, whether you're a Muslim or you're a Buddhist or you're into Hinduism or whatever the major religion in the world is, all of the good deeds you do, all of the religious activities that you do, whether you're keeping all of these fasts and everything that they do, listen, none of that will make them right with God.

It's absolutely a complete and total waste of time.

It's nothing but religion.

That's all it is.

And Christ is the way that we are saved.

And Christ alone.

Titus 3, 4-7 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy."

by the washing, you can underline this also in your Bible, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Here we're learning about this whole concept of reconciliation, which includes regeneration.

Well, regeneration here that Paul mentions about the washing of regeneration that God does through the Spirit of God in our life when we believe in faith, this word here actually means, it comes from two words.

It comes from the word palin, which means again, and it comes from the Greek word genesis, which means from birth or from beginning.

So when we're looking at this regeneration, we're looking at another birth that is happening.

A regeneration is a beginning of new life.

That's what it is.

Now let me ask you something.

How many of you had anything to do with your first physical experience in birth?

We didn't.

Let me say this.

You have nothing to do with your new birth in Jesus Christ.

He has done it all for us.

We in faith are born again of the Spirit.

And when we believe and put our trust in Jesus Christ, this miraculous thing happens with the Creator of the world.

You and I, by the Spirit...

are regenerated here according to Paul's letter to Titus.

We are regenerated and we are renewed in the Holy Spirit.

And this is a rebirth that inaugurates like in the kingdom, in the millennial kingdom.

If you think about this in Revelation, there's going to be a recreation or a renewal, a rebirth of everything one day.

There's going to be also a new heaven and a new earth one day.

Just like we have become new, the earth itself has been what?

It has been cursed by sin, and one day, according to Romans 8, it's waiting for the sons of God to be revealed, therefore it can also be what?

It can be regenerated again.

It's waiting for the day where it no longer is under the fall of humanity and sin and the curse that it brought upon creation.

It's longing and it's waiting and it's groaning to be renewed once again.

This is what's happened to you and me and all who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

They are born again.

And this birth is the rebirth of all believers, and this is what takes place at the moment you faithfully trust and believe upon Jesus Christ, understanding He is your only hope for the way to be reconciled to God, and that you are in your sin, and the wages of sin is death, and the outcome of that will be what?

that will be hell at death the resurrection the great white throne judgment and then the lake of fire for all eternity this is the reality for the wages of sin is death this is where all humanity is headed not because God is not good is because Adam sinned in the garden and because God is good God came to earth took upon flesh

gave himself in order that he, the sinless one, would become your sin, pay the penalty of your sin, and set you judicially right with God in order that you don't receive by grace what you merited, which is what?

Judgment, death, and hell.

That's what we've merited.

You need to understand the significance of what this means.

That's why the gospel is good news.

That's why the enemy doesn't want the gospel being proclaimed.

That's why he doesn't want you to be ministers of reconciliation.

Because Jesus is the only way for fallen man to be reconciled to God.

It's it.

There's no other way for it to happen.

Jesus made this very clear when he was talking with Nicodemus in John chapter 3.

If you'd like to turn there, turn with me to John chapter 3 verses 3 through 5.

And be thinking about regeneration.

It is this rebirth.

It is this new birth.

And this is a work of God.

Nicodemus was Israel's teacher, one of them, primary teachers.

Comes to Jesus at night, got a question, wants to know who he is.

Jesus didn't even hardly let him get his question out of his mouth.

And he says, I tell you,

No one will see the kingdom of heaven unless he's born again.

And now he's going to explain to him here.

Jesus says here to Nicodemus, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again.

Notice, it doesn't say anything about any religious activity, works that you merit.

It would be nice, people like that.

They like to say, well, just let me do about 10 of these things, and if that makes me right with God, I'll do these 10 things.

That's what religion does.

They come up with all kinds of things that people need to do in order that they might be in religious works to think that they're right with God.

They're all self-deceived.

They're all through deception, they're deceived.

There's only one way and one means by where you and I, being born in sin, sinning ourselves, and being guilty before God, can be reconciled to the God who has created all humanity through Adam.

Listen, this is important.

No one will see the kingdom unless he is born again.

Nicodemus said to him, how can a man be born when he is old?

Nicodemus was an older man.

