

The Ultimate Prize of Christianity

by Michael Durham

The ultimate prize of Christianity is justification through faith, not by being a good person or keeping the law.

Duration: 48:01

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 5:1-3, Romans 5:5-6, Romans 5:9, Romans 5:11, James 2:10

Topics: "Christianity"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of truly loving God and having a genuine relationship with Him. He highlights that many people in Christianity today go through the motions of church without truly loving God. The preacher explains that our hope of fellowship with God comes through Jesus, who reveals God's heart for us. He also discusses the concept of justification by faith, emphasizing that breaking even one of God's commandments breaks the whole chain leading to heaven. The sermon concludes with the preacher emphasizing the need for spiritual rebirth and the impossibility of earning salvation through keeping the law.

Transcript

Well, the text, I pray the Lord be pleased to speak to all of us from now, is Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 5. Romans, Chapter 5, and we're going to read verses 1 through 11. Romans, Chapter 5, verses 1 through 11. I want to speak tonight on the ultimate prize of Christianity, the ultimate prize of Christianity.

Romans, Chapter 5, and we're going to begin reading verse 1. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance character, and character hope. Now, hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us.

For when we were still without strength in due time, Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were still yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Much more than having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 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. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord

Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

When I began preparing for this, I thought verse 11 would be the verse that I would just simply read as my text, but as I went through this whole passage, I saw that this passage almost reads like an infomercial. Notice what he keeps saying here. Look at verse 2. Also we have, verse 3, and not only that, much more than verse 9, verse 10, much more, and then verse 11.

And not only that, I mean you can almost imagine hearing the apostle Paul say, and wait, there's more. If you order in the next five minutes, we'll throw in free shipping. He's on a exuberant ecstasy.

He is so full of joy as he's rehearsing the benefits of being justified. In fact, that's what this whole chapter is about. It's about the benefits of being justified, the benefits of the gospel.

What happens when Christ died and was resurrected, and you put your faith in that, the Bible says you are justified. And he picks this up from chapter 4. In fact, Michaela quoted some of this in her testimony. Romans chapter 4, just the three preceding verses to our text tonight.

Not, now it was written for, not, excuse me, now it was not written for his, that is Abraham's sake alone, that it was imputed to him. But also for us, it shall be imputed to us who believe in him, who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses and was raised because of our justification. What a beautiful word, this word justification.

But it's a word, unfortunately, that has kind of been thrown out with the moth balls. And in our modern times, we have lost its power and its significance. So I think it'd be wise for a few moments to really understand this word justification.

What does it mean when a man says he's been justified? Well, I think the best way to help us define it is to give you an analogy, a hypothetical situation. Let us suppose that you are arrested on your way home tonight and you are charged for a crime that you are alleged to have committed. And finally, the date of your court appears and you're there and your defense attorney argues on your behalf.

He or she presents all of the evidence that is to persuade the jury of your innocence because you have declared yourself justified, not guilty. And so with his arguments, he persuades the jury and those 12 people come back and they render this verdict, not guilty. We find you innocent of the charges.

In other words, you are justified in your assuming and claiming to be innocent. You are justified in your maintaining your innocence. That's what it means to be justified.

It means to be declared right before God. It means that you are in his sight, innocent, completely there with not guilty of anything that you are really guilty of. It's to stand before God with his searing eyes of holy justice and he not find one reason to bring judgment against you.

That's what this word justified means. And so I want to ask this question, want to press it, press it on your conscience. I'm not your jury.

None of us will stand as your jurist and as judge. No, no. You stand before God right now in this room is the very presence of God.

Though you may not see him, do not minimize that. You see, you don't only live in a physical realm, matter and material, but all of reality is comprised of not just physical matter, but spiritual. There's a spiritual

realm and God is spirit.

And the Bible says he is reality. In fact, all the physical material reality comes from God who is spirit. He's here and before him you stand.

