

Regeneration Conference Part 2

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer emphasizes the necessity of understanding sin, regeneration, and justification in the believer's life to foster true devotion to Christ.

Duration: 50:55

Scripture: Romans 3:19, Romans 3:23

Topics: "Conference"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that God sees his people as beautiful and without blemish. He refers to the book of Song of Solomon to illustrate this point. The preacher then moves on to Romans 3:23, highlighting that all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. He emphasizes that our salvation is not based on our own performance, but on the performance of Jesus Christ. The preacher concludes by emphasizing the humbling and freeing nature of God's love and justification.

Transcript

Let's open up our Bibles to Romans 3. There have only been a few times. In instances where I was preaching, where I thought to myself. If I could only catch the music director's eye, I would tell him to just keep going.

I really appreciate the sermons that we just heard. Both Ephesians and Colossians, when Paul talks about the spiritual life and he speaks about admonishing, encouraging, teaching one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, you must understand that one of the ways in which you tell whether or not worship is true is, is the theology correct? Is it didactic? Is it teaching you truth about God? We heard enough truth in the worship today to have us all simply fasting in silence for a week or so. We did, and it was a great blessing to me.

I can always tell when the worship is true, when a sermon is true, because this is what it does. It has this unique ability to point out my failure without driving me to condemnation. It causes me to see where I'm lacking, where I'm wrong, maybe the coldness of my heart, but it doesn't leave me there.

No sooner have I come to that realization than it pushes me beyond that to I just want to be more. I just want to be more devoted, not driven by guilt, not driven by fear, but by just being driven by the beauty of Christ. And I saw that and I just it's just another thing about worship.

And I know I'm not here to teach on worship, but whenever I do teach on worship. And teach worship people, leaders, whatever you call them, this is a good way to look at directing worship in a church. Just go to Los Angeles or New York or Lima, Peru or any large city in the world with just thousands of people in the street, walk down the sidewalk, stop and look up.

And keep looking up, just look up. And after a while, people will be walking by you and they'll be looking at you and they'll start, they'll look at you and look up. And pretty soon you'll have 20 people around you looking at you and looking up and trying to look at what you're looking at.

That's how you direct worship. That people look at you only long enough to try to find out what you're looking at. What has you so mesmerized? And I saw that today.

I saw that today. And it was it was it was a great, great blessing, great blessing. Thank you so much.

I so needed that. Wow. Let's look at Romans three.

I have about 45 minutes for me. That's usually an introduction. That's one of the bad things about spending most of your time preaching overseas, if you don't preach three hours, you don't even get paid.

Americans, what will you do with them? Romans three, verse 23, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. As a preacher, it is my task to go to unregenerate men, men who have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Men who do not know Christ.

And without animosity, without arrogance, but sincerely, boldly and truthfully to tell them. And I'm not going to say this in beautiful, flowering terms, but to tell them how vile they are. To explain to them how holy God is, so that in the light of that holiness, they will see their wretched state.

That is my task as a preacher, and I have a biblical foundation for that. Sometimes when I say that, someone will say, well, Paul said he didn't have a ministry of condemnation. And I say, you're misinterpreting Paul, because the closest thing we have to a systematic theology in the entire New Testament is the book of Romans.

And I found it very interesting that he spends basically the first three chapters with one purpose in mind. If you look at verse 19 of chapter three, now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God. That's what Paul is seeking to do.

He's using every power of his intellect carried by the Holy Spirit, drawing, as we see in verses 10 through 18, from some of the most explicit texts in the Old Testament regarding the sins of man. And this is what Paul is doing. He is laboring to condemn the whole world.

Now, why? Because man is a creature given to self and the worship of self. He loves to boast in pulling himself up by his own bootstraps. So talk about the great things.

He wants to literally take the throne by making God his debtor. God owes me because I have a certain virtue, a certain merit. I've done this or that.

