

Good evening. In case I'm strangely three dimensional and you didn't hear Steve earlier, my name is Mason King. I'm one of the home group ministers here on campus, so I'm going to be walking in Galatians with you tonight. This is fun for me. This service is fun for me, because I've walked with many of you for years. As I was studying, preparing, and walking through the text, the Lord had your faces on my heart and he had our relationships. Just kind of knowing you and walking through life, I just loved getting to walk through the Scripture.

Tonight I just pray what has really worked me over this week and what has dug into my heart, I pray the Lord would do the same with you. We're in Galatians 3. If you have a black Bible (one of ours) it is page 973. If you want to grab it, we're going to begin in verse 10. I'll read for us. **"For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.' Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by faith.'**

But the law is not of faith, rather 'The one who does them shall live by them.' Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us -- for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree' -- so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith." If you guys would pray with me.

Heavenly Father, what a joy it is to come and be able to walk through a passage that is disarming, that takes away our defense, that takes away what we put hope in and that would redirect our hope toward you. There is so much we are willing to give our hearts to, willing to give our value to, that is not you, so Lord, I pray you would expose that to us. In great and small ways, Father, help us turn our eyes upon you. My joy is to proclaim the Word, but I know I am powerless to change anyone, so Father, do what only you can do. Holy Spirit, do what only you can do.

I preach in anticipation that, Holy Spirit, you would reveal Jesus to the men and women in this room tonight, to my brothers and sisters, and then to those who don't know you. That our hearts would be captivated by the beauty of Christ and we would long to see his face. I just want that for us: Deeper joy and greater happiness because of Christ in him. Father, bless tonight. Holy Spirit, would you move, please? We pray in Christ's name, amen.

Since I was a child I have loved stories. I don't know about y'all, but I'm a bookworm. I love to read. I love movies. I love people telling stories, because for me they are life giving. I've been thinking about it for a while, and there are certain stories that are good and some I really like. I'll play the nerd card early. I love *The Lord of the Rings*. My dad used to read *The Hobbit* to me as a child. I would read that and really be just kind of transported.

The movies I watch... I watch *Band of Brothers* and think, *Man, those guys serving together, sacrificing together, and going through struggle together*. Maybe you guys did this this week. My wife and I got up early yesterday and went and saw *The Hunger Games*. Anybody? Okay? So we got up and went to the mall, and we were there at 8:15 for a 10:00 showing and met 100 people in line.

There is something about these stories, and for me, the last couple of years the Lord has really revealed to me what it is, so I want to share it with you tonight. I think what it is, is the fact that it gives us wonder. These stories help us have awe. We see a thing of beauty. It's almost as if there are notes in our heart these stories hit, and we go, *Oh, yes!* Like the world that isn't as it should be, and we hope would be better one day, is in that story, and we go, *Amen. I want to see it like that*.

You see, there is this weird shift for us. I think it is as we get older and the years come and we meet disappointment in life and we have expectations crushed, you and I, who believed in things as a child, say, *I'd be a fool to believe that*, so our hearts just shrivel a little bit and we give up hope. We give up wonder because we think, *No, that's too good. I've seen pain. I've been hurt. I gave someone my expectation and they dropped it*. We think maturity in life means we can't believe in simple things like a child, and the Lord calls us to come to him like a child.

So even as we begin tonight, we're just talking about one story. We're talking about the true tall tale of the Son of God. We're talking about how you and I were separated from God by sin with no hope of gaining acceptance from God with anything we could do, and God, in his love toward us in his Son, sent Jesus to die in our place, to do what we could not do, and to bring us into relationship with the Father. So that is the story of the gospel, that you are accepted by God through Christ, and out of that we respond and obey him with joy.

But that's not the story the Judaizers were telling the Galatians. We've been walking through Galatians, and if you've heard this, the people came in to the believers (the Galatians, the saints there) and said, "The gospel? Faith alone? That's too good to be true. Let me tell you what you need to do. You need to follow the law. You need to do this. You need to add this, because do you really think God is going to take you? You really think he's going to take you if you just believe in what Jesus did? Surely that is too good to be true."

So what we have seen in Galatians is the saints' hearts had fear and doubt, and they doubted whether the gospel was true for them, that grace was free for them, that their sins were forgiven. What did they do? They began to add things to faith alone in Christ. Their hearts shrank back in doubt and fear. So if you've been here and seen the last couple of chapters, Paul has spoken to them and loved them and encouraged them and really just taken them, he'll say even later, "Like a mother with her child, I labored over you." He has shown them affection.