And I press this question. Can you maintain the justification of your innocence before a holy and omniscient God? Can you, can you sit there this evening and say that you're innocent of all charges, that the law of God and all of his commandments, you are blameless. You've never violated, you've never committed one violation of one of those commandments.

Can you sit here before God and his holy eyes who knows all about you because he's also omniscient, which means he knows all things, the very crimes of your youth. And some of you are still in your youth, all of your sins, the things you've long forgotten. Remember, he has not forgotten them.

He cannot forget them. He knows them all. Every, not only action, not every, and not only every word you've spoken, but every thought you have ever thought.

He remembers it all. He knows it. Every envy, every anger, every fit of emotion that you seem to contain and nobody knew.

He knew and he's registered at all. And can you sit there this evening and maintain your innocence before this holy omniscient God? Be careful if you say, well, I'm not a bad person. I'm not that bad.

I'm pretty good. I'm trying to do the best I can. Oh, you are setting yourself up for a disastrous conclusion.

You are saying that in the eyes of God, he ought to find you innocent. This is not the means to salvation or justification. This is not the way the Bible prescribes.

If you want to know that you stand right in the eyes of God, that's not the way to declare and hold on to your innocence. No, no. Abraham has said here before us as an example of a justified person who was Abraham.

I'll tell you who Abraham was. He was a pagan. You know what a pagan is? He's a man that likes to bow down to idols and worship them thinking that that's the way to have security for the life beyond this life.

That's what he was. He was an idolater. He bowed down before idols.

He worshiped the moon, the stars. And yet the Bible says Paul uses him as an example of justification. God took an idolater and he looked upon him and said, you're just in my sight.

I find you not guilty. How could this be when he was such a sermon and didn't even believe in God? Well, the Bible says here in this text, it's because he believed God. The Bible says this concerning Abraham.

Abraham believed God and it was accounted. It was given to him. It was put on his record that he was righteous before God just by faith.

Now this is astounding really when we stop and think about it because we don't operate on this level. We judge each other by our performances. Those of you that are in school, how does the teacher grade you on just on you showed up? We hope so sometimes wouldn't we? No, no.

You're judged by how well you perform, how much you master the material, how you learned, how are you, how are you judged by your employer? Huh? By your performance. And so it seems to me that if God was to judge us tonight by our performance, none of us would be very fair and very well tonight. We all be in trouble, but he looks at a pagan idolater and says, I find you just, you can maintain your innocence before me.

How so? Because Abraham at some point turned from his idolatry and trusted in God alone. He believed what God had told him. You see justification before God to be able to be seen as innocent before God is by faith alone.

Now why faith? Well, it's simple because there's no other way. It's the only way you can be sure that you are just before God, because now listen, if salvation comes by keeping the law, no one can ever be sure that you're right before God. How could you be sure if it's all based upon keeping the law, being religious, doing good? How do you know you've been good enough? Let me give you an example.

The Bible says no liar shall enter into heaven. No liar. How many lies does it take? Be a liar one or 10 or 20.

If someone lied to you, what would you say to them? What would you call them? A liar. And what about white lies? If you know that, that, that nice, crazy term that softens it when you give a misleading statement, knowing that it's not the full truth, is that sufficient? How do you know you've kept the commandments and you've been good enough? Or can I even turn it? How do you know you've done enough good? You see, it's not just the absence of evil. It's also doing everything God told you to do.

Have you kept the law of God? Have you loved your neighbor as yourself? Have you not returned evil for evil, but good? That means don't take revenge for yourself. How many of you loved your enemies? How many of us have said here, could sit here tonight and say, I have loved God with all my heart, all my soul, all my strength, and all my mind, because that's what God requires of you. How many of you have done that completely perfectly all the time? It's not just the absence of evil, but it's doing the positive, the good, at all times.

And if that's the requirement that God has stated for all of us, how then can you be sure you can have any hope of eternal life? How do you know when you die or if Christ returns, you can have hope of being with God forever and ever. You see, that's the problem, isn't it? And if you say to me tonight, but I'm a good person or, but I'm a Christian. My dear friend, I fear that you don't know God at all.