Jesus says, and He continues, can He enter a second time into His mother's womb and be born?

Nicodemus wasn't done, dumb here.

He knows to be born again.

He knows what it means to be born.

Listen to what Jesus said, "'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and spirit,'

He cannot enter the kingdom of God.

This would have been a hard thing for a Jew because a Jew would just assume that they are right with God.

Jesus says, no, Nicodemus, you have to be born again.

Now, if you would, look with me at Titus 3, 5 this time.

We were just there, but I want you to see something here.

He saved us not because of the works done by us in righteousness.

Nicodemus was a teacher of the law.

But according to His own mercy, this is all an act of God's mercy.

That means God's doing for us what we can't do for ourselves.

by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit this is speaking of the very thing that Jesus is talking about here born of the water and born of the Spirit this is speaking of the very same thing the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit what we're looking at is the same thing this is what it looks like to be born again this is what it looks like to be born of water

and born of the spirit it is the regeneration work of God as we're gonna see here in Ezekiel chapter 36 we're gonna even see a broader context of what this looks like so if you would you can turn with me to Ezekiel 36 verses 25 to 27 this passage here will also give some insight into what Jesus was teaching Nicodemus who was a Pharisee of the Jews

And he may have very well been referencing here this passage in Ezekiel 36, or at least the understanding of it, because Nicodemus would have been very familiar with Ezekiel.

What does it mean to be born of water and of the Spirit?

Well, we know what does water do for us.

Lot of things, but we're gonna see here in another context here that I want you to see what's going on here.

There is a cleansing work that God does in every single one who put their faith and trust in Jesus.

Do you remember after you were born again the experience of what it felt like to be clean?

Do you remember that?

Wasn't that an incredible feeling?

I mean, yes, you know the sins you've committed.

We don't forget that stuff.

But when you were born again, something happened to you.

There was a cleansing done in your heart, your mind.

There was a cleansing done.

And you were like, man, I feel completely free and at peace with God.

You felt so squeaky clean, even though you weren't.

Why is that?

Because God did something in you.

He regenerated you by the Spirit.

And part of that work that He does is found here in Ezekiel 36, 25-27.

Notice what He says.

This is a prophecy about the future.

This is what God said He's going to do.

Listen to this speaking to Israel.

This is incredible.

I, God says, will sprinkle clean water on you.

And you shall be clean from all of your uncleanness.

That's speaking of their sin.

This is what happened to you, Christian.

And from your idols I will cleanse you.

There was a cleansing work that happened.

The blood of Christ cleanses you from all unrighteousness.

You've been cleansed.

He says this, and I, God says, will give you something else.

This is incredible.

This is what happened to you, Christian.

You may not have known it.

You don't understand these words.

You didn't know regeneration.

You didn't know these things.

All you knew was you heard the gospel.

You felt the conviction of God in your life, Him drawing you to Himself, and you trusted upon Jesus Christ.

Even though at times you looked at him from the flesh as being whatever, now all of a sudden you desire him, you want him, you long for him, you believe in him.

Something has happened to you.

I will give you a new heart.

And I will what?

Give you a new spirit.

I will put within you.

God came, cleansed you from all of your sin through Christ on Calvary.

And His blood atoned for your sin.

His death paid the penalty of sin, which is death.

His own sacrifice appeased the wrath of God for sin.

And God, by the Spirit...

cleansed you clean through the blood of Jesus you were washed white as snow and then scripture says he put a new heart in you and he put a new spirit in you and who has come to dwell in every believer the Holy Spirit of God enters into you and takes up residence inside of you

And I will put my spirit within you, and listen to this, and I will cause you to walk.

Oh man, there's going to be a change in something that you don't understand.

All of a sudden, all the things that you once did that you enjoyed that were absolutely those things against what God would have you do, all of a sudden those things that you enjoyed so much, when you do them, you actually don't find enjoyment in them anymore.

In fact, you might even begin to feel conviction about certain things.

What is God doing?

He's put His Spirit in you, a new heart in you, and all of a sudden those things that brought you so much gratification now do the opposite.

No longer do they do that.

You actually feel conviction or grieving over sin all of a sudden.

You've never grieved over sin in your entire life, and then all of a sudden you're grieving over these things.

How did that happen?

