

The Gospel: Who We Are

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning again, and welcome to faith. We're so glad you're here together with us. We began this series on the gospel a couple of weeks ago, and one of the things that we realize the gospel does for us is it gives us a brand new identity.

We were someone else before we came to Christ, and I believe it's important that we understand who we are, because understand this, Satan is daily going to God.

He is daily sometimes trying to come to you and say, you're not who you think you are. You know, you think you're this holy Christian, but I know what you think, and I know how, and he is constantly accusing us and trying to tell us something we're not.

We're also sometimes modern society and modern scientists who try to debunk Christianity, and even those who just think Christianity is a religion, and we have to understand who we are in Christ and what the gospel means to us.

And I believe the passage that we're going to be in this morning, Ephesians chapter 1, so if you have your Bibles, you can be turning there, Ephesians chapter number 1, and we will be looking this morning at verses 3 through 14.

[1 : 2 7] And as we go through those verses, I want you to notice a phrase that occurs a number of times, and that phrase is, in him, in Christ, in him.

That is very, very important. As a matter of fact, you see this phrase nearly 40 times in the book of Ephesians, almost 160 times in the Apostle Paul's writings.

Paul uses that little phrase, in Christ. Do you think it was important to Paul? I think so. And do you believe it's important in our understanding who we are in Christ?

I think it's invaluable that we understand what the gospel has accomplished for us and who we are because of Christ. Let's look at verse number 3 as we begin.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

[2 : 3 9] Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, by which he has made us acceptable in the beloved, in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, which he made abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, where?

In him. In him. Also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

That we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of his glory. In him. You also trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

In whom. Also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of his glory.

Let's pray. Lord, this morning I pray that you'd help us to understand who we are. I pray that you'd help us to understand the difference that the gospel makes in our life and the work that has been done in eternity past that God had purposed in his mind, that God had purposed that everyone who trusts Christ as our Savior would become a child of yours.

[4 : 35] And we thank you, Father, for what you're going to do today. Help us, Lord, if there's anyone here in the sound of my voice or maybe listening to this on our website, that if they don't know right now beyond a shadow of a doubt that they have a relationship with you, that based on the truth of your word, they could come to know Jesus as their Savior, receive a full pardon for their sin, and be adopted as a child in your family, a child of the King.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Did you catch the richness of this passage? All the things that God is doing for us.

In eternity past, before the world began, God was at work for the believer. In the present, in the time of history, Jesus did work for the believer.

And in the future, there is an inheritance. We see the work of the Holy Spirit, and we see the Holy Spirit at work on the part of the believer. So we see from eternity past all the way to eternity future, we see the triune God at work in the life of the believer, at work in the life of mankind.

So if you have been born again, if you have trusted Christ as your Savior, then you are part of God's family. You are in the family of God, and this is something that is so important, because if you've been born into the family of God, you have the Holy Spirit.

[6 : 06] You have the same power at your behest that raised Jesus Christ from the dead in the resurrection. And you are not who you used to be.

We are not who we used to be. And if you're taking notes this morning, we praise God that he has made us rich in Christ. Think about that. Rich in Christ.

I would dare to say that not many of us would consider ourselves to be rich by American standards. We are by far rich by the world's standards, because there are many who don't even know where their next meal is coming from.

But as far as being a millionaire and being able to spend money as you want, just blow it, I don't think any of us know what that's like. And probably we don't want to know what that's like, because it brings all kinds of other problems and issues.

It would be nice every once in a while to have a little bit extra, right? But in Christ, Paul says we are rich, because we've been blessed tremendously.

[7 : 10] Look at verse number three, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has what? Blessed us with how many? Every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

Paul starts out with blessed, or he starts out with praise be to God. And what we see here, this is a praise report, and the rest is a doxology.

Paul is so excited when he's writing this, literally in the Greek, in the original language, verses 3 to 14 is one sentence. And you think, well, I thought we were supposed to, you know, like write in short sentences so people can understand this.