Therefore, God should, must accept me. To coerce and manipulate deity is one of the greatest marks of a sinful man, and therefore we come against that with the scriptures and we labor with all our might, with illustration, with story, whatever it takes to show men how vile they are. Had a reporter come to me years

ago and he was so angry and he said, why are you always talking about sin? And I said, well, because I want you to love God.

And he said, that's preposterous. I said, have you never read? She loved much because she was forgiven much. I said, sir, you do not love much because you don't know how much you've been forgiven because no one ever told you how vile you actually are.

Now, that's my job, and I walk into a group of lost people, walk into possibly a typical kind of evangelical church in America where so many people believe that they are converted when they are not converted. But now when I come to the people of God, pastorally, my greatest task is not to point out their sin. You see, you get someone truly converted, someone truly becomes born again, one of the marks of their life is they will see their sin.

And you do not have to walk around pointing it out to them every five minutes. The reason why that's done pastorally from the pulpit is because many times the pastors are preaching to unconverted people. But when someone is truly converted, you do not have to get up in the pulpit day after day, counseling session after counseling session, telling this person how vile they are.

How sinful they are. As a matter of fact, you better be very careful with that kind of language around a true believer. As I said last night, I'll have sincere believers come up to me and say, well, Brother Paul, you know, I've just got a wretched, God-hating old heart.

And I go, well, what exactly did God do to you when He took out your heart of stone and gave you a heart of flesh? And I'll talk to them, I'll say, well, Brother, I know you learned that language, but let me ask you a question, do you hate God? No, I don't hate God. Then why are you saying you have a God-hating heart? Do you love wickedness? No, Brother Paul, I don't. When I fall into it, I hate it.

Then why are you saying you're not changed? You see, it is very important for the lost man to understand who he is, but I want you to know something else. It's very important for the saved person to understand who they are. Because I've got news for you.

Well, let me put it in an illustration. Let's say I come to town and I'm the pastor of, this is a church, and I'm the pastor of this church, of all of you. And soon as I arrive my first day, you come to me and say, well, there's this guy named Bob.

He hasn't been a member, he's been a member of the church for years, but he hasn't been in our church for five years. Pastor, you need to go visit him. He's a wayward sheep.

And so I go visit Bob. And Bob invites me into his house. Come on in, Pastor.

He gives me some tea. He's very cordial with me. And I say, Bob, you haven't been in church in five years.

He said, you know, Pastor, you're right. And it's wrong. I just haven't been doing it.

You know, sometimes it just bores me to tears. But you're right, Pastor. I need to go to church.

I need to do the right thing. And I say, Bob, they've been telling me that you've been out drinking and getting drunk publicly. You're right, Pastor.

I just love that liquor. I just love just carousing. I love my friends and stuff.

But you're right. I need to stop doing that and I need to get myself back into church. And then I say, Bob, I hear you've been running around on your wife.

He goes, yes, I have. He goes, I just, you know, I just love women, Pastor. But you're right.

I need to do the right thing. I need to get my family in order and I need to come to church. And I'll be there on Sunday.

So Sunday, I walk in and there's Bob and the church is all so happy. A wayward sheep has come home. No, he hasn't.

A goat's just walked in the church. Bob's not saved. And I'll tell you why Bob's not saved.

Because this is his idea of Christianity. Bob is saying, you're right, Pastor. I'm going to stop doing all the wicked things I love.

And I'm going to start doing all the righteous things I hate in order to save myself. My friends, remember the verse, if any man be in Christ, he's a new creation. That's not a new creation.

If that's your idea of Christianity, you need to talk to me. Regeneration, which I probably won't have time to deal with during this conference. But regeneration, my friend, is a supernatural work of God that, in my opinion, far exceeds the creation of the universe.

The universe was created ex nihilo, out of nothing. But for God to take a corrupt and vile, radically depraved human being and transform them into a son of light. Salvation is a change.

Ontological. You become a new being, a new creature. It doesn't mean that the believer no longer struggles against sin and things like that.

