

God's Love and the Duty of Faith

The Great Commission

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Bible Verse: Matthew 28:19-20
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We've come to a final message in this series I've been doing on the Great Commission. I'm always feeling mixed emotions at times like this. I feel like I've spent too much time on it, and at the same time I feel like I haven't spent enough time on it and that's just part of the tension that I live with in what I do. But in Matthew 28:18 through 20, let's read it as we start. Matthew 28:18-20,

18 ... Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

This is just such a breathtakingly majestic passage, this is far better than looking at the expanse of the Rocky Mountains physically, looking at the Great Commission in any kind of detail is to see a magnificent vista of what God is like and what his desire is for sinful and lost men. What we have to consider today is grand, it is joyful, and yet there is also a sobering aspect to it as well.

What ultimately is behind the Great Commission? Why ultimately did Christ send his disciples out to preach and to make disciples of all the nations? Well, our brother Matt gave us the answer to that question when he opened the service from John 3:16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life." Behind the Great Commission, what motivated the sending of Christ, what motivated his perfect life, what motivated his sacrificial death on the cross, what motivated his resurrection and his ascension on high where he represents us as our great High Priest is that Christ has a love for sinners. There's no other explanation and it is so vital for you and for me to understand this and to dwell on it deeply because as I've said to you so many times, one of the last remnants of your carnal heart is that you are not willing to truly believe and trust in the love of God. You have it in your mind that he's somehow stingy, that he's somehow unwilling to bless you, nothing could be further from the truth and this is seen in the freeness and the broad breadth of the Great Commission. He sends us out to all of the nations.

Beloved, please get this straight in your mind: the call of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a call of love from a God who is willing to save sinners just like you. No one is excluded from the call of this Gospel that goes out proclaiming the love, the death, the resurrection of Christ, his glory, his majesty, and his invitation for sinners to come to him to find forgiveness and eternal life and to live with him forever. Do you see, do you understand, my friends, that there is nothing in that offer that ought to be rejected. There is nothing insincere in that. There is nothing but the complete perfect benevolence of God extended freely to men who have been nothing but rebels and enemies of him. Men who are enemies, men who are helpless, men who are godless are on the receiving end of an offer of complete and free mercy. So the question becomes, then, what will you do with the love of God? What will you do with this Gospel call? What will you do with this command of Christ when he says, "Come to Me"? When he commands you, "Follow Me"? And at the same time and in the same spirit of love he promises, "I'll give rest to your soul. I'll forgive all of your sins. I'll shower you with mercy. I'll give you new life." What will you do with that? And I hope that you sense that there is, and I'm going to talk about this in a minute, well, maybe more like 30 minutes but whatever, that there is this sense of awe and duty and majesty that descends upon the room as we hear these things from the word of God. So I just want to draw out two final points from this passage and the first one is the display of God's love. The Great Commission is a display of God's love and Jesus establishes the sincerity of the offer. You must understand – this is so vital – this is a sincere offer from a saving God that goes to every sinner everywhere. It is in perfect honesty of spirit that this comes to sinners.

Look at verse 19 with me again, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you," and here's what I want you to see for today at this point, "lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Beloved, as we tell men about the love of God not in sentimental terms but in the sending of Christ, the giving of Christ for sinners like you, as we – follow this really closely, okay – as we declare these things from Scripture, as I declare them to you, as you declare them to others, as you declare them in your own private evangelism, you must understand this, as we proclaim Christ to men and to nations: he is with us. That's what it says. That's exactly what he said. Look at it with me again at the end of verse 20, he says, "I am with you always," and that means that particularly in this context as we are teaching men and nations from Scripture about the saving Christ, as we are teaching them to observe and to learn and to follow him, Christ is with us as we are engaged in that activity. Somehow in an invisible way that we can't see, Christ is with us as we proclaim these things that he commanded us to teach to everyone everywhere. And so watch this, follow this, when we tell sinners, when I tell you that God is a God of love, he is a God of mercy, he will save you if you come to him, you must understand that there is a silent partner in the proclamation who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. As we are teaching these things, Christ is with us, Christ is extending himself to sinners just like you. This is grand, this is joyful, this is sobering. Eternity is breaking into time when we do these things. The realm of God is breaking into the realm of man. The realm of holiness and grace and forgiveness is breaking into the realm of sin, death and destruction and lostness, and ultimately it is Christ who is with us as we proclaim these things. Beloved, as we proclaim Christ to men

and to nations, Christ is pleading through us, Christ is calling through us because he is with us as we do it.