No, Paul is so excited, he says, praise be to God, and he just hammers it out, and he just lists all the things that God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit has done for the believer.

And I want you to see where our real wealth is. Our wealth is where? In Christ. Our wealth is in Christ.

[8 : 12] Everything we have of eternal value is in Christ. Everything we have that is worth anything that is going to outlast this life is what we have in Jesus Christ.

What Jesus has, we have. Think about that. What Jesus has, we have as a believer. We have life. We have power. We have a relationship with God.

We have an awesome future. I want you to think about it in terms of this. We have every spiritual blessing there is.

It's like going out and buying the latest model of something, and it's their flagship model. And you ask the salesperson, well, what about, are there any other options that, you know, you got a little bit extra money in your pocket and you want to blow, and you say, is there any other options that I can get on this thing?

And they say, no. We threw everything. We included the kitchen sink in it. As a matter of fact, there's not any, well, there's no other options we can put into it. You get the full meal deal.

[9 : 19] You get all there is. And when we trust Christ as our Savior, we get every spiritual blessing there is. You know, God, it's not like in the Garden of Eden when Satan, when the serpent came to Eve and said, God's holding something back from you.

You know, he's holding something back. There's some knowledge that he has that he doesn't want you to have. And so Eve is thinking, well, you know what? God's holding back, and there's that fruit that's good to look at, and it looks good.

It's pretty. And so God is keeping it from us. I want that. The gospel has given us, provided us in Christ every spiritual blessing there is.

You know, it's like having oil under your property. You may never realize it's there, but in reality, if you've got the property rights, and if you've got the mineral rights under your property, literally, it's yours, and you've got all that richness that's there.

But it's not until you tap into it that you can fully realize its benefits. And we see we have that in the gospel. It's like having oil on your property. We have all the spiritual benefits there are, but when we begin to tap into it and trust Christ and believe God for miracles and trust God for the stuff that would blow our mind, the Bible says God's able to provide for us even more than we can think or even imagine.

[10 : 51] And when we begin to tap into the power and the resources that are ours because of the gospel in Christ, that's when we're able to fully realize its benefits. God has given us everything because of our relationship with Christ.

Now, the next truth is in verse number four. As a matter of fact, these verses, verses 3 through 14, are so full of nuggets of truth and deep spiritual truths that we could plumb the depths of verses 3 through 14 for the rest of our lives.

And we wouldn't have enough patience to go through this because it would take so long and we would never exhaust the resources. Just in these few verses that the Apostle Paul gave us.

Now, this is a deep truth that should not cause debate.

As a matter of fact, it should cause delight. And we're not going to get into the election debate today. We're not going to go there. We'll simply praise God for what the Bible says and we can take it from there.

[12 : 18] Now, I don't think we can understand fully the completeness of the fullness of this. As a matter of fact, no theologian that has ever lived can fully understand what is really being talked about here in God's choice.

As a matter of fact, I don't think we can fully reconcile God's sovereignty in the election. We just can't understand it.

Our minds cannot fathom it. God does whatever he does and it's man's responsibility to trust Jesus. Now, I believe the Bible when it says, whosoever will may come.

I believe the Bible when it says, all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And I believe that God says he wills that none should perish. And we'll leave it there and they will take what God says at face value.

So here's the thing. The Bible says we were chosen before the creation of the world. That's what the Bible literally says. So sometime in eternity past, before the Garden of Eden, before Adam and Eve, God had a plan for us.

[13 : 26] Think about that. God had a plan for us. He was thinking about us before he ever created darkness, before he ever created light and separated the light from the darkness.

His plan involved Jesus Christ. And Christ's sacrificial atonement was in God's plan for all who would trust Christ as their Savior.

And he knew that it would make it possible for us to receive that righteousness in Jesus Christ. Now think about it, believer. God wants you. God wants you.

You see, he never accepts someone who calls upon him begrudgingly. So what Paul is saying here is, God takes no one begrudgingly.

The Bible says God chose you. I don't know what that means. I just believe it because God said it. And so what he's saying here is, he knew before time ever began that he would make it possible for us to trust in Christ.