That only happens if you are born again of the Spirit of God, where God puts a new heart in you, washes you clean, and what?

Comes and dwells in you by His Holy Spirit.

You're born again.

A new creation.

Now, I want to make sure that we understand that not everything at the moment of salvation changes in your life.

I know sometimes when I talk about these things, this is why we open up service at the end for people to come and ask questions.

Sometimes I might bring in something like I did last week about reconciliation, looking at marriage and all that.

I didn't spend the rest of the time teaching about marriage.

And about God's forgiveness if you've gone through experiences of divorce and remarriage and all that.

I didn't take the time to go through all that.

I've taught that many times.

But that wasn't the point of last week's message.

I was talking about reconciliation and God's desire for us to be ministers of it.

Just like today when I talk about this, somebody might be thinking to themselves, well, John, I still sin.

Yes, you do still sin because you still have your flesh.

But you don't love sin like you once loved sin because you have become new in Christ Jesus.

And something else is incredible.

You no longer have to sin because God in Christ has empowered you and set you free from enslavement to it.

Yes, we still sin, but we don't love our sin.

There's a big difference.

But let's move down through here.

I don't want to spend too much time on that this morning.

But this imagery teaches us of God's cleansing work that He washes and He cleanses away the filth of our sin.

What great news that is.

You remember in Psalm 51, the cry of David's lament for his grievous sin.

surpassed all of probably the sin you've ever committed.

But nonetheless, sin is sin regardless of what sin is.

David here, after his horrific decision and having an affair with Bathsheba, who was the wife of one of his mighty men, only 30 of them,

In all of the kingdom of David's kingdom, of the thousands upon ten thousands of soldiers, he had 30 mighty men.

And these men were incredible warriors for David, for God, and his kingdom.

They were noted especially for how brave they were, how their loyalty, their love, all of the aspects of what they displayed as a mighty man that David had.

These men lived close to David's palace.

Why?

Because they were the special forces of David's army.

They were the elite one percenters of all of his military.

And he sends them all out in battle.

And David, instead of going to war like a king is supposed to do with his men, he stayed home in his palace.

He's walking along the palace rooftop one night, gazing down at the houses below him, which, guys, this is normal.

They bathe on the roof.

Why do they do that?

Because the water gets warmed by the sun.

It's normal for this to happen.

David sees this beautiful woman.

He calls a servant and says, hey.

I want to know more about that woman."

And the guy goes, don't you know David?

That's Uriah's wife Bathsheba.

David would have known Uriah very well and probably knew his family.

David wouldn't have no for an answer.

He sins for her and as a king he gets exactly what he wants, when he wants it, how he wants it, and no is never an option.

She's brought before the king.

He has sex with her.

She becomes pregnant.

All the while, one of his mighty men are out in battle.

He finds out she's pregnant.

David can't handle that.

He brings Uriah home thinking he's going to solve this sin problem.

Listen, no man can solve their sin problem.

And what does he do?

He tries to get Uriah to go home and be with his wife.

You've been out for several months.

You probably want to go home and see your wife, right?

Yes, normally.

He doesn't do it.

He stays on the front of the palace steps there with the other servants.

David says, dude, what are you doing?

So he brings him in and says, I'll get him liquored up here with some wine.

Go home now.

Here's a gift.

Take it home.

Enjoy your wife Uriah once again because he's a mighty man.

He has character that surpasses David's character.

And what does he do?

He stays at the palace again.

And David says, okay, I'll have to fix this problem.

Yeah, right, David.

All you're going to do is make it worse.

So David writes a letter to the general of his army.

He says, hey, take this to the general and deliver this letter.

And David writes in there,

What I want you to do is put Uriah where the fighting is the fiercest.

And then when the fighting is so bad, what I want you to do is call all the men to come away.

What did David know?

Uriah was a mighty man.

He's not got reverse in him.

He's going to stand and fight to the death.

If you read about Ben and I, I can give you the names of these guys.

If you read their history, you'll know what they were.

They were warriors to the very death.

And this man, Uriah, stood his ground.

And the onslaught was coming on them.

And what do they do?

Pulls his men back and Uriah is killed.

And he's killed in battle.

David thinks, well, I'm free and clear of that.

It really wasn't me that did it.

Somebody else's arrow killed him or whatever.