He gets right in their face and says, "You fools! Who has bewitched you?" I don't know about you, but I know in my own life, my wrestle with anxiety, my wrestle with fear and doubt, that I have gotten to a place where my ears are so closed and my heart is so hard I've had to have men and women in my life get in front of me and say, "You're being a fool! Don't believe the lie. Believe what God told you." But the Galatians, they shrank back, so we see Paul coming to them, and when the Galatians heard this what they did is they took the wonderful, mighty, huge promise of God and made it controllable.

They took the great promise of salvation in Christ, this wondrous, beautiful thing and made it safe and attainable by adding things to it. I ask you tonight, are we any different? Are you and I any different? Do we have a sure hold on the gospel? Because I know in my own heart I am prone to disbelief, prone to forget, prone to need to be reminded, even to preach to myself the truth of Christ, and even to say Jesus is good and is for you. Fear and doubt can control us, and we will give up what we know to be true.

As we get started tonight, there is some good language Matt has laid down, and I don't feel like I need to reinvent the wheel for this. I feel like we can review this for you, and if you're new I can introduce it to you, but for Galatians there are some terms I think will help as we go through. We've talked about the law, a gift of God that really is kind of like a diagnostic scan, and this Law reveals our sin. It reveals our need for God. See, that Law we run to, which really is God saying, "This is how you can have relationship with me," we run to that when that reveals our need.

It can never cure us. If the law demands perfection, it can never give us perfection. So in that there is a space created between God and us because we are deserving of judgment. We are rejected because of our sin, and I just want to remind even myself tonight that sin is not what we do, but it is who we are. It's not just the fact that you lie, cheat, steal, covet, compare, or want out of proportion; it's the fact your heart wants to do that.

So this is our need, and then we see that Christ has come. What we could not do, Christ does. The very thing we can't do, the very thing the Galatians are trying to do, he takes the curse, but we'll get to that. As we get started, the question I want to ask you, and really I'm going to rephrase it for you and give it to you

tonight is... *What do you have your hope in other than Christ?* I'll say it this way: What gives you meaning, validation, and worth right now besides Jesus? What makes you think, *If I just have this, I'll be okay?*

So here we are in chapter 3, verse 10. Let's look. **"For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse..."** That is, they are rejected by God. **"...for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.'"** I'll rephrase it and say if you put your hope in the works of the law and think that is going to make God accept you, you can't do it. It's not just that you can't do it, but you're going to be required to do all of it. You see, the Judaizers were teaching reliance upon the law.

If you look in there, it says, "Rely and abide." This is not "say hello to and wave at." This is, *I put my hope in this. I put my trust in this. I am abiding in this.* So you put your trust in the law and you have to do it. I'll tell you right now, if you're going to run an inch with the law you're going to have to run a mile, and you're not that good. None of us are. You can't pick and choose which law you want to obey and think, *Okay. I'll just do a little bit and then I'll have faith in Christ. We're good, because I've been good over here and he has to take me.*

If you think this isn't you, here is a little diagnostic for you right now. Have you ever walked into a room with maybe friends, maybe different people, somebody you didn't know, and you just start sizing up the room? Yeah? Okay. So a few of you walk in and you just start figuring where you fit in the social strata. I'm willing to bet as long as we're in the middle to the top we're happy with that, right? As long as you're comfortable with everybody in the room, and you think, *Okay, well, I'm at least in the middle. I'm not down here.*

Maybe that's not you. Maybe you're the person in the room who thinks, *Man, I just don't deserve to be here. Do you see how good these people are at what they do? They seem to have it together. Do you see their jobs? Do you see the cars they're driving? They're my age. They're younger than me. What am I doing with my life?* You see, either way, either place you are, what you do in that moment is you allow something other than God to define your worth. Someone else or something you have. What we do there is we break the first commandment.

We can't even get down the list. I mean, we're just there at one. The Galatians were doing this, and they were beginning to abide outside of faith alone in Christ. They were adding to the gospel, and if you add to the gospel, it's not the gospel. If you add something to the gospel, you don't have faith alone in Christ. Here is a quick example. If I go for a run, which doesn't happen often, but if I do, if I get outside and strap on the tennis shoes and go for a run and come in when it's 9,000 degrees outside and want a glass of water, I pour myself a glass of water.