[14 : 27] That he would accept all who would trust Christ as their Savior. That's an awesome truth. Because we live in a society today where people get rejected all the time.

And some of us may even know what that rejection feels like. But we have a God, we have a Father in heaven who rejects no one. And when Jesus died on the cross, for whom did he die?

For everyone. For everyone. All mankind. He said he died for the sins of whom? The whole world. So all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Whosoever will may come. But the fact is, when you come to him, he won't begrudgingly receive you. Because he had already planned for you to get everything that there is possible in Christ.

And so God has a plan for the believer. And it's not a... Because sometimes we have an afterthought. You know, we start a project. And then something happens.

[15 : 30] And then we have an afterthought. Oh, well, I need to... No. God knew what he was going to accomplish in Christ. Before the world ever began. And here's the thing that we're told, according to verse number 4.

Just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world. In order that, what's supposed to happen? What is the gospel supposed to accomplish in our life? That we are holy and blameless positionally.

What are we in Christ? We're blameless. Because we have received the righteousness of Jesus Christ. But if we have trusted Christ as our Savior, and the Holy Spirit resides in you, what about our practical holiness?

We should be progressively becoming more holy. We should be progressively becoming more like Christ. We should be progressively being drawn closer and closer to him in that day-by-day relationship.

And so it's not enough for us to say, you know what? I've got all there is, and I'm good with Jesus, and I'm good with God. And never grow from there.

[16 : 44] It's like a couple saying their marriage vows and say, okay, we're married now. We never have to work on this. Right? No, it doesn't work that way.

Neither does it work in the Christian life. Because the moment we trust Christ as our Savior, now get this, this is important for us to understand as believers. The moment you understand and trust who Jesus Christ is, and you trust him as your Savior, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell in you.

And we'll see in a moment that we're adopted into his family. We're baptized into the body of Christ. At that moment, you have been given the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

When God looks upon you, he sees the righteousness of Christ. So positionally, there is therefore now no condemnation for them who are in Christ Jesus. But from that point forward, the relationship begins.

And that's where the Holy Spirit comes in and begins to clean out our life and begins to help us with those old sinful habits. And the chains, the bondage of sin is broken.

[17 : 51] And we now can grow to be more like our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So we're declared right before God. However, progressively, as Christ is living out his life in us, as a result of being filled with the Holy Spirit, we'll grow in our sanctification.

We'll grow and we'll understand what being set apart really, really means. Because the Holy Spirit will be moving us to live more and more and more of a holy life.

Our identity with Christ or in Christ is right with God, is righteousness. So when he sees you, when he sees me, what does God see?

He sees Jesus Christ. He sees the righteousness that was accomplished at the cross of Calvary. So he's made us rich in Christ. God has a plan for us.

He knew that all those who would trust in Christ would have all the riches that were available. And then the next thing we see is God predestined us in love through Christ.

[18 : 54] We see that in the latter portion of verse 4 through verse 6. Let's look at verse 4. Now is it just for us?

Now before we go any further, we need to understand that the biblical doctrine of predestination is not the same as the doctrine of election.

Those are two different concepts. They are not the same. The word predestination occurs five times in the New Testament. It's not a bad thing. As a matter of fact, it's a very good thing.

It's here. It's right here. And I don't understand the entire fullness of it. Nobody does. But here's what we need to know about it. Before we were ever born, before we ever came into existence, God destined, God predetermined that everyone who would trust Christ as their Savior would become a child of God.

Isn't that awesome? It's like God is not waiting up and thinking, Well, do I want to accept you in my family? Yeah, you trusted Christ, but do I really want to accept you in the family?

[20 : 25] No. Predestination is simply the fact that before time ever began, God predetermined your destiny in Christ. Meaning, when you trust Christ, God had already predetermined that you would be a child of His because you trusted Christ.

Now, I'm not even touching on election today. Those of you who are busily, you know, I'm not even going to touch that debate. Suffice it to say, I believe whosoever will may come.

