

The Gospel That Makes a Gospel Community, Part 3

by Michael Durham

The gospel that makes a gospel community is one that delivers us from the power of sin and its appeal to worship other idols, so we can worship Christ and become like Him.

Scripture: Ezekiel 36:25, Luke 7:36, Romans 1:16, Romans 5:10, Ephesians 2:8

Topics: "Idolatry", "Sanctification"

Description

Michael Durham preaches on the power of sin's appeal, which lies in promising better gods, leading people to idolatry by seeking care, help, and provision elsewhere instead of in Jesus. He emphasizes that the essence of all temptation is idolatry, where internal balance is sought from sources other than Christ, leading to turmoil and loss of joy. Durham explains that salvation not only delivers from sin's penalty but also from its power and the appeal to worship other idols, highlighting the need for sanctification to break idols and worship Christ alone.

Transcript

Romans 1:16-32

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against

nature. 27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

The power of sin's appeal is that it promises better gods. Now Satan knows he cannot lead us where he wants to take us if he stated it like that. Therefore, it is most unlikely that the devil will approach the Christian and say, "Hey, I want to introduce you to a better god than Jesus." Yet, whether he says that or not, the temptation is just that, a promise of someone or something that will care, help, and provide for you better than the Lord Jesus Christ.

The essence of all temptation then is idolatry. And you can know if something is an idol to you if that something or someone is not caring, helping, and providing for you as you expected. What takes place in your heart when that happens? Is there pain, anger, resentment, turmoil, and loss of joy? If so, then more than likely you have discovered an idol.

I gave an example last Sunday of a husband and wife who were experiencing strife. The wife's world was totally out of kilter on the inside; she had no sense of balance, peace, or joy because her husband was not doing for her what she expected. Her husband was an idol, even though she may not have feelings for him. How is this possible? Well, it's possible because she placed her internal well-being and peace and joy upon her husband. Her life revolved upon his approval of her, his affection for her, and his treatment of her. This is idolatry because we should only look to Christ Jesus for the internal balance of our world. Her internal balance was built on her husband and that is idolatry.

Let me briefly explain internal balance. Internal balance is inner harmony, steadiness, and tranquility, which does not mean a trouble-free life. It does not mean your outer-world, meaning circumstances, cannot be imbalanced, unsteady, and turbulent. Internal balance does mean that you don't have problems; it means that in spite of that turbulence and trouble you maintain your spiritual equilibrium. If you've ever had problems with your physical equilibrium you know what I'm talking about. The same can be true spiritually--your whole world is spinning and there's no peace on the inside. An example of inner balance is Jesus fast asleep in a boat on the sea when a dangerous storm was raging. He even rebukes the disciples for waking Him up.

Adversity will expose whether or not a Christian is building any part of his or her life on an idol. If you are experiencing any kind of discomfort, it will prove if you are worshipping Christ or an idol. Problems detect whether or not your life is built solidly on the Rock. Problems do that. In fact, the reason you're experiencing the pain, the discomfort, the turmoil on the outside is to expose what's on the inside. No other reason. It will either expose a life built on the worship of Christ or it will expose a life built on the worship of something else.

As we have said these last couple of weeks, salvation must not only deliver me from sin's penalty but also from its power and the appeal to worship other idols, because that's the power of sin's appeal--idolatry. If I

am to be saved, I cannot be saved only from the penalty of sin and the wrath of God, I also need to be saved from this heart of mine that constantly doesn't want to trust Jesus because I can't control Him. So I look to these other things, it could be concepts, not even something real, a dream, maybe the dream to get married one day. You can so put your inner balance and the hope of inner balance on a concept that's not even real and that be your idol. I need deliverance from that. This is what God has promised. Salvation is the power of God to deliver you from believing a lie about God so you can believe the truth about God. Our default is "to exchange the truth of God for a lie, and worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator." So if I am to be saved, to be a Christian, God's grace has got to work in my life to deal with this problem of idolatry. I have this problem and so do you. We all have it.