You say, wait a minute, but I am a Christian. Isn't that enough? No, it's not enough to justify you. Claiming to be a child of God is not the standard of justification.

It's by faith. There are many people tonight who claim to be Christians. You're looking at a person who not only started preaching when he was 15 day after my 15th birthday, but I pastored two churches.

And if I had died before December 1st, 1986, you know what would happen to me? I'd have gone right to hell. And I was a preacher. I professed that I was a Christian since I was five years old, but I had never truly met God and been forgiven of my sin and knew him as my Lord and savior.

So saying you're a Christian is not the magical words that is at the gates of heaven that will open them up to you. No, nor is it being a good person. Not at all.

Anybody who suggests to me, well, you know, I'm not that bad. I'm at least as good as he, or it may be even a lot better. My friend that tells me, you know, nothing of God, you know, nothing of his holiness, that this is a God of absolute moral purity and excellence.

There's no shadow of turning. He's faithful. He cannot do anything.

But what he says, there's not even a lie on his lips. He cannot lie. This is a holy God.

And you say you're a good person. You know what the problem is? Here's the problem. When you say things like that, you're playing God and determining what's right and what's wrong.

You have set yourself above God and said, no, no, I'm the standard. I'm the means by which I will determine right and wrong. Not you, God, not your word, not your commandments.

I'll determine what's good and what's evil for me. And my friend, did you realize that that's what started this whole problem in the first place? Right. When God made Adam and Eve, he put them in the garden, the Bible says, and he made a tree, he called it the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And he told Adam and Eve as a test, do not eat of this fruit. And when they were tempted, the whole essence of that temptation, when Satan tempted them, it was this. If you eat of that tree, you'll be like God being able to know good and evil for yourself.

In other words, you'll be able to determine what's right and what's wrong for you. And you won't have to listen to God. And they succumb to that temptation.

They wanted to determine what was right for themselves, what was wrong from themselves. And that's the problem when you say, but I'm a good person. You just told me if you had the ability, you'd take God out of the equation completely and you'd establish yourself on that very throne of heaven as the determiner of all that's good and all that's evil.

No, the problem is that all of your goodness is never going to be enough. Not all of your law keeping, not all your religion, these buildings. I sometimes think we have got to the point that we have put stock in brick and mortar and lights and pulpits and pews and all of the trappings of Christianity.

And we find ourselves going to a church on Sunday and saying, I'm a good person. I'm not doing all the bad things. And I'm a Christian.

I asked Jesus to come into my heart and there's where our confidence is. And it's not in Christ himself. All of your religion, all of your law keeping, all of the goodness you could muster is not to be able to save you because the law cannot save you, cannot justify.

It cannot declare you innocent before God. Listen to what James chapter two states. James says, this is in the Bible in the new Testament that to break any part of God's law is the same as breaking all of it.

Just one. Let's say, let's say God only had 100 commands or let's just say he had 10, 10 commandments. How about that? How convenient.

And you kept nine of them. Well, let's say you kept all 10 of them for year after year after year. And now you're an old person kind of like Brian.

You've lived all your life and you've kept all of those 10 commandments and now you're an old person. You're not going to live much longer and you break one of them. Do you know what James is saying? You missed it.

You just damned your soul because to break one of these commandments, it's like breaking them all. Now, how does that sound fair to you? Doesn't sound fair to me. Doesn't sound fair to you, but you're not looking at it from God's perspective.

You're not looking at it from righteous eyes, but adulterated impure eyes. The way you should look at all of God's law is that every one of those commandments is a link in a chain leading from earth to heaven. And if you just break one of those commandments, the whole chain's broken, isn't it? And there's no way into heaven now.

The chain's broken. And that's what James is saying. It's what the Bible says.

To violate one is to break them all. Now, here's the crux. Here's the reason why.

Because those laws are not laws to keep you from having fun or pleasure or joy. Those laws are really to tell you who God is and what he's like. He's that good.

He's this pure. He's this wonderful. He's this stable.