Because we do. But our desires are different. Our passions are different.

And when we go wayward, we become nauseous about our waywardness. Maybe we'll have time to talk about that in a little while. Right now, I want us to look at verse 23.

It says, "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Now, verse 24, being justified. Now he's talking about believers being justified. Now, from my dear friend and mentor, Charles Leiter, who's been an influence in my life for only the Lord knows how many years.

He came to me one time when I was younger and he said, Paul, men only have two problems. Men only have two problems. One is the condemnation of sin.

The other is the power of sin. And God deals with both of them through the cross of Calvary. And through the work of the Spirit of God.

I said, well, what do you mean? He goes, let's deal first of all with the condemnation of sin. Man is condemned. Because he is already guilty.

Because he has broken God's law. He has offended God's person. And even if man throws up the white flag of surrender, that doesn't solve the problem.

Because God's still got his gun on him. You see, there's a problem of justice. We're going to talk about that tonight.

We're going to talk about the cross tonight. The problem of justice is this. You have violated God's law.

So even if you repent of it, you're still guilty. In order for you to be saved, you must be justified. You must be justified.

Now, we're going to talk about how that was made possible through the cross of Christ. But right now, we're just going to talk about justification. Because you need to understand this.

Sometimes, you know, Americans like cliches. So they say justified, just as if I'd never sinned. And that kind of thing.

Well, no, that's not what it means. Let's look at two ideas of justification at this moment. First of all, let's look at the wrong idea.

One idea is that the moment you believe in Christ, you're somehow infused with righteousness. Or you're infused with a power that enables you to live a righteous life and gain acceptance before God. I don't know who comes up with these things.

But not only are they against scripture, they're totally an illusion. They're against reality. Anybody who thinks about their own Christian life knows that if they have been infused with some sort of power that makes them righteous, they're still not righteous enough.

We fail. Now, another thing that you need to understand about righteousness and about justification is this. In order for you to be with God, to be right with God in any fashion, you have to be perfect.

I love when someone asks me on a plane, what do I have to do to go to heaven? And I'll just look at them. I usually have my Bible open. I'll just look at them and I'll go, Oh, that's easy.

You just have to be morally perfect from the moment of your birth to the moment of your death. And then I just go back reading. And I've had guys go, Hey, hold it.

No, no, no, no. What? Oh, you didn't understand me? In order to go to heaven, you have to be an absolutely morally perfect creature from the moment of birth when you were a baby to the day you die. No flaws.

Have a nice day. And then you'll see the person sitting over there and they're like, you know, they're looking out the window for a while. They're doing this.

They look at me. And I'm making faces. And finally they... And I go, That's not possible.

I go, Then you've got a big problem, don't you? You see, you've got to understand. He just doesn't make you nice or some sort of good or kind of acceptable. What must you be? You must be absolutely morally perfect.

And not only does that mean you must not have sin, but it must mean that you must have this great store of righteousness. You must be righteous. Not just neutral.

Not just, I didn't do anything bad. But every moment of my life, I did nothing but righteousness. I did the works of righteousness.

See, sometimes I've run into these people, a few of them are street preachers that believe in sinless perfection. And I mean, they're amazing fellas. I mean, because they've completely redefined what sin is.

But they'll say that they're perfect. They haven't sinned in 14 years, 13 years, things like that. Here's a good way to get them.

Just go, because either way, they're either going to have to acknowledge they're a sinner or they're a blasphemer, one of the two. I just go, what is the greatest sin? Sometimes people say, well, I don't know. I say, well, maybe it's breaking the greatest commandment.

What's the greatest commandment? To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Then I ask them, in these last 14 years of sinless perfection, are you willing to tell me that every moment, every conscious moment of those 14 years, you loved God in a way that God deserves? That you gave God in love everything that God as God deserves? And if they say yes, they've blasphemed. You see, we haven't loved God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

We haven't done everything for the glory of God. Not only have we sinned, and do we continue to sin, but also we lack in works of righteousness. Who may ascend to the hill of the Lord? He who has clean hands, a pure heart, not lifted up his soul to falsehood.