We've said there are three stages of salvation. Salvation stage one is salvation from sin's penalty, which is the wrath of God, in order to be able to know Christ. Salvation not only deals with the negative aspects of sin, but it also gives us the positive blessings of grace. God saves you from something to something. We've been saved from the wrath of God to know God. The wrath of God is to not know God at all. Beloved, if you are a true Christian, let's settle this once and for all. Your spot in heaven has already been reserved for you. That's not a question this morning. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, there is an inheritance reserved in heaven, guaranteed for you. That's stage one of salvation. You've been delivered from the tragedy of an eternity without knowing God. But you've also been saved so that you might know Him and have a vital relationship with Him, not just the knowledge of, but to know Him intimately and vibrantly.

The second stage of salvation is to deliver you from the power of sin to break the idols in your life for one distinct purpose.

Stage Two of Salvation: Deliverance From The Power of Sin

For The Purpose of the Worship of Christ

You're saved from worshipping idols so you can worship Christ.

I. Salvation's Deliverance is For the Worship of Christ

A. Salvation Must Be For the Purpose of the Worship of Christ.

Man rejected his Creator for the created. Therefore, instead of building life on the Creator, which is what worship is, man builds his life on the lesser. See, worship is not just singing songs to God, worship is the act of building your life on and around something. Whatever is the basis of life is the God or gods you worship.

"Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." (Romans 1:24- 25)

Therefore, if I am to be saved, God has to save me from this tendency to leave Him and run to the lesser. What is that? It's salvation. This stage of salvation is the process of sanctification.

Sanctification is the removal of the idols we have built. One of the promises God made in the Old Testament about saving His people was that He would deliver them from their idols.

"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols." (Ezekiel 36:25)

God's promise is to deliver us from our idols and that's not an instantaneous thing because you continually produce them. God deals with one and up springs another in its place. But over the long process of the Christian life they don't spring up as quickly as they used to nor in the quantity they used to so that by and large you become more conformed to the person of Jesus Christ. That's what sanctification is. God begins to deal with this tendency, this appeal of sin that promises a better god so you don't fall for the lie as often or frequently as you used to.

Secondly, sanctification is the growth in Christ-likeness. Think about yourself, how likely of a prospect does it seem that you can be like Jesus? Frankly, it doesn't seem very hopeful. But God has promised. This does not have anything to do with you or me trying to do our best to be like Jesus, this is Jesus' promise of grace to transform us. That's what sanctification is. We are saved by the power of God. Paul begins this section, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation." But we have already established that salvation is more than just the forgiveness of sins and the deliverance of hell, it is God dealing with you today, right this very moment. As I speak His Gospel power is aimed at the idols you're worshipping. I pray you're not worshipping any, but if you are I have good news--the Gospel, and as you worship Him you'll become more like Him.

This is what Paul shows us in a negative way, he does it backwards. You become what you worship. You become like whatever you worship.

"because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools

The first thing that happens when we turn away from God and turn to our idols is that it affects our thinking, our rational. Even believers. Sin is irrational. It never makes sense. Although at the time of temptation, it makes perfect sense to you. But the truth is sin is intellectual suicide. It does something to the reasoning powers of a man.

For example, how smart is it to believe that we are all here because of the theory of evolution? Stop and think about it. For evolution to be possible, the odds are like you standing on one side of the universe with a rifle and shooting a bullet all the way across to the other side of the universe and hitting a spot the size of a period. That's what scientists say are the odds and probability of evolution, even those who believe evolution to be true. Do you know how far it is from one side of the universe to the other? Scientists still don't know. At this moment--and they say it's expanding--it's about 150 billion light years. Now you may be a good marksman, you may even be qualified for the Olympics, but I guarantee you aren't that good. But what makes an intelligent man believe such foolishness? Here's the reason: they become like what they worship. What do they become like? Verse 23 answers:

and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things." (Romans 1:21-23)

Man is not satisfactory to meet all the desires of his body. So what does he do? He turns away to even lesser things, birds and animals and bugs. Whatever you worship, you become like it. This is what happened to man. I said something yesterday to my wife. I said, "Our nation has gone to the dogs." Then I stopped myself and said, "Oh, I should never say that again, out of respect to the canine world because

dogs act more sensible than people who are under the power of sin." But again, we become like what we worship, which means if we are to be saved then God must transform me into the likeness of Christ whom we worship. How does He do that? By worship. That doesn't make sense for some of you because you're thinking of singing a song with your hands lifted up, praising and being happy in Jesus. That's part of it, but it's much more than that. What then is worship?