So there is a majesty to the proclamation of the Gospel, there is a majesty to Bible teaching, serious Bible teaching, true Bible teaching that is magnificent in its implications. We are not talking about this foolish Super Bowl of preaching that other people are doing on this day that turns it into a mockery, turns it into a form of entertainment in a carnal way handling the word of God like that. That's not what we're doing and that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about Christ being with us in an earnest sincere proclamation of the Gospel that pleads with sinners just like you to come to him for saving faith and for salvation. And because he is with us, it's an indication that Christ cares for sinners, he is with us as we do this, he is manifesting his care for sinners by his personal presence mediated by the Holy Spirit. It's majestic. It's wonderful. You could never preach on these things enough. And we know that his presence is one of love as he does this, as he extends himself to you because 1 John 4:7 and 8 says that God is love; that love is one of the perfections of his character; that all that he does is done in love. There is no bifurcation of his character. God has a benevolent character, his presence is desirable, he intends good for sinners who hear the Gospel. And you can see this in the ministry of Christ himself; you get a sense as you look at his earthly ministry as he ministered in his physical presence, you get a sense of his compassion that he manifests in the proclamation of the Gospel now through his human agents.

Look at Matthew 9:36. Matthew 9:36, we'll start in verse 35, "Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness." Jesus was this great evangelist going throughout the countryside there doing in his physical presence what he would later command his disciples to do through all the nations. He doesn't send us out to do that which he didn't do first. And what was his attitude, what was his perception, what was in his heart as he did that? Look at verse 36, "Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.'" He's conducting this ministry and he's looking out on people that are hearing him and what's in his heart is this deep sense of compassion and mercy because he realized the stress and dispirited condition that the people who were listening to him were in. Oh, the love of Christ, the compassion of Christ, the majesty of Christ. This is not the matter of sentiment, although it ought to move our hearts to feelings of love and praise and gratitude and adoration to Jesus Christ, it ought to have that effect on our heart but it's not simply about our feelings, this is what Christ is really like.

And you go into other Gospels and you look in Luke 13, Luke 13, what we're doing here is we're showing the love of God displayed in the proclamation of the Gospel, the good news. In Luke 13:34, he pleads with unrepentant Jerusalem, he pleads with them. Watch this, he reveals what's in his heart as he preaches to them. He says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I

wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!" The whole point there is that Christ was willing to save but they would not have it. They rejected the one who is manifesting compassion to them in his preaching. There is no excuse for this and there would be judgment as a result of it, verse 35, "Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

Look at Luke 19:41 and 42. Later in his ministry, "He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it," he cried, he sobbed, he knew that they were unrepentant and they were foolishly hard-heartedly rejecting him in verse 42, as he wept he said, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes." Judgment is coming because you've rejected the opportunity that was given to you.

So you see this display of the love of God and this manifestation of the compassion of Christ was simply an extension of prior revelation that had been given in the Old Testament. The prophet Ezekiel says this in chapter 33, verse 11. You don't need to turn there, you can look it up later. In Ezekiel 33:11 it says this, "'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?'" You see, beloved, that the earnestness of God, the earnestness of Christ in the proclamation of repentance for the forgiveness of sins comes from a sincerity in God's heart?

On Tuesday, this past Tuesday, we saw the love that should attend, the human love that should attend our personal evangelism. We went through that and saw how Scripture manifests Christians grieving for the lost, praying for the lost, pleading for the lost, commanding the lost and other aspects of it. But beloved, we do that only, we do that in a, this is going to come out wrong so why say it that way? Well, it's because it's what's in my mind, I guess. Our proclamation of the Gospel is derivative of the attitude of God in the Gospel. It's not that we're pleading and loving and generous in our proclamation of the Gospel but God's not like that. God is like that and in a secondary sense, in a derivative sense from the work of God in our hearts, that's what we're supposed to be like in evangelism as well, but our evangelism as we saw from Tuesday night, it's really important to be here Tuesday nights, I'll just say that, but our evangelism is simply a manifestation of the attitude of God toward sinners in the proclamation of the Gospel.