You can count on him. Thou shall not bear false witness, which means plain Western Kentucky, you ain't supposed to lie. You don't lie.

Tells you that God is truthful and that you can count on it. If he says it, it's done. Thou shall not steal.

What does that tell you about God's character? You don't have to take your own livelihood into your own hands to survive. God is so good. He'll provide what you need when you need it.

You don't have to resort to thievery in order to feed yourself or to get what you need in life. God is good. And I could go through all of those 10 commandments because all of those commandments tell me something about the goodness of God.

And so if you break one, you violated all of God's character. And that puts you in a position of not being innocent at all. Because are you listening? This is crucial.

The holy standard of heaven is singular, not 10 commandments, not 613 or 30 in the Old Testament law, but one. It's to be as perfect as Jesus. Are you still maintaining you're a good person tonight? Look to Jesus Christ.

If you want to know what it's going to take to be in heaven, just look at Jesus and then you'll know what's required of you. I remember witnessing to a young doctor many years ago now. You know, one of the things he told me after a few weeks of sharing with him, he says, you know, this God you tell me about, I've been in church all of my life.

Listen, he was an assistant Sunday school teacher, been in church all of his life. And after about six weeks of me just talking to him about God and the scriptures, he said to me, this God you're talking about, I've been in church all of my life and I've never heard of this God. I just told him about the God of the Bible.

I didn't have any other books, just the God of the Bible. I'm just, I just told him some of the things I've told you tonight. He had never heard of that.

And this thing you call conviction of I've never experienced it. Well, I knew he hadn't because he wasn't a Christian, even though he said he was saying I'm a Christian does not make you one. That's not the standard.

And I will never forget week after week. He would just, he would beg me and I wasn't doing this to torment him. He would say, just tell me what I got to do to become a Christian.

And I said to him, there's nothing you can do. There's nothing you can do. He gets so angry with me.

Every time I said, there's nothing you can do. Oh, come on. It's got to be something.

I've been told if I just do this and do that, I'll be all of my life. There's surely something I can do. I said, man, it's an impossibility.

And that always frustrated him after week after week. Please just tell me something. I finally said, okay, I'm going to tell you something.

Here's what you've got to do. You've got to be as perfect as Jesus Christ. And immediately he understood because that is what God requires.

Be holy as I'm holy. It's not whether you didn't take a drink this week or you didn't cuss somebody out and you helped some little old lady across the street. No, no.

It's be holy as I'm holy. How many of you qualify? Well, I sure don't. And I'm the one standing here before you all.

And if I don't make it, who's going to make it? Not that I'm the best, but I'm supposed to be an example as a preacher of the gospel. And if a preacher of the gospel can't get into the kingdom, who's going to get in when Jesus said to Nicodemus, Nicodemus, you're a great teacher, perhaps the best teacher, religious teacher, you know, the Bible better than anybody else in all of Israel. And yet you've got to be born again.

He didn't get it. What was Jesus saying? It's absolutely impossible for you to keep the law and get into the kingdom of God that way, because by the deeds of the flesh, no one shall be justified, right, innocent before God, because you can't live that holy. You can't.

It's impossible. Two boys were playing in the backyard when suddenly a loud crash interrupted their playtime and a ball soared through the air and through the plate glass of the patio door in the back of the house before dad could get out of his chair. The son who didn't throw the ball, but didn't catch it either, tattled on his brother and said, I didn't do it dead.

Mark did it. The dad looked at the patio door and he saw a jacket, jagged, broken corner where the ball entered into the house. And then the son from whose hand the ball had turned into a glass breaking projectile said, dad, don't worry about it.

Don't worry about it, dad. I only broke part of it. And that's how we often try to view justification, being innocent in the eyes of God.

I didn't do as bad as it could have been, as I could have. No friends, the Bible says it's by faith. Now, what does that word mean? What does it mean to have faith in God? I'm telling you, it's not what you think it is.

It's not believing that God exists. Even the devil believes that you got to do a little bit better than that. If you want to get into heaven, because the devil believes that God exists.