No, David, he died and the blood is on your hands.

David was now guilty of not only having an adulterous relationship with this woman who I don't believe was even privy to being a part of that.

But now we have him murdering one of his most faithful men, Uriah.

And David, his sin, he thought was covered up.

But no man can uncover their sin before God.

And God sends Nathan the prophet.

But here's David now lamenting.

Listen to what David says.

Aren't you glad that God forgives our sin?

You may be here this morning and you may say, John, I'm struggling with sin.

And I just feel horrible this morning about whatever it would be.

Listen, sin should break our heart before God as Christians.

It should grieve us.

Why?

Because we grieve the Holy Spirit when we sin.

And the Spirit of God lives in us.

The very one that regenerated us and gave us a new heart.

And the very one that cleansed us from all of our sin.

This regeneration has happened.

And this conviction of our sin is an important thing.

But notice here what David does next.

This is what he says here in Psalm 51.

If you want to turn there with me, I'd like you just to read it with me.

Psalms 51.

Have mercy on me, O God.

Now David is standing before God.

He's guilty before God because of these terrible sins.

according to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions.

Listen to this.

Here it is.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

This is the cry of someone who's doing business with God.

And David's desire here, if you move down to verse... Let's just keep reading.

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Behold, that means he was born like we all are in Adam.

Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the sacred heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.

Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

These are the words of what happens when we are born again and regenerated.

We are cleansed.

And what does someone do when they understand their guilt before God and the consequences of sin, which is death, and then the reality of hell, and then the judgment seat of God, and then the lake of fire?

What do they do when they understand they have no hope without God in this world because they're guilty of all their sin?

This is what they do.

They cry out to God for mercy.

Forgive me of my sin.

I trust and believe in Jesus Christ, God the Son, who came and took upon Himself my sin, all the sin of David, all of your sin, all of my sin.

Christ bore that sin on the cross, and God crushed Him as a sacrifice that He received and He approved of in what?

Meeting His wrath and paying the penalty of our sin.

Jesus Christ did all that.

And when a person understands their only hope to be reconciled to God is through Jesus Christ and the good news of the gospel, that's how they are reconciled to God, through Jesus Christ alone.

This is so incredible.

If you're in Jesus Christ today, when you were born again at faith, you were born again, you were washed and regenerated, and this new heart was given to you, and the Spirit comes inside you to dwell within you, this is how we live and walk in the new man of the Spirit.

This is good news for each and every one of us.

Now,

God the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us and cleanses us, regenerates the person, demonstrating that the person now has been reconciled to God.

And so personal is this relationship to God in being reconciled to Him that God came and dwells in us by His very Spirit.

In Ephesians chapter 1, 13, we read about this.

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, that means in Christ, when you heard the word of truth, which is the gospel of your salvation, and you believed in him, notice you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

All of this incredible work has happened to you, and it happens so very fast.

In a moment, in a blink of an eye, in time, it happens that quickly.

In regeneration.

In 2 Corinthians 5, 5, he who has prepared us for this very thing is God who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

Same thing we read about here in Ephesians chapter 1.

In 1 Corinthians 3, 16...

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you, speaking to Christians?

In 1 Corinthians 6, 19 through 20, do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?

You're not your own.

You were bought with a price, so glorify God in your body.

Anyone who has been born again, that is washed by regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, has been reconciled to God.

They...

are no longer dead in their sins isn't that good news and they now have been what made right with God if you are not in Christ today unfortunately you still have the good news and the element of grace is still here at present but there's coming a time where that grace will no longer be available for anyone and that happens first and foremost at the moment that you die there's no second chances after death no second chances

That's why the gospel is so important to share in our own day, in our own time.

Something else that he shares here, which is really, really good, in 2 Corinthians 5, 17, he says, Now, I want to reiterate something here.

The old man of the old life has passed away.

That means that man has been buried with Christ.

All of the sin, all of that stuff of the old man, of the old Adam, it has been done away with by the blood of Jesus Christ, and you are born new.

But here's something that has still remained.

That is going to be your flesh.

Your flesh will still remain until you die.

And that is what you're going to struggle with throughout your life.

The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life.

You're going to struggle with the old man, the flesh.

Not speaking of the man you were before Christ, because that's been covered by the blood of Jesus.