With his lips, there's no deceit. You see, to be with God, you've got to be more than forgiven. You've got to actually be righteous.

A perfectly righteous being. If you just understand that doctrine right there, that eliminates any idea of a right standing with God by means of works. Because one failure, you are disqualified.

If you've kept most of the law, that's not good enough. It's all of it. All the time.

Perpetuously. Always. Always.

Ongoing. Do you see that? Now, what does it mean for God to justify us? Justification is a legal term. This is very, very important.

We use the word legal or forensic. Okay? It's a legal term. What it means is this.

God looks down at the sinner. The moment that sinner has believed in Jesus Christ, truly believed unto salvation, God legally declares that sinner to be right with Him. Do you see that? Now, that brings us up to a very important thing with regard to a study of religions.

Most religions in the world, if you really get down to it, they're all about how can someone be right with God. And that's an amazing thing. That tells us that Romans chapter 1 is really true.

That God has written His law on the hearts of men, and men know they're guilty. So even though they may not accept the God of the Scriptures, maybe they don't even really accept a personal idea of a God, they still have this idea that they're wrong. Now, herein lies the difference between Christianity and every other religion.

Every other religion is, I'm going to heaven because I did this. I'm going to heaven because of this store of virtue or merit in my life. Christianity is the only one that says no to that.

I am not right with God by my virtue and merit. I am right with God by the virtue and the merit of another Jesus Christ my Lord. You see, coming to Christ is first of all an emptying.

And that's one of the reasons why we preach about sin, because it is an emptying of everything. I have nothing. Many of you love to sing that song, Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to the cross I cling.

But you don't really understand what you're saying. I mean, you can't even boast in your repentance. You can't even boast in your faith.

There is a sense in which we are saved by faith, but there's another sense in which your faith does not save you. Do you realize that? For example, as a friend of mine always says, if this platform just suddenly disappeared and I began to fall into an abyss, I wouldn't cry out, Oh my faith, save me. I wouldn't, would I? I would cry out, Oh my Lord, save me.

So we don't even boast in some merit of repentance or faith. It is all of Him. And that's so important for you to understand, because sometimes if you're a sincere believer, you're going to look at your ongoing repentance and realize it's not worth talking about.

So how can I be saved? Or you're going to look at your faith, and you're going to say, I don't, let me share with you something. And you can take this and put it on the YouTube and allow people to destroy me with it, I don't care. But sometimes I go to the mission field, whether I'm in Asia or India, Nepal, Indonesia, and I see the lostness of humanity.

And I'll be honest with you, I struggle with my faith, even my faith. But you know what always heals me? Going back to asking one question. Who was Jesus of Nazareth? So see, even guys who get up and preach sometimes, you know, our faith isn't worth talking about.

But see, our justification is all of what God did for us. And never at all what we do for God. If you grow in your maturity, eventually this is what's going to happen.

If you grow in your maturity of understanding the Gospel, if someone comes up to you and says, man, if anybody's going to heaven, you are. I mean, you are. You're dedicated to Christ.

You're this, you're that. If you're truly growing in your maturity and your understanding of the Gospel, you know what your response is going to be? You're going to throw up. No, I'm serious.

You're going to become nauseous, and you're going to cry out, away from me, away from me. Unto Him and unto Him alone be the glory. And then you'll do a diatribe of explaining how wicked you are.

Just so that you make sure that not one ounce of glory is removed from the cross work from Christ. It's all Him. Now, but please understand this.

You don't know what I'm saying. If it's all Him, it's none of you. And that's not to demean you.

That's to make you strong. Why? If it has nothing to do with me and everything to do with Him, I'm always safe because He's always righteous and strong. I'm always there.

I'm always loved. There is nothing that can be done against me. There's nothing I can even do to myself.