No, no. It means to put your confidence in God, that you are willing to commit yourself to him, commit everything about your life to him, even your goodness, as well as your badness. And the Bible says, when you do that, you're justified.

God looks at you as as innocent as the pure white driven snow, as innocent as a newborn baby. He sees you as innocent as he's only begotten son just before God. And then Paul goes into here the fifth chapter and he begins to tell us what the benefits are.

Look at verse one, peace with God, to be at peace with God. How many of you would be honest and testify? I know down deep there's something between me and God's just not right. I know that we're not on the best of terms.

I can sense that there's something like sandpaper between God and I. There's a distance, there's a gulf. And the more I try to bridge the gulf between God and I, it seems the farther apart we grow. Yes, because you have declared war on God by trying to be your own God, calling the shots, trusting you, not trusting God.

That is a declaration of war on God. It's not that God wants to be at war with you. You declared the war against God when you've rejected Jesus Christ as the only way in faith in him.

But the moment you trust in his son, peace with God, the turmoil is over. That's great. But what I want you to notice is that there's something more here.

The truth of Christianity is about more than just the knowledge of your sins gone or forgiven. For the majority of us, if you've been to church at least once in your life, that's probably what you took from that church service. That to be a Christian means your sins are forgiven.

My dear friends, that is such a inadequate explanation of the Christian life. You know why a lot of people don't want to even want to try Christianity because what they've seen is not the real thing. What they've been told is not the truth.

There's so much more to Christianity than knowing that your sins are forgiven. What is it? Well, not only is there peace with God, but he says in verse two, you have access into a grace that you stand. You are shrouded, kept in the loving, kind activity of God, where he is merciful to those who believe in him.

He goes on and he keeps going on and he goes on and he goes on until we get to verse 11. And in verse 11, we find the greatest benefit of the Christian life, the ultimate prize. Let's look at verse 11 again.

And not only that after much more and also this and also that he says, and not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We rejoice in God. You see the truth about Christianity is really about knowing God personally and to know him.

Are you listening to know him is to love him. If you ever meet him, your heart will be captured. Your heart will fall for him immediately.

Why? Because that's how beautiful he is. And when your heart is able to see God for who he is, my dear friend, he captures your heart by his beauty and by his love. And Paul is saying the greatest benefit of being a Christian is not that your sins are forgiven, although that's wonderful.

It's not that you know that you can go through great tribulation and it's going to build character in your life. And it's not just that he loved you and died for you while you were a sinner. But I'm telling you the greatest benefit is that you can know him and you can rejoice.

The word rejoice is literally a word that means to brag. You can boast that you know God. And in the end, the true Christian heart longs for not any of God's good gifts, but for God himself.

There it is different. That's the dividing line that puts you either on God's side or the enemy side, the devil side. Do you love God for himself? To see him and know him more intimately, intimately to be in his present presence is the soul's greatest delight.

As I listened to the testimonies of these two people and I heard about their life before Christ, I don't know if you were captured by the same thing I was captured and amazed by the confusion, the panic, the fear, the perversions. Both of these people were telling you something. What are they telling you? They were telling you that they're just like you, just like me.

We were made with a soul and a heart that wants to experience pleasure and delight and joy and beauty. Why do people go to art museums? I've never quite figured that out. Just walk around and just look at these paintings.

Some of them, I don't even know what they do. They don't look like anything. I mean, a chimpanzee with a pan, a can of paint could do something like that.

But they're mesmerized because in their understanding of beauty, that's beautiful. There's something in the human heart that wants beauty, that longs for happiness and pleasure. And so what do we do? We try to find it in the lesser things of life.

If these two people could answer my question, I'm not going to put them on the spot, but I know what their answer, and they can feel free to answer. After all of the experiences of pleasure that the world has said, here is, you do this and it will satisfy you. You do this and it will send you up.

It will give you a glorious high and exhilaration and ecstasy. Here's beauty. Here's loveliness.