And that man's been crucified with Christ, according to what Paul says, but the flesh is still there, and you're still going to struggle with it.

And the kingdom of darkness is still here.

And all of the onslaught of the things of this world without God is still present.

And we stand against those things by the power of the Spirit of God.

And if we do sin, and when we do sin, we confess our sins before God, not because we lose our salvation, but because it affects my relationship to the Father.

And it grieves the Holy Spirit of God.

And so there's elements.

You want to keep a short list of those things.

Don't go on and act like sin's no big deal because, man, I got saved and I don't have to worry about sin anymore.

You have been cleansed of all sin that you have ever committed, yes.

But those sins we continue to commit still impacts our relationship to the Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Doesn't change the fact that I'm born again, that I'm saved, regenerated, filled with the Spirit of God, but it will greatly impact my relationship to the Father, my prayers, the power of the Spirit of God working in me, all the elements of my testimony, my boldness, my courage, all of that stuff is affected until I repent of that sin and I am restored in that really close fellowship with God the Father through the Holy Spirit.

That's why we deal with sin in our own lives after we come to faith in Christ.

Yes, it's been covered by the blood of Jesus.

In John 5, 24, we read, "Truly, truly, I say to you, "whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me "has eternal life.

"He does not come into judgment."

Isn't that good news?

but he has passed from death to life.

See, all things have become new.

Galatians 2.20, Paul says this.

Now you might understand more about what he says in this passage.

I have been crucified with Christ.

It is no longer I who live.

In other words, the old man, the sinful things that we have committed.

We were placed, all that was placed on Christ.

And what Paul says is when Christ was crucified, all my sin, everything about all that stuff of the old man, it died with Jesus Christ when he was crucified on the cross of Calvary.

So Paul makes the statement, I have been crucified with Christ.

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

and the life I now live in the flesh.

Notice he still speaks of the flesh.

I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

You will struggle with the flesh, Christian, and the domain of darkness.

But the man or woman of faith in Christ, that old man before they came to Christ, that man has been dealt with and he's been done away with.

He's passed away.

The new man, the new woman in Christ has come.

1 John 5, 12, whoever has the Son has life.

Whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Ephesians 4, 17 through 24.

Now I say this, Paul says, and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as Gentiles do in the futility of their minds.

They're darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them.

They're ignorant to the things of God.

They don't understand these things due to the hardness of their heart.

They become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

But that is not the way that you learned Christ, assuming that you've heard about Him and were taught in Him as the truth is in Jesus.

In other words, surely you've heard the gospel, Paul says, to put off, here it is, the old self, which belongs to your former manner of life.

and is corrupt through deceitful desires and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds and put on the new self created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

That is the new man right there.

The old has passed away.

Put off the old man.

Behold, all things have come new.

Put on the new man in Christ created after the likeness of God.

We look the same after we come to faith in Christ.

We may even feel the same in many ways.

We're not going off feelings here, but we are not the same men and women.

we were before we encountered Jesus Christ something incredible has taken place in us we were born again of the Holy Spirit we were regenerated that we were what cleansed we were given a new heart the Holy Spirit came and well within us this is what it means to be reconciled to God this is the beauty of the gospel

Scripture says that God came and he, like in the Old Testament, you read about a man like Abraham, for example.

I think this would be pretty cool if we would do this.

I know we don't because it's not that big a deal.

But oftentimes in Scripture, when God came and made a covenant with a man or something major happened between him and the encounter he had with God, God oftentimes changed the name of a man.

For example, I think about Abram, which means high father.

Think about his name.

It means high father, yet Abraham himself was fatherless.

He was an old man married to an old wife who was barren.

And his name means high father.

In ancient times, one's name carried great meaning.

And God made a covenant with Abram, a fatherless man with a barren wife in Genesis chapter 17.

God said, And yet he was still fatherless at this time.

Not only was there a change in Abraham's name, but there was also a change in his identity.

Think about this.

His purpose and his destiny.

One cannot be born again of the Spirit and remain unchanged.

It's impossible.

The same is true of each of us.

We also in Christ have had a change in identity, a change in purpose, a change in destiny.

We have had what?

A new heart.

We have been cleansed.

The Spirit of God living in us.

We've been adopted as the children of God.