It's Him. Now, as Paul had this problem, you start teaching that to people, and they're just going to live in sin. No wicked, carnal church people, when they hear that, are going to live in sin.

But genuine Christians are going to hear that. And just like I said about the worship this morning, they're just going to want to be more. They're just going to want to be more.

Now, we have been saved by the power of the cross. We have been pardoned. Our pardon became possible by His death.

But you need to understand that Christ did not just die for you. He lived for you. And you say, well, yes, I understand, Brother Paul, He had to rise again from the dead.

Yes, He had to rise again from the dead, but that's not what I'm talking about. Christ not only died for you on the cross, He lived a perfect life for you on this earth. And this is what I want you to see more than anything.

The moment you believe in Christ, you're truly converted, you are clothed in His righteous life. You are dressed in His righteous deeds. Do you remember the Father? He always looked down at the Son and He always said, there was never an instance when He did not say, did not think it, this is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

Do you see that? You have been dressed in that life. So now the Father always looks at you and says, this is My beloved Son, this is My beloved Daughter in whom I am well pleased. You say, well, does He not see my sin? He does see your sin.

He does not take it into account. If He took one sin into account, after a hundred years of living a life of Christianity, being more devoted than anyone else, if He took one sin into account, you'd still go to hell. He takes no sin into account.

He declares you righteous and He treats you as righteous based upon the cross of Christ. And again, you say, well, if people believe that, then they're just going to sin. No, lost people, religious lost people who hate God but come to church because they have to, they will sin.

They will use it as a loophole. But if your heart has truly been regenerated, if you truly love God, if you're truly a child of God, you will listen to this and go, I'm free. But I'm not going to use my freedom for the flesh.

I want to be more. You know, when you're younger it seems that your heart will often break because things are pointed out to you that are so wrong in your life. That will always happen.

But it seems as you get older, your heart breaks because you understand something new about what He's done for you. You understand something new about Him. That the moment you believed in Christ, you were pardoned of every sin past, present, and future.

That the moment you believed in Christ, God declared you to be right with Him and He began to treat you as someone right with Him. That is to say, He treats you as His only begotten Son. That's amazing.

Do you remember Joseph? His father gave him a multi-colored coat which it doesn't seem he wanted to share with his brothers. But we have one who is greater than Joseph, who clothes all his brothers in his coat of infinite righteousness. Infinite righteousness.

As you begin to walk in the Christian life, you begin to see something of an interchange that goes on because of this doctrine. I'll give you an example. This young man wrote me a few years ago going into seminary.

And he was a young man devoted. The girl he was courting, she was a very, very godly girl. Just a splendid couple in Christ.

And he wrote me and he said, you know, Brother Paul, I'm so ignorant of God and I'm so wicked and I'm so unrighteous and I do this and that. And all these things he wrote. He signed it and he sent me an email.

So I wrote him back. I said, dear brother, you are far more ignorant and far more ungodly than you now know. Love, Paul.

I have the gift of mercy. And so he calls me up on the phone and he goes, thanks? And I said, brother, in many ways you've advanced beyond me even though you're a young man. I said, in many ways you're holier than I am.

I said, but I'm happier than you are. And he said, how could that be? I said, I've walked a lot longer than you have. Which means I have so many more failures.

I have seen myself fail so many times that it has drained me of ever attempting to look for some hope or joy in myself or my performance. I've given up. And I only look to Christ.

I said, you get up in the morning and if you have a quiet time for eight hours and you memorize the book of Leviticus that morning and you go out and you witness to everybody and you pray all night and sleep an hour, I said, you feel pretty good about yourself. He said, but you can't sustain that very long. I know.

I try. And I said, when I get up in the morning and I have my time with the Lord and I witness and I seem to be walking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, I said, I'm so happy about that. I said, but the next morning when I get up and things just don't go so apostolic in my life, I'm unmoved.

My security isn't wavered. My joy is not even gone. You see, I know again, there's so much I want to say to you and there's so little time, but let me give you a difference between the voice of God and the voice of the devil in your life.