II. Worship of Christ is Based Upon Faith in Who He Is

It goes back to last week's message. God reveals Christ in His beauty, power, and excellence and you're transformed by what you see with the eyes of the heart. That is an experience of worship because you believe God to be true in what He shows you about Him.

Whether you're saved or not saved, this is always the problem--exchanging a truth of God with a lie. You stop believing what's true about God so you can believe what's not true. When Satan came to Eve he said in effect, "God is not being very fair with you by keeping you from eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil because He knows the day you eat you'll be just like Him and He doesn't want any competition." The temptation was an assault on the goodness of God and Eve believed that lie about God that God wasn't good enough or sufficient enough for her so she believed the lie and stopped worshipping the Creator.

Worship of Jesus is then a reversal of that. It's to stop believing the lie and start believing the truth again. That's what worship is. Worship is an act of faith because it's based upon the truth of who God is. That's why it's so important for the believer to pursue God for God's sake. The more you understand Him, the more you know of His ways, the more you know of His person, the more you believe, the more you worship.

A. Worship Is An Act of Faith.

Worship is based upon the truth of God of who God is.

B. Sanctification is Salvation's Process From A State of Unbelief to a State of Faith.

Sanctification is the process of biblical repentance over the course of our lives. In this stage of salvation the Holy Spirit is teaching the believer a repentance that is based upon what he or she believes about God. That's all He's doing. This is not about making behavioral modifications. This is about you believing the truth about God and repenting over the lies you have believed and running back to the truth. That's what sanctification is. It's a life of repentance.

C. Faith in the Truth of God is Key.

The more sanctified I become the more of God's holiness I see. It always works this way. The more I become conformed to the likeness of Jesus, the more grace has revealed to me the beauty of Christ, His perfection, His moral excellence, and His holiness. The more I see God's holiness the more I see my unholiness. God's holiness always exposes the imperfection of your own heart so that you sometimes wonder if you'll ever make any progress. Have you not been there, where you want to throw up your hands and say, "God, this is useless, I can't be a Christian because You're so far above me and I want to be like You but I'm not." That is God's work in you!

Most of us often go around not realizing how flawed we really are, how weak we really are. The more God lets you see of Him the more it exposes your own unholiness. When that happens there is only one thing it ought to make you do: embrace the Gospel. That's the only answer. The more I see of God the more I see how unworthy I am to be in His presence, but the only reason I can be in His presence is because Jesus Christ died on the cross for me. He's already dealt with my sin. The Father has already come against that sin by coming against His Son on the cross. So believer, when you see how unholy you are it's time to worship. Now you're free to really worship.

The greater Christ and His work of redemption appears the more I worship. So sanctification is the process of seeing more and more of Jesus and at the same time a decreasing of myself. It is not about me progressing in behavior. This is a major mistake being made in many evangelical churches today. Many pastors are doing their best to get their folks to start acting like Christians, but what they don't realize is the way they're approaching it is wrong. They are merely preaching for behavior modification. If there is change it is most often only a change of the outside not the inside.

You don't have to be a Christian to change your behavior. It's one of the devil's tools to make people believe they have to change their life in order to become a Christian. Anybody can change their life if they want to badly enough. All it requires is a desire so strong that you will turn over a new leaf, you will change your behavior, you will change your outward actions or appearances or words or performance. That is not repentance and yet it is celebrated in more churches that that is what repentance is. It isn't. Not at all. Repentance is to stop believing the lie about God and believe the truth.

Repentance is a word that means to change 180 degrees. You're walking this direction and you repent, which simply means you turn around and go back the way you came. If my problem with sin as a preacher, a Christian, a believer, is a tendency to believe lies about God then repentance is turning away from the lies and believing the truth about Christ. That's what repentance is. If you will believe the truth that is in Christ, what do you end up doing? Worshipping Him. That is spiritual reformation. I cannot make myself more like Jesus and God didn't call me to do that. He called me to participate in Him, to cooperate with Him by trusting and believing in Him. I can't make myself any better than I am. And if I have improved, it is because of the grace of God.

So just because you change your behavior doesn't mean you're a Christian or that you've grown in grace. My question is, how much are you believing about God that's true and how much are you believing about God that is a lie? With time, the more I see of Jesus, the more I see my need for the cross and the greatness of Christ. The more I see my need for Jesus the more I'm going to embrace Him because I understand I cannot do this on my own. This is the basis of worship.