I mean, you think about all that has happened when we are born again at the moment of our salvation.

Now, I have a very good friend that has a world ministry to the Muslims, and I'm not going to say where he actually works out of because it's so dangerous for him, and his life has been threatened, and they've tried to take his life on several occasions, including his own family members.

Think about that.

But he came to faith miraculously in Christ.

Hearing the gospel, believing, there's a long story about how he came to faith in Christ, just like we came to faith in Christ.

And one of the first things that happened to him when he became a follower of Jesus Christ, he changed his name.

He no longer goes by his birth name, but he goes by the name Abraham.

Abraham.

He changed his name, which represents his new life in Jesus Christ.

They still look the same, he still sounds the same, but he does not identify as being the same person that he was before he came to faith in Christ, because he was born anew.

Now you might be thinking to yourself that I did not change my name when I came to faith in Christ, right?

But everything else in you has changed.

But I want you to learn something here that's very, very important.

Your new name is coming in the future.

The Apostle John writes about it in Revelation 2, verse 17.

Jesus speaking to the churches.

Listen to what he says.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone and a new name written on that stone, which no one knows but he who receives it.

There's a day coming because you are new in Christ Jesus where you're going to receive a new name from Christ himself.

What an incredible truth.

When we came to faith in Christ, being born again, we were adopted as children of God.

We received a new father.

We received a new family.

We received a new identity.

We received a new citizenship.

We received a new life by the Spirit.

We have a new purpose.

We have a new destiny.

All things have become new for us in Christ Jesus.

One's identity will influence greatly how they live.

Have you been born again?

Have you been reconciled to God?

There is a reason that we identify as Christians.

And Acts chapter 17 tells us that it was at Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.

There was a time when calling yourself a Christian truly meant something.

Unlike today where Christianity has become nothing more than a nominalized cultural buzzword, to be a Christian was to identify your new life with Christ, to live for Christ.

Paul wrote about this in Galatians chapter 2 verse 20.

I have been crucified with Christ this is our banner this is our theme I've been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me and the life that now which I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who love me and gave himself up for me the men and women we were before we came to Christ those men and women are no longer our identity

The old man has been crucified with Jesus Christ.

We have become new, born again, regenerated, cleansed, and filled with the Spirit of God.

A new life has come, the life we now live.

We live not for ourselves, not for the flesh.

We live for Christ, our Redeemer, who reconciled us to God through the cross.

That is how we live our life now.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a huge disconnect within Christianity today.

And I think a lot of it is because of the way the gospel is preached or the gospel is shared today.

That Jesus is nothing more than a get-out-of-hell card, and you want to have your golden ticket.

That way, if by chance you might die one day in the future, you got that covered.

And all you do is you take your little ticket that's been given to you, says...

saved, and you stick it somewhere in your satchel, and it's in there, and you're going to use it one day when you need it.

But see, that is what cultural Christianity teaches you.

There's no change of life.

Nothing really happens to you that's profound.

You're not going to live any different.

You're just going to go on and hurrah, hurrah, hurrah, akuna matata.

No, that's not true.

Jesus is not my ticket to heaven.

Jesus has become my very life.

My very life.

He is life.

He's my life.

He's your life.

He's not just a ticket that I put in my pocket.

He's everything to me.

that's what it means to be born again to be crucified with Christ thank you Jesus for doing that for me for you that God would love us so much that he would come in the Sun would come in he would offer up himself to the father to be crushed in your place in order that you could be reconciled to God doesn't that demonstrate how desperately God longs to have relationship with those whom he created

to reconcile you to Him.

This isn't a punch my ticket man and go to church on Easter and Christmas.

No, Jesus has given me everything in life.

This is a difference.

Do you see a vast difference here?

Look at Christianity here in the West.

Does it look anything like what you read about in the Bible?

Not much.

And it's not going to get prettier moving forward.

Why?

Because the way the church has crumbled to the culture.

And they water the gospel down.

They don't teach about the new man, the regeneration, the cleansing, the new heart, the new spirit, the new life, the new father, the new family, the new citizenship, the new purpose, identity, and the new life.

They just say, hey, believe and have a little Jesus in your life like a salt and pepper shaker over the steak of your life.

Are you kidding me?

It's all about consumerism today where churches are all about growing mega churches and they're building more and more.