And so predestination is God has a destiny for everyone who trusts Christ. And that is, the moment you trust Christ, so many things happen.

And one of those things, according to what the Apostle Paul says, is what we see here, that He has predestined us to what? To be adopted as His children.

So He has predetermined that everyone who trusts Christ as their Savior would become a child of God. Despite your sinfulness, despite your rebellion, despite your wickedness, despite all the things that we bring to Him, God says, I will cover it in the blood, I will forgive, I will declare you righteous because of Jesus Christ, and I will accept you into my family, and I will adopt you as my child.

[21 : 47] And that is why Paul gets so excited as he gives this praise report and finishes off with this doxology. He says, God chose us and God predestined that everyone who trusts Him would be a child of His.

Here's the thing, God wants you in His family. God wants you and me in His family. It's not, again, it's not that He begrudgingly says, well, I guess I've got to take you.

Like a foster family that gets this troubled kid and they ask, well, will you take this kid? Well, I know we signed up for this, but yeah, okay.

No, God's not like that. He wants us to be a part of His family. Is that good news or not? That is awesome news. Paul says, God wants you.

And here's the thing, we are predestined to be adopted. Paul says, God has predetermined that everyone who trusts Christ would be adopted.

[22 : 54] Not some of us, not most of us, but all of us who trust in Christ will become His children. God decided before anything was made that everyone who would trust Christ would be adopted into His family.

Do you realize that radically changes your identity? We go from a rebellious, sinful being who are utterly destitute, so to speak, to becoming a child of the King.

Imagine that changing your identity. Imagine if you were in a social system like England or like somewhere that has royalty.

Can you imagine waking up one morning as a pauper or a commoner and then the next being a member of royalty? That's exactly what happens to everyone who trusts Christ as their Savior.

We become a child of the King. We are in the family of God. Not because we are lovable, not because we deserved it, but because we're children of the Heavenly Father.

[24 : 08] Co-heirs with Christ, the Bible says. And our identity is a child of God. And since the Father loves the Son, what does that mean for us?

Since the Father loves Jesus, He loves us. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. That whoever, whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Who's included in the whosoever? Whosoever? Everyone. God so loved the world.

Now that's not the trees. Now when He's talking here of the world, He's talking about humankind. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. That whosoever believes in Him.

And so the Father loves the Son. He loves us. Now the next truth is in verses 7 and verse number 8. It gets even better. It progressively gets better.

[25 : 11] He has redeemed us in Christ. Let's look at verse number 7. What word do we see? What begins verse 7? In Him, again. In Christ, we have redemption through His blood.

The forgiveness of sins. According to the riches of His grace. Verse number 8. In Him, it says we have redemption.

Not will have. Not might have. It's an accomplished thing. It's an accomplished reality. We are redeemed.

And to redeem means to buy something back. Redemption is having paid the price for something. It's having the price of something paid. A ransom paid to buy someone or something back.

Because you realize we were in bondage. We were in bondage to sin. Because of what happened in the Garden of Eden. Mankind, the Bible says, are born into sin.

[26 : 17] We're born separated from God. We looked at that last week. And a little of the week before. We were born separated from God. And what Jesus accomplished on the cross of Calvary, He paid the ransom.

And He bought us back, so to speak, out of bondage. And Jesus accomplished that. And because of that, here's the good thing.

We have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. We have been bought back by the propitiatory death, the atonement of death on the cross of Calvary.

The death of Christ. And it was shown or proven by the blood that He shed. And we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. We are free from bondage.

We are no longer in slavery to sin. Romans chapter 6. We see the book of Romans talk about that we are no longer in slavery to sin.

[27 : 15] The price has been paid. Jesus bought us back. And not only that, but we have been forgiven through the blood of Christ. We've been redeemed.

We've been forgiven. This is a clean slate. Sins washed away. I don't care about what your background is. The Bible says, Though our sins be as scarlet, they shall be what?

White as snow. And as far as the east is from the west, God will do what? Remember our sin no more. Separate our sin from us. It reminds us, it reminds me of when Catherine and I lived in Largo, Florida.