III. Worship of Christ Is Based On Grace and Not Shame

Worship is not only an act of faith but is based on grace.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

We read Ephesians 2:8 in light of our conversion and we leave it there. That's the worst thing you can do. You are saved--past tense--you are being saved--present tense. The way you are presently being saved is the same way you were saved: "by grace through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Salvation is of the Lord. God is saving you, God is sanctifying you, and you have to trust in God and that's

a work of His grace. Worship is not only an act of faith, it's based upon grace.

Turn your Bibles to Romans 5:10-11. Here we see that salvation is described in worship terminology. Being a Christian and saved is being explained by the Apostle Paul as an act of worship.

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Romans 5:10)

Notice this terminology, "having been reconciled we shall be saved by His life, and not only that," Paul gets to the greatest benefit of this whole great Gospel he's been proclaiming up until now.

And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. (Romans 5:11)

I've been reconciled to God, but the benefit of that reconciliation is that I can rejoice, worship, live my life based upon Him and not a lie. I can know Him and interact with Him and rejoice in that. That is salvation. That's why I plead with saved and unsaved week after week, month after month, year after year. It's not a religious act when you talk about getting saved and coming to Christ. It's not just a ritual that takes place in churches like ours, we're talking about knowing God Almighty and having a relationship with Him that continues to transform you so that you literally rejoice in Him more than anything else.

You say that's not you. You fear that you don't rejoice in Him more than anything else. Then stop with me and answer this question, have you ever so rejoiced in God, not for His benefits but for Himself because you saw how awesome He was? You saw how perfectly holy He was and how unholy you were in comparison that you could barely believe He could forgive you, but He did. You know this so clearly because you can remember the love of God, He was so loving, so gracious, so kind to be merciful to you a sinner. You felt like you were the woman caught in adultery, standing half naked before God and He took compassion on you. At that moment you knew you saw Him in a way that you'd never seen Him before. If that's never happened, then you may be a Christian in name only and you've never come to know the saving power of God. The Gospel has not had a work in you. Oh, let God open your eyes today.

God by His power can open your heart to see what I'm saying so that what I'm saying becomes real and in its reality it expresses a power that literally changes your mind about Him. His glory becomes so beautiful that you can literally rejoice in Him. He becomes the treasure, the pearl of great price that you're willing to sell everything for.

We have people today who come in and out of our services, they do all the right things, they act the right way, they say the right things, but they don't worship. Jesus is not the center and fulcrum of your life. Their world does not revolve around Him; their desires are not for Him.

Notice one of the things Paul says in this passage, did you see it? I've not made mention of it but it's there over and over again. When men rebelled and rejected God, He turned them over into their own lusts. When you don't have Jesus, the only thing you have to guide your life is the lusts of your own body and mind; you pursue one thing after another, trying to find this inner balance and it never comes. Just the moment you think it comes, it's gone like a snow in July. It's melted, evaporated and there's nothing there so you turn to another desire. But salvation is to know God and to know Him is to worship Him and rejoice in Him more than anything else. The only way that happens is by grace. God's grace is undeserved kindness giving you the power to do what you ought to do but can't by yourself.

A. Grace is the Only True Agent of Sanctification.

You can only deal with sin with grace and not the law. I have to prove this to some of you, I know. I have to repeatedly prove this to myself because I'm a perfectionist and a performance-oriented person, that's my personality, so I can sympathize with you.

Do you really believe that only grace can deal with sin, and not law or shame? Let me ask you this question, answer this only in your heart but please answer: After you have sinned, do you worship?

What do you mean do I worship after I sin? That's the stupidest question I've ever heard. You can't worship after you sin. You can't even lift your head, the conviction and remorse of God is there. What do you mean worship after you sin?

I mean exactly what I said. Those who are being sanctified by the power of God's grace believe God and the truth of God is that He is that good and gracious to have already solved the problem of that sin. Most of us have been brought up to believe that after we sin we have to sit in the penalty box for a while. We have to grovel, we've got to show how sorry we are, all in the attempt to appease God to get Him to find us again acceptable. That's not grace. That's law. That's shame. In other words, you're saying, I've got to feel my shame enough so that then God will forgive me. That's not the truth! That's a lie about God that says He's not that gracious!

"Do you mean to tell me that I can worship after I sin?"