And so in 2 Corinthians 5:20, look at this because this makes the point perfectly. I would have done better to skip the past three minutes and just go straight to this text. 2 Corinthians 5:20. This really needs to sink into our hearts and our thinking about God and about the Gospel. Verse 20, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ," we speak on his behalf, and look at how Paul describes it. He says it's "as though God were making an appeal through us," God is speaking through us to you as we preach the Gospel, Paul says and God makes an appeal and Paul says, "we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." And so God himself is appealing to the lost in the proclamation of the Gospel.

God himself is making this call upon sinners. This is a matter of urgent and earnest priority. We preach on behalf of Christ, not for our own sake, in one sense, not even for your sake. We preach on Christ's behalf because he commanded us in Matthew 28 to go out and do this. He commands in John 21 that his disciples would feed his sheep and tend his lambs. There is this unspeakably broad great compassion of God that is gushing forth through the preaching of the Gospel toward sinners. And in the language of, you know, you use that gushing metaphor language of Isaiah 55:1, he says, "Come and drink freely from the waters of life."

And so, beloved, understand this, the God of love is willing to save and if you're here today and you've never turned to Christ, you've never repented of sin and embraced him as your Lord and Savior, I want to tell you that God is willing to save you today. There is nothing on God's side that is standing between you and eternal life. The God of love is willing to save. Let no man contradict that fact.

Now that's not without its difficulties as we read Scripture in its totality. Someone might well ask, I would want the question to be sincere, "But what about the doctrine of election, that God has chosen who would be saved before the foundation of the world? Is this offer from God sincere when He knows that not all will respond and that He's even chosen who will and does the work that they would be willing to respond? Is this offer sincere? Or was Christ simply crying crocodile tears over Jerusalem?" Crocodile tears being an insincere display of emotion, that he knew what was going to happen and so how could it ever be sincere that he was actually weeping over Jerusalem? Well, I'm going to comment on that difficulty. It's one of the most difficult issues in theology in my opinion. I'll comment on it briefly but we need some context first.

Scripture says that the greatness of God is unsearchable, Psalm 145:3. His ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts, Isaiah 55. His ways and his mind far transcend anything that we are able to understand as sinful, created, finite beings. How are we to understand the fullness of the infinite holy mind of God? We have to approach this with humility, not with an accusatory spirit against God that says, "I question Your sincerity here."

There's another aspect of it in Deuteronomy 29:29, it says, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law." God has secret things that he has chosen in his sovereign prerogative not to reveal and to make known to us and that is perfectly okay. That is absolutely within his prerogative. He can choose what he reveals. He is complete in himself. He is under no obligation to make any revelation to men whatsoever, but he's made a fullness of revelation to us that is sufficient for everything that we need for life and godliness, everything that is necessary for a sinner to be saved is revealed in the Scriptures, but that doesn't mean that there are other things that he didn't reveal to us. And here's the point, beloved, when you and I come to questions like this, it is very important for us to adopt the posture of Moses when he was at the burning bush. He took off his shoes. He said, "This is holy ground. I'm seeing a revelation, a manifestation of God here. Let me take off my shoes in a manifestation of humility as I explore this."

God's holy ways are beyond our limited ability to understand, and he has not made known to us all the secrets of his counsel. This is theology 101 what we're saying right now.

But to address the difficult question, how do you reconcile the doctrine of election with a sincere offer of the Gospel? Well, God's love sincerely extends even to sinners that he knows that he will ultimately condemn. He knows that but it does not mitigate against the sincerity of the offer of the Gospel. That is the teaching of Scripture. We believe it and we teach it even if we cannot fully reconcile it all in the contours of our limited minds. What you need to see, beloved, is this, is that these things may perplex us, these things may be very difficult for us to understand and get our mind around, but the problem is not in God, the problem is in the limit of your finite mind. It's not a problem in the mind of God. He is sovereign to save some, and he lovingly offers Christ to all. That is the teaching of Scripture. We believe both sides of that even when we acknowledge that we can't fully explain how those two things are reconciled. God is sincere and compassionate as he offers mercy to people that he knows will reject it.