Here's joy. If I asked you of all those things that the world promised was joy and pleasure and beauty and loveliness, how do they compare to Jesus? They're shaking their heads. They don't compare.

They don't compare. I've not always been a preacher. When I realized I wasn't a Christian, I went into the world just like these two people testified.

I did about everything that I could do because the church never made me happy. I was never satisfied by the trappings of Christianity. The superficial outer surface that we see.

And so I did everything that you can imagine. But I'm telling you, when I'm alone with my God, and when he's there and I know he's there, there is a joy and a pleasure that supersedes anything I've felt in the physical body. It transcends the physical body and the mind and enters into a place we call the spirit, but we don't even know how to define it.

We just know that's what the Bible calls it. And from that center, my whole life feels like there's a sun bursting in rays of glory and joy and love and pleasure. I can't even contain myself talking about it.

And that's not the half of the joy. I love this woman here. I've been with her for 37 years.

I don't look that old. She robbed the cradle. And we are best friends.

I call her my soul's twin. This woman knows how to touch my soul and pleasure and give me joy, but she cannot hold a candle to my Jesus. And that's what Paul said in this 11th verse.

The greatest benefit of the gospel and being just before God is that you can know God himself and rejoice, boast in him, brag. There's nothing better. Like I'm doing right now.

I'm bragging on Jesus. That's all preaching should be. Bragging on Jesus.

Listen to me, Christian. That's all witnessing should be evangelism. It's just bragging on Jesus.

He's worth it. One thing I have asked of the Lord that while I seek after that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. The same Psalms just said in thy presence, there is fullness of joy in thy right hand.

There are pleasures forevermore. Listen, this is the heart of Christianity. Otherwise, you have folks like a man who called me several years ago after I preached in his church.

He told me that my preaching disturbed him and he knew he wasn't a Christian after all, as he had claimed. He said he knew he could not love God because worship to him was, are you listening? Going to church, singing a few hymns and listening to a sermon. That's worship.

That was love to God. Love and worship becomes duty rather than an expression of the glory of the God that fills the heart with awe and joy. And when you strip love and awe and joy from Christianity, you no longer have worship.

You have formalism, you have religion and you have death. It's not the exercise of duty. That's what God's looking for.

He said, but isn't that, isn't that honorable? Isn't that the moral thing to do what God wants me to do? But you can't do it. You can't be like Jesus. That's not the way to be declared innocent or right in his eyes.

There's no heart in it. If I'm not moved by a spontaneous affection for my wife as a person, then my duties of affection do not honor her. In fact, they belittle her.

Edward Carnell said it this way, quote, listen, suppose a husband asks his wife if he must kiss her good night. Her answer is you must, but not that kind of must. What she means is this.

Unless a spontaneous affection for my person motivates you, your overtures are stripped of all moral value. They mean nothing. They dishonor me.

How can you say you love God if you've stripped your heart of any affection, any joy, any, all of him? How can you sit there tonight with a straight face and an honest heart and say you love him? If you're just trying to conform to his rules, so it'll go easy on you on judgment day. And yet that's where most people are in Christianity today, sitting in our churches. Yes.

Our duty without joy and glory becomes a poor masquerade for loving God. And it doesn't conceal the fact that we really don't love him. How can I love God and be able to joy in him? This God of the universe, this creator of all things who gives you life and breath tonight, who causes you to have good things in this life? Yes.

He causes the sun to shine on the good and the evil, the rain to fall on the just and the unjust. How can you look at this God and know you have any hope of fellowship with the creator? He says there in verse 11, how, and not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Our boast and our joy in God is through Jesus because Jesus is the revelation of God and his heart for you.

And you'll never have Michaela or Tanner's experience until you see Jesus and his heart for you. You can go to church. You can listen to preachers.

You can sing hymns. You can watch your P's and Q's and perform admirably in religion, in society, in politics, in social sciences. You can be a model citizen, but my dear friend, until you see Jesus and his love for you, your heart is still at war with God.