When God speaks to His people and through the prophets, in the books of the prophets, He says some things that are so hard I can't even mention them in mixed company. He says some very hard things to His people, but here's something He never does. He never ends without calling them back to Him and affirming His love for them.

And that's the way you discern the voice of God over the voice of the devil. You see, when I have one of those bad days or when you have one of those bad days, the voice you most often hear is, you failed. And how dare you think about opening up your Bible and trying to read it? How dare you think about praying? How dare you even ask for forgiveness? Now go over there and sit in the penalty box for 15 days and if you do good, you can come back.

You see, if you sin and the voice drives you, takes that sin to drive you away from God and away from grace and away from mercy, it's not God. But if you sin, and it beckons you to come to Him. I hate sin and I hate my own sin.

And don't misinterpret me here. But there is a sense that even in our weakness and sin, it serves to glorify God. You see, when I look at my life in the mirror of God's Word and I see where I've failed, whether generally or specifically in a deed during that day, in Christ, it doesn't cause me to go sit in the penalty box.

It causes me to run to Him even closer. It causes me to hold on even tighter, to pray to Him more, to need Him more. And that's how the believer gets the victory.

You don't get the victory out of a sinless life. You get the victory that everything, even your devotion drives you to Christ and your lack of devotion drives you to Christ. I'm here today, Lord, because my heart is aflame for You and I'm so devoted.

I'm here, Lord, because my heart is a stone and I need You. Do you see? It'll really change the way you look at things. Now those of you who are believers will understand this and not use it as a loophole for sin, those of you who are believers.

Those of you who are just religious, you'll rejoice in this because it will give you freedom to run wild in your flesh and your condemnation is just. Don't do that. Don't do that.

But I want you believers to know this. I want you to know that you are loved. As I said last night, the hardest, most difficult thing you're ever going to have to do is believe God that He loves you as much as He says He does and He loves you in the way that He says He does.

You see, we're always hearing, especially in music and in preaching and poetry, the big sighs of God's love. You know, God loved us so much, but that's not good language left by itself. You see, the issue is not that just God loved you a whole bunch.

It's the quality or nature of His love. See, when you think God loves a lot, maybe you're thinking God loves like you, He just does it more. No, it's a different quality of love, a different kind of love.

You see, the holiness of God, when you get down to it, is basically... Well, I ask people sometimes, I go, Is God holy? Yes. What does that mean? Well, God's without sin. Well, what does it mean that God's righteous? Well, it means He's without sin.

Well, which is it? Holiness means primarily... Primarily, it's not referring to God with regard to sin. Holiness primarily is referring to the uniqueness or separateness of God. No one is like God.

Like R.C. Sproul says, you know, What's closer to God? A seraphim standing in the presence of God or a worm bacteria crawling around in the toilet? Which one's more like God? The answer is neither. God's not like us or like angels, just better. It's a completely distinct thing.

It's so far beyond us. That's why God is holy in His essence, in His person. No one is like Him.

Triune and one and all these things. God is holy in His love. What does that mean? No one loves like God.

No one has that quality of love. No one has that kind of love. No one has that magnitude of love.

You see, we're talking about someone not like you. And so if you look at your best day in loving someone else and being unconditional in your love towards someone else, on your best day, that's not the love of God. His love goes so far beyond that.

And it's all rolled up in Him and in His Son. It is all rolled up in Him, His Son, and His Son's performance. Not in you and your performance.

Do you realize there's never been one moment in any moment of your life that you loved the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? Not one moment? You don't want this to be 99% God and 1% you. This is all God. And you say that's very humbling.

It's humbling, but it's beautiful. It's humbling, but it's freeing. I don't have to be anything.

I don't have to be anything. I'm loved. Period.

When you walk through that gate called the Kingdom of Heaven, everything changes. Everything. Everything.