Now let me give you a very faint illustration, actually a triad of faint illustrations because the challenge theologically here is God sincere in an offer that he knows is being rejected, is he sincere in an offer where he has preordained who would receive it? This is not a good illustration but I think it helps a little bit anyway to give us a little bit of insight to it. I'm going to give you three examples all saying the same thing, okay?

There are things that are common to our human experience that give us a little ray of light into things that are beyond our ability to understand. Some of these things will hit too close to home for you, but isn't it true that a parent can lovingly appeal again and again to a wayward child, a wayward adult child to be reconciled to them, total sincerity in the offer even though they know it's going to be rejected once again? Isn't it true that a spouse, a wife can appeal to a husband who is hardhearted against her and she appeals in the full sincerity of her heart, "I love you. Come to me. I care for you," knowing that based on experience that that invitation is going to be rejected again? But it doesn't mitigate against the sincerity of the offer knowing the outcome in advance. What you may not realize is that this is the life of a pastor as well. A pastor pleading with a wayward member, pleading with somebody who is hostile for whatever reason, say, "Oh, but I love you. Please come back. I love you. Please don't do this. I love you." Knowing that that offer is going to be rejected, the sincerity is not diminished, the sincerity of that appeal is not diminished because the outcome is, in one sense, foreordained.

You can see how a sincerity of love can make an appeal that is going to be rejected. Here in theology, here in the revelation of Scripture, it goes a step further and God has ordained what that result is going to be. Scripture says he's sincere in the offer of the Gospel in the midst of that. Here's the choice ultimately that we have to make either we accept the full teaching of Scripture even though it's something that's hard for us to understand, we can't fully explain this and we say, "Okay, but yeah, God's greatness is unsearchable, my mind is finite, His ways aren't my ways. I'll believe it. I accept it. I bow before it and I'll proclaim both things as true, and I know that it's accurate because it's

consistent with the teaching of Scripture." That's the right way to handle it, or the alternative is to accuse God of insincerity in his offer of the Gospel, to accuse Paul of being wrong when he says God is pleading through us. It's unthinkable to accuse God of insincerity in anything that he does. You can't go there. Better for us to say, "Wow, this just shows me how little I know and I honor the greatness of God," rather than to accuse Scripture, to accuse God, to accuse Christ of an insincerity in the proclamation of the Gospel, the eternal Gospel which alone can save men from their sin. God is sincere when he offers Christ you. Christ is sincere when he calls you to him. As we've seen in past weeks, the only reason, the only barrier, what keeps men from coming is their own sin and their own love for rebellion rather than anything on God's part. God is sincere, the problem when men don't come is because they don't want to come. Jesus says, "They refuse to come because they don't want their sin to be exposed," John 3.

So we see the display of the love of God in an undeniable way in the proclamation of the Gospel. The question then becomes what shall a sinner do with this love? You here that have not bowed the knee to Christ, what will you do with this offer of Christ that is made to you even today, some of you made again and again? What will you do with this love? Well, that brings us to our second point for today and you could call it the duty of man's faith. The duty of man's faith and as we explore this from Scripture, it will vindicate indirectly the sincerity of the Gospel offer because there are consequences to a refusal. So Jesus establishes in Matthew 28 the basis upon which men should come to him. Jesus establishes the basis upon which men should come to him in Matthew 28. Go back to it with me in verse 20. Matthew 28:20, and if these things seem difficult to you, that's okay. They are difficult, we just need to humbly ask the Spirit of God to illumine our minds and expand our understanding because these things are so important.

So Jesus had said in verse 19, "Go make disciples of all the nations," and he says in verse 20, "teaching them to observe," to observe, "all that I commanded you." When this teaching comes to men, there is a responsibility upon them to respond, to embrace it, to obey it, and this Great Commission is placing a duty of responding in faith to what is heard on the men who hear. So what is your responsibility when you hear the Gospel? What is your responsibility when you read in the Scriptures Jesus saying, "Follow Me. Come to Me. The one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." What is your responsibility? I won't do you any favors if I try to mitigate or diminish this at all, you are responsible to believe and obey. You're responsible to believe and obey. And so there is a duty of faith that is placed upon you when Scripture is opened up before you and Christ comes and calls and commands you to believe in him.