Why?

So they can get more money to do more stuff.

And people are so materialistic here in the West that they're all about just buying what they're selling.

We're not here to sell anything to you.

We're here to help you know that you can be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

The gospel's free, everyone.

It doesn't cost anything.

It costs Jesus everything.

So they peddle the gospel for money.

It's a joke today, man.

It's an absolute joke.

And people are flocking to those churches.

Why?

Because it's just full of thin air, man.

There's nothing to it.

It requires nothing of you.

And all the while, those people are still living as if they've never been born again.

Still doing the same stuff, same people, same sin, same lifestyle.

Nothing changes, but they'll put the Bible verse on their Facebook every once in a while that God loves you.

Oh, sir and ma'am, love?

We can't comprehend the love of God.

that God would leave the glory of heaven, God the Son, and come and take on the form of man, that he would what?

He would become the second Adam to fix everything the first Adam lost in his sin and rebellion against God's command.

Jesus had to become man in order that he would redeem man and God took upon flesh because only that way could we be redeemed because a man would have to live perfectly before God because no one can by the law.

None of the Jews could do it.

You can't do it.

I can't do it.

God knew that the law was to point them to the one who would be the perfect law himself, Jesus Christ.

He fulfilled it all perfectly.

Every dot, every letter was fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

Sinless perfection before God gave himself as a sacrifice where he would be the means.

Where sinful humanity separated from the holy righteous God who created all things.

He would be the mediator that would come and bridge the gap between where we are and where God is.

And only through Jesus Christ can man be reconciled to God.

Only through Christ.

That's why this gospel is so important.

Why?

Because of the reality that 100% of every person who lives will die unless Jesus comes again.

Because there's no second chances after death.

And because if you're here this morning and you're not reconciled to God, this is why we're still here preaching this and teaching this.

Because the door is still open.

And Jesus Christ, He's not only the way.

He is the door.

He is the gate.

He's the narrow road.

He's living water.

He is the bread of life.

He is available today for all who will repent and believe upon Jesus Christ and be reconciled to God by His incredible mercy.

through the mediator Jesus Christ all the other religions are climbing the mountain to God and every one of them will hear the same thing depart from me you workers of iniquity I never knew you why their names have never been written in the book of life why because scripture says Jesus says in John 14 6 I am the way the truth and the life

No one can come to the Father except through me, Jesus says.

That's why this matters.

That's why we have this incredible gift of the gospel because it's the only message, Christian, that will reconcile your loved one to God is through Jesus Christ.

Talking about the ranch, talking about the weather, talking about hunting, talking about whatever you talk about is fine.

But what we don't want to do is spend our life talking about just that and never get to the place where we talk to them about how they can be reconciled to God through Christ Jesus.

There's many people sitting in churches here in the West who are lost, as any Muslim is, as any Hindu is, as any Buddhist is, and they think they've stamped their golden ticket to heaven, and they're going to hear those words, depart from me, I never knew you worker of iniquity, and they will be cast away into the lake of fire one day, not because God is not merciful or gracious or loving, it's because He is just.

Because he has done everything in order that man could be reconciled to him through Jesus Christ the Lord.

I'd like to have our lay pastors come forward and start serving communion at this time.

We're going to take communion here in just a few moments.

But I'm going to share just a few more thoughts while they're passing out communion.

And then we're going to turn our Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 11 here in just a moment.

The challenge of what we're facing in our time, it's just... It's the hearts and minds of people are so hardened.

But because that's true, it doesn't keep us from our responsibility before Christ.

I'm going to read you a few thoughts here.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 19 says, See, there's only one way that man can be reconciled to God.

And anytime you hear anyone say, well, you know what, you have your way, they have their way, whatever.

Listen,

The Scriptures are our source of all truth.

Jesus Christ, according to His own Word here, is the only way.

And if you think about how God has done this, what an incredible God we serve and know.

So God was reconciling the world to Himself.

not counting their sins against them.

That's what it is to be reconciled to God.

God no longer counts your sin against you.

Even though you were guilty of sin and you deserve the payment of sin, which is death, the reality is God offered grace and mercy and this allowance of Him coming in Christ and bearing your own sin.

And the only reason you and I stand before God now and the only reason we will in the future be right before Him and enter heaven and eternal life is not because of any work that we've merited.