I go to get something and come back, and my wife grabs that glass and just pours salt in it. I mean, just a bunch of salt and stirs it up and goes, "Here you go, honey." Do you think I'm going to drink that? Do you think I'm going to go, "Yes, I want that"? "It's refreshing. Thank you." No. Why? It looks the same. While it even looks pretty good, it's fundamentally different. See, the gospel and religion are different, and I grew up with a lot of religion. I don't know about y'all. The gospel is that I am accepted, so I will obey and run to God.

Religion is if I obey, if I am good enough, he will accept me, and the Galatians were swinging this way. The Galatians were adding things to faith alone in Christ, so there is a curse of the law, a rejection that comes into the law. Now the law was given as a covenant. That's a promise, and if you break a promise, you know, there is a consequence, so the law itself was given by God to Israel to teach Israel about their relationship *with* God and about the character *of* God. The Law demands perfection. The Law demands holiness and says that God is holy.

When we look at the law, we see we don't measure up. We're under the curse, so to define this word *curse* a little more for you is when I say rejection what I mean is divine condemnation, separation from God, an empty void in your life, a space, like we've said. None of us can fulfill it. We all try to. We all try to abide out of Christ, so you can hear the voice of the Judaizers. You even heard the last couple of week as they say, "You don't need Jesus; you just need to do what he tells you to do. You don't need Jesus; you just need to obey.

You don't need Jesus; you just need to not drink as much, or not cuss in front of people, or not cheat on your wife, at least physically, or you could just avoid sin and try to be really good, and then he'd have to take you." This is not the gospel. Not only if you put your hope in the law, if you trust in the law, do you have to do all of it? But you're under the curse. Let's go on to verse 11. "**Now it is evident that no one is justified before God...**" That is, no one is accepted by God, "**...by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by faith.'**" Let's skip to the back half.

"The righteous shall live by faith." There is a progression and thought that we'll walk through with Paul. If the righteous live by faith, and in Romans 3 we see that "**...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**" then you can go to the beginning of verse 11 where it says, "**Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law...**" You see, every single one of us is unable to make ourselves good enough. Oh, but we try. We do. Paul disarms anyone who would put their worth outside of Christ.

Legalism is not going to help you. What you don't do doesn't matter. Moralism is not going to help you. What you're willing to do? No. It's the object of your faith. So Paul says again and again it is Christ alone. Here is an example. In my home, if I'm going to go and wash the dishes and I'm going to do that because I

want my wife to like me... It's been a tough week or I want her to accept me and I need some validation from her, so I do the dishes. I wash everything. Get it right. I'm just waiting, right?

She gets home. I'm like, *You're going to notice*. She doesn't give me the response I want, because really what I wanted if I would be honest is, "You're such a good husband. Thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to do this for me. I love it when you do this." If she doesn't respond that way, what happens in me? What happens in you? See, I get bitter. I get resentful, and that is going to play out about 20 minutes later, and it's going to be bad. I'm working on it.

If I, out of the love I have for my wife and the vow I've made to her, wash the dishes to bless her, I am free of her response to me. I'm free of it, because I'm doing it out of joy. I'm doing it out of faith in the relationship I have with her. So even though we try to do this all the time, you and I cannot control God to do what we want him to do and respond the way we want him to respond. It's just not going to happen. Verse 12. See, Paul is really kind of building here. Ten...eleven...twelve... He's just knocking at the law that is not going to stack up.

"But the law is not of faith, rather 'The one who does them shall live by them.'" So we know God's standard is perfect obedience to the law. If you were here last week, we talked about verses 1 through 9 in chapter 3 and how Paul was talking to them about how God spoke to Abraham and made a promise to him. He said, "I'm going to bless you. I'm going to bless the nations through you." **"And Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."** So 430 years before the law came, Abraham is having faith in God's promises. God is accepting him in that faith.

Now we are called to faith in the promise, faith in that same promise fulfilled in Christ. That is where we are to put our hope. Faith in anything outside of Christ... Hear me. Whether you're thinking, *Well, I try and obey the law, or, Really? I just don't do it that way*, faith in anything outside of Jesus means you're opting out of his finished work for you and opting into what you can do. It can be really subtle for us. What Paul is saying here is faith and the law are incompatible.

You don't get a little bit of both. You don't get to have your cake and eat it, too. You come with faith in the promise that God is going to deliver you from rejection because of Jesus. Okay, so let's kind of walk through what we've done because I like to think of Paul as kind of like a rhetorical ninja, and I said I was a nerd earlier so it's fine, but he uses the law to refute the law, so he's using things the Judaizers were teaching. He's going, "Uh-uh. No. Christ alone."