Now that has its own problems because sinful men are lost, they don't even have the ability to believe and obey. Ephesians 2:1, they are dead in trespasses and sins. So the Gospel as it's revealing the love of God to sinners is simultaneously exposing to them their utter lostness and their utter inability to respond. There is a complete total inability to respond to Christ. The rebellious answer to that, the rebellious response to that could be, "Well, that's not fair!" Well, God is fair, God is just, you don't want to go there. You say, "Well, I'm starting to feel desperate here. I'm commanded to do something that's beyond my power to do, and there are consequences if I don't." And the weight and the

magnitude starts to envelop your mind. Precisely. Precisely. That condition of spirit, that conviction of your lostness, of your sinfulness, of your inability is designed to make you despair of anything in yourself so that you would flee to Christ and ask him and cry out to him for mercy. "Christ, You call me to come. Christ, I'm guilty. Christ, I'm unable. Have mercy on me the sinner." And the thing that gives you confidence to come to him like that is that he has commanded you to come and he has promised in love to receive you. So while we need the Holy Spirit to impart life-giving power to awaken us and to raise us from our spiritual death, we need help from above and that's what Jesus says, "You must be born again. You must be born from above," John 3:7.

Now some men believe and I would say it's probably the common perspective, the common attitude among the Christian church, some men think that a man cannot be responsible to believe and responsible to repent if he is not able to do so. Well, Scripture doesn't see it that way. You are responsible even in your inability. You see, faith in Christ is a duty and you must understand, you must understand this, it is a sin not to believe in Christ. It is a sin not to repent and believe in him. It is a sin not to submit and to call out to him for salvation. And to say it is a sin is to say it is a moral culpability for which there will be an account.

Look at John, the Gospel of John 16, John 16:5. Jesus is preparing his disciples for his soon departure and he says, "now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going? But because I have said these things,'" referring to his departure, "sorrow has filled your heart. But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper," who is the Holy Spirit, "the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." So he says, "It's to your advantage that I go away because when I go away, I'm going to send the Holy Spirit to come upon you and He's going to have a ministry in your heart and a ministry amongst you corporately." And what's he going to do? What is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit? Jesus says, "He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment." The Spirit will have a work of attending the preaching of the Gospel to produce certain effects in the hearts of men, and first on the list of this convicting work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus says, "concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me." He says, "The Holy Spirit is going to convict men of the fact that it is sinful not to believe in Me." There is no reason to refuse Christ and so what you must understand, therefore, is that it is the duty of sinners to repent and believe in Christ when they hear the Gospel. This is the responsibility and the duty of every man, and the fact that God has elected some to believe and passed over others does not excuse all men from their responsibility to respond. They have a duty to respond.

You can see this from another perspective. How serious a sin is it for you to be rejecting Christ here this morning? It is such a grievous sin that Scripture says it will receive the most severe punishment. Look at Hebrews 10, Hebrews 10:26, the Bible says, "if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth," if you go on and you reject Christ after hearing the Gospel and you refuse him, "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins," there's no hope for forgiveness if you refuse Christ certainly and in a final sense. So what's left for you after that, after you reject Christ? Verse 27, "a

terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries." He gives an illustration in verse 28, "Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses." And Moses was a lesser revelation than Christ. That was a dispensation in shadows and types. Now we're here in the fullness of light and Christ is proclaimed to you. So if the lesser revelation, so to speak, results in death without mercy, verse 29, this is unavoidable, this is obvious as the nose on your face. Verse 29, "How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" You are insulting the Triune God with your rejection of Christ. You have refused the very thing that is offered to you in mercy.

How, my friend, do you think that you will ever escape the judgment of God when he has come in love and offered you Christ and you said, "I won't have Him"? My hand almost trembles at the fearfulness of the thought. Picture this with me, you have a holy God who has lovingly offered grace to you. Some of you, you're hearing this grace offered to you for the 1,000th time and you reject it every time beforehand. Oh, oh. You have a holy God who has lovingly offered grace and the sinner responds to him and says, "No way. I reject that. I will not have this Christ rule over me." Beloved, that's the reality of refusing the Gospel of Christ. It doesn't seem, I understand it doesn't seem like so much of a consequence right now because in the order of things you'll walk out, you'll get in your car and you'll drive to lunch, and you know, you can kind of forget about it in one sense, but that's your human delusion, that's not the perspective of God on it at all. God looks at this and says, "This is a matter of most holy justice and most holy consideration. I have offered to you," God says, so to speak. God says he has offered Christ to you and you say, "No."