But it's all done by the love, grace, and mercy of God which He performed in Jesus Christ in the sacrifice of His own life in order that you and I could receive what we didn't deserve and that is what?

Grace, mercy, and righteousness.

If you're here this morning and you don't know Jesus Christ, I mean, you might be a churchgoer, you grew up here in Texas, I mean, come on, people in the South, you talk to about everybody here, they'd all say, oh yeah, I believe in Jesus.

The question is not do you believe in Jesus, the question is do you understand that you have no hope before God in your sin?

Do you even know that Christ came for a reason?

He came and died for sin.

That's why He came.

Why?

So that you, a sinful man and woman, could be only through Christ and faith in Him, be set right with God, having your sins wiped away, so that you can receive the righteousness of Jesus Christ, stand before God now,

right before him adopted into the family regenerated renewed new heart new spirit new life new destiny new identity all of this reality is true and available for all who today will put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ and we as Christians which this is what's so incredible is that God is what using you and I now

As ministers, every Christian in here, if you're a Christian, you're a minister of this gospel of reconciliation.

You are.

And you carry it around as a trust.

It's God's entrusted you with this incredible gift of salvation and the message of reconciliation for all other who can come to know him.

So all of our life is permeated with this truth of reconciliation.

And then we carry this around as we go through our day, as we go to our job.

Your first ministry, by the way, is where?

It's your home.

It's your home.

Your home's your first ministry.

And then your job and everything else that you do throughout your life, those are all wonderful things that you enjoy, but they don't ever circumnavigate the reality of this gospel message of reconciliation.

And as we think about the timing that we're in, we are really late in time.

The day of the Lord is coming.

And if you can't understand what's really going on in this world, man, we are getting there quickly.

This AI, and I've taught a little bit on this, it's going to transform this whole world.

Transform it.

It is important that we understand that all of this is part of the last days.

But I can tell you what's coming is going to be a change like we've never experienced.

Technology has changed the minds of people.

People don't think the same anymore.

They're not the same.

Things have shifted and changed.

With this AI and all that we're doing moving forward, no one's going to stop it.

It's going to continue.

And it's going to happen.

And things are going to get crazy.

But I can tell you the deception is going to ratchet up to a point where
that it's going to be so difficult to believe anything you see or hear.

Why is this important?

Because Christian, now is the time we need to be sharing this message of reconciliation with people.

And here's the beauty of this.

You and I don't save anyone.

Do you know that?

You can't.

Only Jesus Christ saves us.

There is no other name under heaven whereby men might be saved.

Only in Jesus Christ.

He alone saves.

But you've been entrusted with this message.

And you share it.

And you know what you do at that point?

You allow the Spirit of God to do His work.

All I'm obligated to do as a Christian, out of love.

You're going to notice that Paul says something.

We didn't get to it this week.

Maybe next week.

The love of God compels us.

Not only the love of God, but also knowing the righteous anger of the Lord and the judgment.

There's things that we know that are real.

And in knowing these things, the first thing that makes us do this is the fact that we've experienced this love from God, and now we have a love for people different than we once did.

But here's the challenge in our time.

The time challenge we face today is that the wickedness of our time is impacting your love and your heart.

And we're becoming so self-withdrawn, focused, that this is a great concern for these last days.

So I want to just encourage you to be praying about this and saying, Lord, show me when and how I need to go about sharing this.

And you have people you love that do not know Christ.

And here's the thing.

We can't save them, but we know the one who can.

And be praying for them.

And then when the opportunity arises, listen, somebody says, well, I don't want to cause a rift in my family.

Listen, the gospel will do that.

But I would rather cause a rift in my family than for that person to one day hear, depart from me, you worker of iniquity, I never knew you.

I'd rather that relationship be strained here on earth than that person eventually come to hear the gospel.

And even if they hear it and reject it, that will be on them.

Let me say that too.

That's the way this will work.

The gospel does two things.

It will either draw men to salvation or it will what?

It will judge them on the day of judgment.

It will do one of two things.

We're very fortunate that we've heard the gospel so much here in this country, but unfortunately, it's becoming harder and harder because people's hearts are hardened, and they're becoming so cold and indifferent to the things of God.

So I want to encourage you in this.

NOTES:

[illegible]