When we talk about the power of story and narrative, the wonder it creates in us, the belief that it was, was it not that belief you felt when he called you to himself? Was it not that wonder that the gospel is true for

me? You see, this is what the Galatians saw at the beginning, but then they began to shrink back in fear and doubt. Paul spent the last three verses disarming the law, telling us if we put our hope in anything outside of Jesus we are under the curse. You know, I know we've talked about it and I've at least confessed we are all prone to put our hope in other things.

My thought for us tonight is that we're going to hear this about the Galatians and we're going to think, *Man, they were fools. Paul is right to call them that. They had the apostle there preaching to them and they let some B team come in and teach something different from the gospel they knew.* When I say the law, you think you're pretty good. You think you have stuff together, and you live a clean, upright life. You haven't gone on a wild, drunken spree anytime lately, and you think you're good.

My concern for us tonight is that we'll miss this, so I want to talk about how we're prone to put our hope in things in that space within our soul, because you and I were made in the image of God. Theologians call that *Imago Dei*, and so you and I were made in the image of God. The thing is I'm willing to bet most of us were born in the twentieth century. Okay, I'm not going to go decades, but some of you were probably born in the 90s. Anybody? Welcome, it's good to see you.

The thing is, we weren't born in the garden. You and I weren't born where Adam and Eve were walking around, but we woke up in the curse. We woke up in rejection, so this soul we have that God has given us is made with immense capacity for joy, pleasure, satisfaction, and fulfillment. All made to feast upon the glory of God, so you and I are waking up in the curse, waking up separated from God with space in our lives, trying to fill that void and cover that space on our own.

I don't think you're that good at 10 or 11 to articulate it. I don't think you can go, "I'm just trying to get back." It's just not going to work, but I think what happens is we really do begin to search, whether we know it or not. Whether we can say, *I'm just looking for God*, we just begin to give ourselves to things, and we take good things and make them ultimate. We take things God has given and we elevate them to the place of God. We trust them for identity and for fulfillment. I'm just going to walk through a couple of these, and if this is you, man, I just pray you hear it.

If you put your hope in power, if you put your hope in success, respect, having a good reputation, then you're worried about what people think of you and what they're going to say about you. You're going to control kind of how you look in social situations, and you're going to fight for your career, that you have ever-expanding responsibility, like you're trying to prove something. Like the opinion of your boss really validates you as a human being with an eternal soul. You want to be known. If you want approval, if you want acceptance, love, or affirmation, you're going to behave right.

No matter what group you're in, you're going to look right and be right, and you're going to try really hard to do it. You're going to fight after relationships. That is where I was. That is where I can be, fighting after relationships, fighting after love, thinking, *If I just had this I'd be okay. If I just had a girlfriend... If I just had a spouse, I'd be all right. I wouldn't be a loser. I'd be loved.* You'll elevate that to the place of God in your life to where that relationship defines you. That person's acceptance makes you feel validated, and I'll tell you, you will fight tooth and nail to keep it.

For some of you, the greatest grace God gives is he removes that to expose what your heart has done, to show you your need for him. Maybe your idol is comfort. Maybe you want easy living. You want freedom. You don't want any rules, so you're going to avoid responsibility. You're going to avoid discipline and change. You want to be safe. So you can buy anything you want. You can amass possessions around you. You can have remotes for everything, for your vacuum. (I don't know.)

But the thing is, you can go out every year and buy new clothes, match the style, match the fashion, get a new car, look right, and you can't cure your sick and sinful heart, but you're going to look good. If you think this isn't you... If you think, *No, I don't do that*, watch your heart the next time you're in the mall. If you're into cars, watch your heart the next time a car drives by that is nicer than yours. Someone's home? Someone's job? *If I just had that, I'd be happy. I'd be somebody.* We all do this.

Maybe it's control, so you're going to impose rules upon others, and in doing that, you're going to have really strict standards for yourself. You're going to be a legalist. Anybody else? Thank you. I appreciate that. We have one honest man in the house. The thing is what you're going to do is say, *If I find safety in controlling myself and defining myself by what I don't do, then I'll be okay.* But the thing is you feel better and better and better, as what you do is judge and condemn those who don't do the standard you've created, the righteousness you've defined for yourself.