What will you do on the judgment day, then? What will you do when God calls you to an account for your refusal of Christ and you stand before the Great White Throne of Judgment, my friend? I'm pleading with you. I'm pleading with you. I'm begging you to consider the consequences of the hardness of your heart. You will stand before Christ in a Great Throne Judgment and no longer will he be presented to you as one offering mercy who can save you in love, you'll be before him as a judge, having rejected him as a Savior, you'll face him as a judge and the consequences of that are eternal and they are unspeakably great. It frightens me for your soul, but understand God does not trifle with the Gospel. I guess that's what I would want you to see and understand. This is no trifling matter. You may not take it seriously but God does, Christ does. I mean, how serious did Christ take it, how earnest was he? Look at the cross, look at his nail-scarred hands, look at his nail-scarred feet. See him bleeding and dying for sinners just like you. He's earnest. The insincerity is on your part, not his. And a sinner's rejection of Christ has nothing to do with whether God chose him or not, he is rejecting Christ entirely for his own reasons. He is uninfluenced by God. God is not forcing him to reject.

I alluded to it earlier, turn to John 3:18, "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world,

and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." The reason that sinners reject Christ is because they love their sin so much that they don't want it to be exposed and they don't want to give it up. Men refuse Christ for reasons that are entirely within themselves. A God of authority, a God of love commands them to repent and believe but they reject him because they will not have it.

So what will a sinner do in that miserable condition? Beloved, it won't do any good to assert that he has an ability to believe because Scripture says he doesn't. It also on the other side, it won't do any good to say, to protest against his responsibility to believe because Scripture makes it clear he has a duty to do so. So let me in these final minutes here try to gather all of this up in a way that I can only ask the Spirit of God to use in our hearts individually and corporately to transform us. The Gospel is a universal appeal that is made to all men. Every person under the sound of the Gospel has every reason he needs to believe because Christ commands him to come, Christ calls him to come, Christ promises to bless him if he comes, and that is an unrestricted offer. It's made to all men. It's made to everyone in this room. It is a manifestation of the love of God for sinners just like you. We are sitting in a room without umbrellas where the love of God is showering down upon us in the things that are being said here, and now we're faced with the fact that there is a responsibility to respond to that, to believe in Christ for salvation, and to the extent that you say, "I'm weak. I'm sinful," that's not to hinder you from going to Christ because he calls you, he commands you to come. So beloved, it's left for us to look to the love of Christ, to believe him when he says he will forgive everyone who comes to him, to take him at his word and to call upon him for this mercy that he promises to sinners just like you.

For those of us in Christ and for us corporately as a church, this liberates us and informs us and motivates us to be those who seek out spiritual conversations every opportunity we get, and to have in our minds and our understanding that if God opens a door for the Gospel, that he's going to be pleading through you to the one with whom you speak. It's great, it's gracious, it's the Gospel of Christ. What will you do with it?

Let's pray together.

Father, these things are so far beyond us. We are creatures of time, we are creatures of frailty, our minds are finite and they are distorted by sin and here we are dealing with matters of the most holy, most loving aspects of the eternal sinless God. How great is our weakness in these things and so, Father, we appeal to Your love, we appeal to the Christ who died for sinners just like us, we appeal to the Holy Spirit whose work is to convince men of sin, judgment and righteousness, to glorify Christ before them. Father, we ask for a great Triune work of God that would bring fruit from these things that we have considered over the past few weeks. We've done so in weakness, our Father, but it's not a matter of human power anyway. O God, You who have said You will send forth Your word and it will not return void, You who say there is a sufficiency in the Gospel for the salvation of everyone who believes, Father, work in the hearts of dead sinners, and work in the hearts of your people that we might be aflame with love for You and that You might

renew us in our ability, our desire, our opportunities to proclaim Christ for, Father, we know this is the pearl of great price, this is the most wonderful thing in the universe. And as You've commanded us to go, Father, we simply ask for as Jesus promised, that You would be with us to bring fruit from what we do for the glory of Your name and the salvation of many more sinners. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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