Yes, if the worship is based on the truth of the Gospel.

Can you not say at that moment after sinning, "Thank You, Lord, You died for that sin"? If you can't, it's because you're shame and law based and not Gospel and grace based. You say if I preach and teach this to people they will take it as a motivation to sin all the more. No they won't, grace doesn't do that. What did Jesus say to the woman caught in adultery? The law demands your execution, woman. It wasn't rumored that you committed adultery, it wasn't reported that you did, you were caught in the very act. I, on the other hand, have committed no sin. I can pick up a stone and I can crush you and take your life righteously, but I won't. In fact, I don't condemn you. I forgive you. Go and sin no more. Shame and law cannot say, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." It will threaten that but it cannot say that because it cannot give you the power to go and sin no more.

The longer you wallow in your shame and guilt, the longer you are refusing to worship the Lord Jesus and remain in your idolatry. You believe the lie. What's the lie? That Jesus and the cross aren't big enough for this sin; you need another savior. So you turn to yourself and try to convince God you shouldn't have done what you did. He knows you shouldn't have done that. He told you not to do it. "Well," you say, "I need to convince Him that I'm sorry about it." You can be sorry about your sin not because you are genuinely remorseful that you sinned but because you know you stand under the consequences of your sin, of which you do not like. Therefore, you try to appease God and placate Him, making up for what you did. My dear friend, are you saying that what Jesus did on the cross was not sufficient and there's something lacking that you need to make up for? You see, you've believed a lie about Jesus Christ and His redemption and you've started worshipping you and your performance, which is an idol.

The longer you do not worship Jesus the longer you glorify sin and shame. You are magnifying the wrong god. You need to be worshipping Jesus. You are worshipping an idol.

Suppose as you were being tempted to lust--it's not just men who are tempted to lust, women can be tempted to lust as well--and in that moment you're tempted to gaze at a person with thoughts that are not holy, if you stopped and began to adore and exult in Christ, how likely would it be that you would lust in your heart for that person? Very unlikely. You most likely would not give in to the temptation. That is because grace is much more compelling and satisfying than sin.

Some oppose grace, believing when a Christian sins he or she should feel shame. Why do you believe that? Because you believe that shame is more powerful than God's grace. You believe that you've got to feel this shame as a means of atoning for what you did. You do not accept the grace of God freely. I'm talking to Christians here, people who are genuinely saved but who struggle in this area. It's because you've exchanged the truth of God for a lie and you're worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator.

When someone in the church sins, what's our normal reaction? Our normal reaction is to start them on a shame-induced program. We want to shame them back into correct fellowship. You might even say something to the effect of, "I can't believe you would do something like that." What did you just say to that person? Shame on you. You're trying to heap shame on that person. You're trying to do the work of the Holy Spirit and make that person feel so uncomfortable that they've got to repent and come back.

Or, another method of inducing shame is to ignore or shun the guilty. This is what most Christians do, we shun them and hope the shame they're feeling will bring them back. Just like the Pharisees of old, we have to cross the street in order to avoid them.

There is a place and time in the church for shunning. Jesus said when a brother or sister will not repent over their sin after many warnings and consultations then they are to be shunned. There is a point of excommunication. But we're not talking about that kind of a situation. We're talking about when the sin first happened.

Another shame-based tactic is to try to frighten the person with the consequences of their actions. "Listen to me, you've got to repent over this. You've got to get right with God because here's what's going to happen in your life," and you start giving all the consequences. I've done that. I've done it many times. I've had people come into my office, contemplating doing a certain thing and in crystal clear clarity God shows me what's going to happen, and I tell them, "This will happen and then this will happen and then this will happen," and I've never ever had anyone have the consequences of their actions stop them in their tracks and change their mind. Never. And yes, it does play out exactly like I said it would happen, but the threat of consequences doesn't work.

All consequences do is remind us of our brokenness. It reminds us of how broken we are. We already know we're broken, so what do the consequences matter? There's no power in that. The power is to believe in the grace of God that says Jesus was broken for you. There's where life is. There's where power is. Jesus was broken on our behalf. The law will tell you that the soul that sins will surely die, yes, there are consequences, but in most cases the consequences will not work, The grace of God can do so much better than guilt and shame.

I want to bring this to a conclusion by giving you an example of what we're talking about.