In these things, what we do is take the weight and expectation of our souls, these souls created to feast upon the glory of God, and put them on a thing or a person, and we expect that person to fulfill us and we crush that thing. We will crush it. We will destroy that thing looking for validity and acceptance from it, and in turn, we will be crushed because our hopes will be smashed. Our ability to have right expectation will be distorted, so when someone comes to you with the gospel and says, "It's true," you say, "No, it's not. I've heard it and look how my life turned out."

You take a created thing and elevate it. We all do this. We all work it out differently, but we all work it out the same. We look for our value, worth, and meaning in ourselves, others, and the things of God, but not God himself. In that, we're all condemned. We're all rejected by God for what we do, so Paul tells us there is one way to be justified before God, one way to be accepted, one way where God will look at us and say,

"He's mine. She's mine." When God promises to Abraham he will fulfill this promise, that he will bring about a blessing for the nations through his seed, let's watch that come to play, shall we?

Verse 13: **"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us -- for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.'"** So Christ, the only righteous, the Son of God born of a virgin in man's flesh, lives a perfect life before the law becomes a curse for us? Jesus, who knows what it is to be rejected by God, who knows what sin does, who has been spotless, perfect, righteous, and accepted his entire life, who has existed in fellowship with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, says, "I'll take the curse. I'll be their substitute."

For you and I who have gone after anything but him, who have looked in everything for fulfillment that is meant for him alone, who have been rejected by God, he says, "I'll do it." This is where I think familiarity is our enemy, because you've heard this before and you've heard Christ died upon the cross for your sins. Maybe you haven't and this is new to you, but for a lot of us, you've heard this message, so I want to draw your attention to the fact that the curse is rejection.

It is separation. It is divine condemnation, and Christ became a curse for us. Can you hear him on the cross? Can you hear him when he says, **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"** The only perfect one became our substitute and died in our place that we might know God and be forgiven. Paul says in 2 Corinthians, **"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."** Paul goes on to write, **"Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree."**

You see, Christ took on the curse of the law for the world. The Jews couldn't believe it. They couldn't believe God would send the Messiah and then allow him to be cursed and hung on a tree. At that point, when Christ was crucified, when he was nailed to the wood, when he died and gave up his breath, he took on the sin of the whole world: past, present, and future at the point of the cross. This is what we talk about with future grace, because you and I, born in the twentieth century, we weren't around and every sin we have committed hadn't happened yet.

At 18, at 28, at 34, at 65. Now that is me, because there is grace I'm going to need if the Lord gives me another 40 years, because I know my heart. I know I am prone to forget the gospel. I am prone to put my identity in other places, but the encouragement for me and you is that Christ knew, too, and he went to the cross and did what we could not do to gain acceptance before God for us. How freeing is this? How joyful is this verse, that he became a curse for us?

Every sin we have committed, every time there is fear and shame and guilt and condemnation that would make us run from God and go back to anything we think will bring us value, what Christ has done here is

said, "Oh, come to me. You are accepted." I just want you to hear this: If you're in Christ, if you've placed your faith in him, when God looks at you it is like everything you did bad went right. Now I want you to hear that. He looks at you and sees the perfection of Jesus.

If his standard is perfection, he looks at you and sees perfection. We talk all the time about how you see this play out in a person's repentance. Whether it has been days, months, or years, when they repent, when they sin and know they have sinned against God, whether they run from him or they run headlong into sin, or like I used to do and I still am prone to do, where I just try and be good enough for a couple of days before I confess and repent. Anybody else? *If I'm good enough for a while, maybe he'll accept me then.*

How distorted is that? Because what he has done is free us to be able to run free of guilt and shame, free of condemnation. **"There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."** We can run to him, and instead of running to him, they turned away from him. The Galatians began by the Spirit, but they tried to walk by the flesh, and they shrank back from faith alone in Christ. They tried to obey to be accepted. They doubted the goodness of God. They believed it too good to be true, so instead of believing what God said about them, they tried to control their status before God.

Hear me in this. Here you see in verses 13 and 14 that, **"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us...so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith."** He died for us and became a curse for us so the Holy Spirit could come and live inside of us, so the Holy Spirit could come, give you right-minded motive. The Holy Spirit could come write the law on your heart.