Now, He says being justified, being justified. Now I want you to go for just a moment to the Song of Solomon. It's in chapter 4. I'm not going to tell you exactly where, because I just want you to pay attention when I read it to you.

Chapter 4. Now just listen. I want you to see this as God speaking to you. Okay? This is God's Word.

I'm not going to make it up. It's actually in the text. I'm going to show you where.

But this is God speaking to you. Now for some of you big macho guys with muscles to your ears, this will be a little bit difficult to comprehend, but focus, okay? Focus. It's not the type of language that we normally use, but I want you to think about this.

You are all together. This is God speaking to His bride, to you. You are all together beautiful, my darling, and there is no blemish in you.

Have you ever thought that that's the way God looks at you? You are all together beautiful, my darling. All together. All together.

Everything about you is beautiful, my darling. And there is no blemish in you. And then He goes on and He says this.

Now look at this. You have made my heart beat faster, my sister, my bride. You have made my heart beat faster with a single glance of your eyes.

Now, people ask me, what's your greatest verse for prayer? This one. This is my prayer verse. Now look at this.

I have three children, Ian, Evan, and Rowan. And the biggest battle I have with regard to idolatry is with my children. I could send my wife to preach and just me be at home and play with the children.

Just be careful. I'll steal your children. I just love children.

I mean, and I remember one time I came from a very difficult background in my childhood. Extremely difficult and there's no need to get into it, but painful. Scared most of the time.

Frightened. Terrified. And I remember one day when Ian, my oldest son, was about three years old.

And he was in, he crawled up into my bed and I was downstairs doing something. And I thought, well, I'll go up there and see what that little rascal's doing. Well, he's in my bed and I came around the corner.

And the moment he saw me, he went. It just drove me back against a wall. I remember as a little boy hearing footsteps and being terrified.

Just terrified. Just let them go past. Or this footstep stopping at the door and you're going, what's going to happen now? Is it going to be good? Is it going to be bad? But when I walked through that door, that little boy went.

There wasn't a doubt in his mind. That he was loved. And that, ya llego la fiesta.

The party has begun. Dad is here. He had no doubt.

One glance of my little girl's eye. Just one glance. I'm gone.

I'm gone. All she has to do is look at me. If I, being evil, can love my children like that, how much does your heavenly Father love you? Paul, what are you always talking about prayer? I mean, prayer.

Look at this verse. I give one glance to heaven. Verse 9. One glance to heaven with my eyes and his heart beats faster.

Do you see that? That's absolutely marvelous to me. I look up. I say, Father.

All of heaven is called to be silent. That's the love of God. That's justification, you see.

I have been justified. He looks down at me every time. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, and I walk in that.

He goes, look at this. You have made my heart beat faster, my sister, my bride. You have made my heart beat faster with a single glance of your eyes, with a single strand of your necklace.

Now here's the important thing, and we've got to draw this to a close. I've got three minutes. I want to say this.

This is the most amazing thing about grace. Amazing. And it's this.

She's a peasant girl. He's a king. Peasant girls don't wear necklaces.

And if they do, it's like a goat's tooth or something. It's not very pretty. I mean, really.

But he looks at this necklace. He says, you make my heart beat faster with this necklace. Now here's the thing I want you to see about you and about grace and about justification and everything else.

She has nothing. He gives her the necklace. He adorns her with the necklace.

He makes her beautiful with his gift. And then he loves her in that beauty. And that's what God's done to you.

He's dressed you in the righteousness of Christ. And he loves how he's dressed you up. He makes you beautiful.

And then loves you for being beautiful. And all the while you're in there going, but I'm this and I'm that and I'm this and I'm that. Morbidly looking at all the things and all the bad and all this.

And there is need for introspection, but sometimes people carry this far too far. And instead of rejoicing in the beauty that God's made of their life, of their standing in Christ, they're always looking within. Like that old country philosopher said, you need to come down from the cross because somebody needs the wood.