We lived very close to the beach. And many evenings we would go to the beach and we would walk along the water in the sand and watch the sunset.

And we would walk one direction. Let the waves crash over us. And you look back for a while, you could see our footprints.

[28 : 17] But when we would turn back, we might have been walking 20, 30 minutes, 40 minutes. And we would walk back. A miracle had taken place.

The waves that would ebb and flow and wash over the sand and wash back had completely taken away all of our footprints.

Our footprints had all been washed out, so to speak. Completely washed away. Not a single sign that we had ever been there.

And like where we were going, we hadn't been there yet. Isn't that amazing that God can do that for us? Just like the sand on a beach, the water comes in, totally erases our footprints.

So if we look back at our life, and as if it were God looking back, he would say, I don't, what lifestyle? All I see is the righteousness of Christ.

[29 : 25] And everything before us is new. We haven't walked there yet. And we're waiting to see what God has in store for us. Hallelujah, we've been given a clean slate.

We've been redeemed, and we have been forgiven through the blood of Christ. And praise God that he has, next main point, that he has revealed to us his will in Christ.

We see that in verses 9 and 10. Verse 9, having made known to us the what? The mystery of his will. According to his good pleasure, he wants to let us in on it, which he purposed in himself.

And here's the mystery. That in the dispensation of the fullness of the times, when the time was ready, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, in him.

See, the Old Testament saints didn't understand this. They didn't understand what God was going to be doing. That's why he called it a mystery. And this is what Paul is teaching about in these verses.

[30 : 32] As a matter of fact, you go to chapter 2 and chapter 4. Read about it when you get home. Talking about the mystery of his will that he's talking about. And here it is. God uniting Jew and non-Jew into one family.

That's the mystery he's talking about. That's the mystery the Old Testament saints had no clue of. That one day there would be no more Jew and Gentile in the sense that in Christ, we're all one.

We're no longer separate. There's the condos in heaven for the Jews and then there's the slums for the Christians, but we're still there.

No! We have all the same rights and privileges in him, in Christ. And this has been God's plan from the very beginning. And here it is. Jesus Christ is the King of kings.

He is the Lord of lords. We are no longer defined by our race. We are no longer defined by our gender. We are defined by this in Christ.

[31 : 38] Who are you? I'm in Christ. Well, what about, I'm in Christ. Well, what about, I mean, are you this? Are you that? I'm in Christ. And it doesn't, when God, he doesn't see color.

He doesn't see gender. He doesn't see, because at the foot of the cross, we're all the same. And in heaven, we will be together, unified as children of God.

This is who we are, in Christ. And here's the thing. Christ will rule over a united people forever. See, the Jews don't have anything on us.

Yes, they were God's chosen people. The Bible says we have been grafted into Israel. And we receive the same nutrients. We receive the same lifeblood that they have. It's the gospel.

It's Jesus Christ, the Messiah. And so the prayer of Jesus in John 17. Remember that prayer of Jesus in John 17? God, I pray that they might be one. And that's his prayer.

[32 : 42] His prayer is answered. One people in Christ. And when the church recognizes it, when people recognize this, of who we are, our true identity, we will be one.

Realize that in Christ, we are one. In the story of God, from the way from the beginning, there was no black. There was no white. It was creation.

Mankind needing a Savior. He's bringing every one of us together in Christ. That's who we are. And he has revealed his will in Christ. And he has given us an inheritance in Christ.

Verses 11 and 12. In him also we have obtained an inheritance. Verse 11 says, being again, that word again, being predestined according to the purpose of him, who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

Look at verse 12. That we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of his glory. Now some of you may not really think a lot about inheritance.

[33 : 51] Because you may not get much of one here on earth. There may not be much to get depending upon your family, depending upon the situation. You might inherit some debt.

But the thing is, in Christ we have an inheritance. And where's our inheritance? In Christ. And the Bible says our inheritance is ultimately this.

That we get God. He is our inheritance. We get Jesus. It's not that, oh, I get a mansion in heaven.