He ends this verse and says, through whom we've now received the reconciliation. You see, the great joy tonight is that through Jesus Christ, I can come into God's presence. Are you listening? I'm pleading with someone right now.

I really, really am. This is, if you knew me, I would, I would get on my knees right now for you. I'd beg you to hear me.

I'd beg you to cry out to God. And if I thought that would make the difference. I'm begging you to understand that between you and God, there's a gulf and you can't cross it.

But Jesus came looking like us, made a man born under the law, born of a woman. And in the fullness of time, he came and he bridged the gap by dying for us, by so identifying himself with you, that he took your sins. He took your crimes, your lies, your modicum of goodness, all the things you're hoping in, that he finds us filthy in his nostrils.

And he received it to himself and he was crushed by almighty God. God crushed his son on that cross. God took his only son, the reflection of his own self, and he treated him as the dirty, rotten scoundrel that you are and I am.

He pulverized him on Calvary. He literally rejected his son and cursed him because that's the result of sin and this war we have with God. It's to be cursed.

And what's the curse? Do you know what the curse is? Not having a mark on you. The curse is to be alienated from him. And at that moment on the cross, God rejects his son so that Tanner and Michaela could be reconciled to God.

Because three days later, he was raised for our justification. Michaela is a good theologian. She got it right.

His resurrection is God saying, my son, he did it. He did it. He did it well.

He did it perfectly. He obeyed me. He suffered my wrath and he didn't sin in any of it.

Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Up from the grave you arose. And he arose and that was Jesus's vindication that he had done all that God had commended him on your behalf so that God, if you'll just, if you will just trust in Jesus, he's not asking you to climb some mountain.

He's not asking for some great religious feat. He's not even asking you to go to church. He's asking you to put your all, everything about your life on Jesus's back and say, I believe you're sufficient.

And you'll do that. If you see what I've seen, if you've seen what Tanner's seen, Michaela's seen, you'll do that. Because you will find out that your war with God's not profitable.

In the end, you won't win. Who are you to strive against God? Who are you to raise your hands against the omnipotent, all powerful hand of God, who by the breath of his words, you could become nothing today. You can overcome God.

Not all the armies of the earth can take and conquer him. No, he stands above it all. Conqueror, overcomer, victor.

And if you see his beauty tonight, if you can rejoice in God through Jesus Christ, if you can say, there's my hope, my joy, my pleasure, my all and all. I love that hymn. It says, he demands my life, my all, my soul, my life, my all.

Why? Because he's worth it. And I can only pray that God show you that tonight. You want to be right before God? You want to be able to be able to say to God, I am innocent because of what Jesus has done.

Then quit trying, quit claiming what you have done or haven't done and claim what he has done on your behalf. Believe him, cling to him, run to him. Do not let this night strike midnight before you have seen him and his beauty and you've yielded and ceased your combat against him.

We've been reconciled. Are you still at war with God? Lay down your weapon, sir. Lay it down.

Draw an armistice, see the cross and see there's peace with God tonight and God will receive you. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Could you pray with me? Oh, father, thank you.

I just want to thank you for what you've given to us in your son Jesus Christ. Life now has meaning, destiny, purpose. I thank you, Father, that we can boast you through your son, that you are our greatest joy.

And if there's Christians here tonight, Lord, that has lost that joy, which is very possible. We get deceived again, and we start pursuing lesser joys and pleasures. Lord, I pray that my brothers and sisters would see you again.

They'd hear how great you are. They've heard how beautiful, lovely, and they remember. They don't need to be told.

They just need to remember. For that person or person's Lord that's never seen, only you can reveal yourself to them. And I pray you do that right now.

Oh Lord, please have pity and mercy, because that's the only way Tanner and Michaela was saved. The only way I've been saved. It's the only way anybody's ever been saved, from Abraham to the Apostle Paul to the very last one before you return.

It's because you took mercy and pity, and you showed them the beauty of Christ. Open the eyes of people to see Jesus. And we ask it in your name, and for his sake.

Amen.

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