You need to stop acting like that. Morbid for morbid's sake. I regularly survey my life.

I regularly, with the mirror of God's Word, examine myself and test myself to see if I am in the faith. But my dear friend, I see people do that, but with no knowledge of justification. And it leads to this morbid, horrid doubt.

Don't look so much at you. By now you should be wore out in looking for something wonderful about you. And just look to Him.

Look to Him. Look to Him. It's all about Him.

It's all about Him. And what that does also is it protects you from the schemes of the devil. If the devil were to walk in this building right now, and take bodily form and walk right here and just stand there and accuse me, my only response would be to yawn.

Like, haven't we been through this before? I mean, you're the devil. You're not omniscient. You don't even know the half of how bad I've been and how much I fail.

But I've never said it was about me. It never was about the clothes I earned. It's always been about my elder brother.

Do you want me to call him for you so you can talk to him? It's always been about Christ. And the transaction is this. Over the years of your life, God will work death in you.

He will. He will work death. He will exhaust you in all your labors to be good in your own power and all these other things of trying to work for right standing before Him.

If you're a child of God, He will exhaust you until you're broken and you realize you're nothing. And at that moment it's like, now the positive work can be done. The person has stopped running so wildly, drinking out of cisterns that hold no water, and you look to Christ and Christ will be everything.

Christ will be everything. So the Christian life, and I promise I'm finishing. I'm going to get as close to a drama right now as I ever get in teaching.

This is the Christian life. You're walking around and you're lost. You're not a Christian yet.

And then one day someone preaches the gospel to you, but there's a voice within a voice. There's God working, the Spirit of God regenerating, calling, revealing, illuminating. And all of a sudden you see God

like you have never seen Him before.

And when you see God as you have never seen Him before, you see yourself as you have never seen yourself before. You see your sin. And a part of that self-confidence dies.

But at that moment when you see your sin as you've never seen it before, it does not lead you to despair if the Holy Spirit is truly working. Because with that revelation of the holiness of God and the revelation of your sin comes the revelation of the grace of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and you throw yourself upon Him. And then in the morning the next day you get up and you start praying and you start walking, and you see a greater revelation of God.

Something new about God as you walk in this Christian life. And because you see God's holiness and God's splendor and beauty and goodness in a way you've never seen it before, you begin to see also your sin as you've never seen it before. If you're a young Christian, realize this.

When you're 90 years old, you're going to see a lot more sin than you see now, even though you're going to be a lot more holy. But you're going to see more of your sin. But it's not going to lead you to despair.

You're not going to be left to mourning because you're also going to see a greater revelation of the grace of God in the person of Christ and you're going to be filled with joy. And so what happens over your Christian life is this. More and more you see God's greatness, God's holiness, God's power, His beauty, His excellencies, everything about Him.

And the more you see that, the more you're going to see what you are apart with Him. And the deeper is going to be your mourning. But while your mourning goes deeper, at the same time your joy goes higher because now you're seeing greater and greater measures of the grace of God in Christ.

So in the end of your life, you're fulfilling both commands. Blessed are those who mourn. You mourn with a depth that a young Christian could not even begin to understand.

And yet you live with joy unspeakable and full of glory. But now your joy no longer lingers or finds its fountain in you, but all of Christ, all of Christ. And at that moment you are truly glorifying God.

That's the Christian life in a nutshell. God bless you so much that the love of God would prosper you, believers. That it would prosper you.

That the love of God would wrench out of you those wrong things you know you do. That you would just be carried by that. Carried.

Carried by that. All the days of your life. Let's pray.

Father, please bless your people. That they would see their weakness. Your greatness.

What you have done for them in Christ. They would truly be broken and contrite in heart. And yet as I said, Lord, full of joy.

Full of glory and joy unspeakable. That they would realize that they are loved. That they are loved.

That one glance of their eyes upward to your throne makes your heart beat faster. Lord, that they would walk in love. That they would keep themselves in the love of God.

In Jesus name, amen.

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