If that's all you're applying for on earth today, you're sadly mistaken. That's not going to be the awesomeness of heaven. The rubies and the gold and the streets of gold is not going to be the ooh and the ah thing in heaven.

It's going to be Jesus. And it's God. It reminds me of a story of a family that was flying from America to Europe. And on the plane, they were flying above the clouds.

[34 : 58] And the mom looks out the window and she says to her six-year-old, Honey, this reminds me of heaven. And the little girl kind of has this puzzled look and kind of disappointed look.

And she said, Mom, where's Jesus? It's not heaven if Jesus isn't there. And so our inheritance is God.

Our inheritance is Jesus Christ and everything that goes along with that. That's our inheritance in heaven. If Jesus isn't there, it's really not heaven.

The next thing we see is God works all things according to the counsel of his will. See, God didn't phone down from heaven and say, Hey, guys, what do you think?

God has his own will. God has his own plan. And his plan is that we who trust Christ as our Savior would receive all of this in Christ. Because he wants us in his family. He wants us to share in this.

[36 : 02] Get this. God wants you to inherit everything he has. He says it's according to his will. Well, here's the thing. We have great hope in Christ.

Because if it were not for Jesus, the Bible says we would be without hope and we would be miserable. Think about it. We would be utterly undone without Christ because there would be no hope.

Where else do we have this hope? In government? In Congress? Not even in the Declaration of Independence?

We have this hope nowhere else but in Christ. No matter how good the offer is, we have no hope other than in Christ.

Because Christ is the only thing, God is the only thing that will never let us down. He's the only thing that lasts. And then lastly, as we close, I told you we just get better and better and better and better.

[37 : 05] And the last truth that Paul shows us is that we're sealed in Christ. He has sealed us in Christ. Look at that. Verse 13 and 14. In him you also trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also having believed what happens to be a believer.

We were sealed. He says, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. And there's a lot that takes place there. There's a financial concept that's being brought out here.

You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the what? He's the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of his glory.

Sort of like a down payment, but not. It's a surety. It's a pledge. It's like when you want to buy something and you give them, say, 500 bucks and you say, I'm coming back.

Well, for a lot of us, that's a lot of money. I wouldn't just leave \$500 on the table. If I gave you 500 bucks, I'm coming back for it, or I'm coming back to finish the transaction.

[38 : 24] So the point is, when Jesus left earth, he says, I'm sending you the Holy Spirit. There are a lot of things that, again, he's our comforter.

He's the one there. He's our teacher. He's our guide. He's all of this. But I think the thing that really makes the biggest difference in all of this is, Jesus says, I'm going to leave you with the guarantee.

I'm leaving you the Holy Spirit. And that means, I'm coming back to get you. I'm coming back to get what's mine. And the Holy Spirit, during this point in time, whether it's 1,000 years, 2,000 years, however long, that's to show you, I'm coming back.

And I'm going to receive my own back with me. So we're sealed by the Holy Spirit. We're sealed by the Holy Spirit. The will of God will be accomplished.

The will of God will then be accomplished. In this verse, it says, you have a great hope because God has given us the Holy Spirit, the down payment, the promise of the inheritance that we'll receive.

[39 : 33] He has sealed you. And here's the thing. Our possession of the Holy Spirit guarantees our inheritance. Because we have the Holy Spirit, once we've trusted Christ as our Savior, Holy Spirit in us, that says He will come back.

Our inheritance, our unity, and our growth in holiness. And here's the thing. How can you know whether you have the Holy Spirit? Is there a measure of holiness in your life?

Has there been a difference made since you trusted Christ as your Savior? Now, there may be many who might say, Lord, Lord. Remember like we saw last week? We saw the week before. But unless we know in our heart of hearts, we've trusted in our heart of hearts, not just a head decision, but trusted Christ as our Savior and received that forgiveness, received that redemption.

We are declared righteousness. Receive the Holy Spirit. Once we're born again, there will be changes taking place in our lives.