B. An Example of Shame vs. Grace:

In the life of Jesus there was a man, Simon a Pharisee, who invited Him for dinner at his home. It was a big deal. There were many in the house and there was Jesus sitting at Simon's table. He wasn't sitting in a chair but reclining on a pillow, that's how they ate in the Orient. Most likely, His feet were protruding behind Him. And without anybody's notice, in darted a woman. She found her way to Jesus and immediately she began to weep over His feet so profusely that the tears actually began to wash off the dust that was on His feet from His journey to this man's house. Then she took her long hair and began to wipe His feet and then she began to kiss His feet and finally she took her most costly perfume and poured it out and anointed His feet. Everybody was speechless because this was not the wife of the Pharisee, this was not the hostess, but rather a prostitute and everyone there knew it.

Simon thought like most of us think. Let's be real. Ladies, how would you like a known prostitute to do that to your husband? How would you like it if she used the tools of her trade, her hands, her lips, her hair, and begin to caress your husband's feet? I guarantee you if you had any spine about you, you'd stand between her and your man and you'd say, "You leave him alone, this is my man!" And if you didn't, I can imagine what would happen when you got back to the car after dinner. "Why did you let that woman touch you like that? Do you think she's prettier than I am?" Stop and think about it though. We understand a little bit more of Simon's reaction. It would probably be our reaction also.

Simon didn't know what to do with this Jesus; He was not conventional. I'm assuming that Simon believed He was at least a prophet, a man of God, because of the miracles He had done. And now watched the display of this prostitute's affection and thought to himself, "If this man is really a prophet He ought to know what kind of woman this is and He ought not to let her do that." Jesus, knowing what he thought, said, "Simon, I want to tell you a story. Two people owed a man a debt. One owed 500 denarii, and the other 50. (A denarius was a day's wages back then, so one owed him almost two year's wages and the other only 50 days wages.) But neither could repay the man. Neither one had the money and the wherewithal to cancel out the debt. That man took mercy on those two people and forgave both of them of their debt. Simon, which one do you think will love the man the most?" Simon said, "I think the one who owed the most money." He said, "You're right. Look at this woman; she had a great debt with Me. She owed Me more than she could pay and she knew it."

Jesus doesn't say it but it's implied in His remarks, "She worships Me because she understands who I am. She believes the truth about Me. But Simon, you don't. I've been in your house now, how long? And you've yet to bathe My feet (which was customary in that day because they didn't wear shoes like we did and they didn't have paved sidewalks. Jesus had dirty feet!), and you didn't give Me a kiss and you didn't anoint Me. But this woman has done all of that this night. She's even taken the rewards of her ill-gotten wages from prostitution and poured it out on Me and I think it is beautiful."

Can you imagine that? Jesus thinking the wages of yours and my sin is beautiful when it's poured out on Him as an act of worship? You better believe it is. Most of us don't think that way. We're like Simon the Pharisee. We're thinking, This is not godly. This is not holy. No, when you build your world on you and your performance and behavior, when you become the god of your world, it doesn't look very holy, but in the eyes of God, when you build your life on Him it looks beautiful because it believes the truth about Him that He's just that gracious and good.

Do you believe that? Do you believe it doesn't matter what you've done? It carries eternal consequences so I don't mean it doesn't matter in that regard. You've sinned against Almighty God and that's worthy of being damned forever but Jesus says to you, "I've gone to the cross. I've died in your place so that penalty

has been removed from you so that you can come and bring Me the wages of your sin and pour them out as a love offering. I'll receive it as worship."

What are you going to bring Christ? What do you have to offer Him? Nothing but your sins. That's all I still have to offer Him. Do you think preaching is going to help me with God? No. If I think it does, then it becomes iniquity that will damn me. The only thing I have to offer God is my imperfections and that's why I worship Him. I see how holy He is. I see how unholy I am. And my only hope is the cross. The more I see the cross the more I worship Him.

Therefore, our job as Gospel proclaimers--remember this is all about the church preaching the Gospel to one another--is to get others to see the truth about God and the lies about their idols and show them that Jesus is better than anything they're worshipping. That's our job. That's all you've got to do. Show them the foolishness of their idols and the worthiness of Jesus Christ and trust that the grace of God can open their eyes like He opened yours. Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/michael-durham/the-gospel-that-makes-a-gospel-community-part-3/>

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