The Holy Spirit could come and allow you to walk in true joy, true life, because you have been forgiven by the blood of Christ alone. Christ came so we might be brought into the promise of Abraham, that we might have the Holy Spirit. The Galatians shrank back from this. They doubted its goodness. They said, "It's too good to be true." You see them faced with the beauty of Christ and then shrinking back. You see them believing the lie, the subtle lies, they begin to walk in and say, *No. I have to do more to earn. I have to try to get him to want me,* when he has died for us.

As I kind of wrap this up for us as we've walked through the text a little bit, I just want to show us ourselves, because when I said I got kind of worked over by this text, oh, I did. In thinking through this, I think our reaction can often be like the Galatians. I think you and I, having begun by the Spirit, try to walk in the flesh, and at some point we veer off the rails of the gospel. We look outside of Christ. We idolize things in our lives. We even idolize things we don't have. We idolize things we want. We put the weight and expectation of our souls onto relationships, jobs, and possessions. We crush these with desire.

We go from one thing to the next, and we end up frustrated and disappointed. If we're honest, we're frustrated we don't have more fruit of the Spirit in our lives. We're frustrated we haven't been changed more for as long as we have been a believer. We're frustrated our hearts are still prone to sin, and frustrated that what we really wanted didn't work out. We, like the Galatians, think, *The gospel was too good to be true for me*. We go back to things we look to for value and for fulfillment.

One of my favorite books is called *The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis. It's a story of heaven and hell and of people on a bus going to heaven. They get off the bus, and they're walking through heaven, and the whole story is about what they need to give up to go further into joy. I love it, because I see myself in the pages. I see my wicked heart. I see my need for the gospel, because these individuals say, "No, no, no. You want me to give that up?" "No, it has actually been here for a while. I'm pretty comfortable with it."

"I think I'd rather take this than what you're offering." "I'll keep my lust. I'll keep my bitterness. I'll keep my disappointment and self-pity." "I'll keep my creativity. It's my identity, and I don't need what you're offering." Lewis has this quote where he says, "There is always something we insist on keeping, even at the price of misery. There is always something we prefer to joy – that is to reality." So any hope outside of Christ will not satisfy or fulfill us. It will leave us under the curse of the law when we are offered the blessing in Jesus.

The gospel clear for us is that we are accepted in Christ for relationship, and we do not obey to be accepted. The call for us tonight is the same call for the Galatians: Having begun by the Spirit, if you have strayed from faith alone in Christ, if you have tried to find your worth and your value and your satisfaction in anything other than Jesus for an hour or for decades, repent and come. Repent and come to Jesus. I want you to get this, because this is something we are all prone to do.

We are all prone. If I haven't illustrated enough for you tonight, in my own heart (I think in your heart, too) we are all prone to look outside of Jesus for satisfaction, and we believe the lie. We look to people around us. We look to anything but the Word of God toward us in Christ that says, "Forgiven. Accepted." No matter who you are, we are tempted to do this. We are tempted to keep something at the price of misery. In honesty, we'd rather be miserable with it because we've gotten comfortable with it than to go through the pain of losing it where we could go into greater joy. Lewis just called that joy greater reality.

I have a couple of questions for us. This is what I'll leave us with before we go to Communion: Where are you straying from the gospel and what are you trusting in besides the work of Christ? The second one is a question, but it's really my prayer for you and for me: Will you give it up and run to him? Will you let go and come to Jesus? See, the great danger for us is that we will shrink back like the Galatians, that we will

believe it is too good to be true. We will believe God's love for us in Christ doesn't know our sin, doesn't know our dirtiness, doesn't know our hiding, or we'll just think we don't need him.

Both of those things leave us under the curse. My hope is God would give us eyes to see and ears to hear the beauty of Christ. That you would know him. That he would reveal himself to you in a way that fosters wonder in your heart, where you could come to the Savior like a child and come with faith that what he says is true, and that you would move forward into greater joy. Let's pray.

Father, I love you. I love you so much, Lord. All you continue to do is to be good and faithful, and so many times we stray, and we put our fulfillment in things that are not you. Lord, would you allow us to see you and hear you. Holy Spirit, I just pray in anticipation, Lord, that you would reveal yourself to your children. That they would know they are accepted. That there is grace. That there is no shame or condemnation but there is grace, so they would run to you.

For those in the room who don't know you, Lord, I pray you would reveal yourself as beautiful, and the very thing they think identifies them, validates them, and gives them worth, that they would see they've been looking for you. Lord, reveal yourself. Father, do what only you can do. Father, give us hope in you and joy in you. We pray in Christ's name, amen.