If we claim to be a believer, but there's not a day-to-day change. If we habitually live in darkness, then you've got to go to the book of James. And James says, you show me by your actions whether you truly are in the family of God.

[40 : 53] So I would put this out this morning. If you don't know Jesus Christ as your Savior, if we were to ask you, or better yet, if you were to stand before God, and he were to ask you, why should I receive you into my heaven?

What would your answer be? If it's, well, God, I don't really know. I hope I'm good enough. That's not the right answer.

This morning, if you don't know whether you are a child of God, if you don't know whether you have the Holy Spirit residing within you today, then I would say, turn from your sin.

Trust Christ as your Savior. Believe that he died. Believe that he's the Son of God. Believe that he's God. Believe that he died on the cross in your place. And believe that he wants to offer you salvation, forgiveness of sin, and to bring you into his family.

And just simply trust Jesus for that. And trust him alone. Based upon what the Bible says, all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, delivered from the penalty of sin, and received into his family.

[42 : 09] Do you realize there are two ways we can know that we have the Holy Spirit? Love and holiness. Think about it. Love and holiness. What does the Bible say how the world will know that we are in Christ?

If we love one another. So the first thing the Bible says how we can know if you have the Holy Spirit is love. Second thing is holiness. Is he making a difference in our lives?

And praise God. As we close, this is a doxology, remember? As we close, praise God that all of this is by grace alone. All of this is by grace alone.

We don't deserve it. We can't earn it. The whole passage is full of grace. God having lavished his grace upon us, it is by his grace alone that we can receive the forgiveness of our sin.

And it's through faith alone. It is by grace, through faith, that we come to know Jesus as our Savior. We are saved by grace, through faith, faith alone, not of works. Because if it were, we could boast about it.

[43 : 10] And where do we find it? In Christ alone. There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. I don't care what the Dalai Lama says.

It's only through Christ that we're saved. Christ is the only way. And praise God, it is not just for us alone. It's for the whole world. For God so loved who?

The world that he gave us, his only begotten son. Salvation is offered to the nations, not just for us in this room. And praise God, it is for his glory alone.

To the praise and the honor of his glory, God does everything that God does. There's no boasting on our part. When we get to heaven, we can say, hey, look, I was good. Look at where he got me.

No, look at where the goodness and grace of God got you. Because of his mercy, he didn't send you where you deserved.

[44 : 10] And by his grace through faith, we have an inheritance. This is by the grace of God. And praise God, our true identity is in Christ.

Our true identity is in Christ. Because of the gospel, we can know who we are. And when Satan comes knocking and says, who do you think you are?

You know, you just messed up majorly. We can say, Satan, I am a child of the king. I am forgiven. I am righteous in Christ.

And that's who I am. And we can say, God, get Satan out of the way. Because I know who I am. If somebody comes to you and says, how do you know you're, how do you know that, you know, Christianity is just a bunch of baloney.

How can you know there's a God? How can you know that you're right with God? How can you know that you're a Christian? Well, because I know who I am. Because I am in Christ.

[45 : 17] We have a new identity. And we have this identity in Christ. Isn't that awesome? Let's pray. Father, this morning as we've gathered together, we thank you that you love us so much that you sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross in our place.

And I thank you, Lord God, that we have the ability to go to anyone that we see we have contact with and share with them the gospel and offer them a brand new life and a brand new identity.

Father, I thank you that you've determined that everyone who trusts you will become a child of yours. And we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we can become a child of the King.

We thank you, Lord, for what you're going to do in our lives today. I thank you for each one here. And I pray that the truth of your word today would seep deep down into our lives and that he would make a difference in the way we think and the way we live tomorrow and next week and the rest of our lives.

And this reality of our identity in Christ would help us to rise above mediocrity and help us, Lord, to realize that you have a plan for us and you have a mission for us to accomplish, that this gospel is not for us alone, but it's for the nations, it's for the world.

[46 : 35] And, Lord, I pray that you help us to get the gospel out, whether it's beginning with our family and going out from there. Help us, Lord, to live out the gospel.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's all stand this morning.