

The Favor of God – Our Only Concern

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: Galatians 1:10

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There are many things that trouble a true believer. There are many difficult trials and burdens that he bears. One of our burdens is our own sinful natures, our sinful passions. They cause us great anguish and great pain. “We struggle,” Paul said, “in this body of sin desiring to be clothed upon with our bodies or building of God in glory.”

David said, “I will be satisfied when I wake with his likeness.”

And Paul himself said, “Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin.”

This is one of the great burdens and trials of a true believer, the flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh so that you cannot do the things that you would. That is a trial and a burden that he carries all the time.

And then another trial that he carries with him all the time, another burden, is his slow growth in grace and his slow growth in wisdom and faith and understanding. It causes us to cry to God, “Why don’t I have strong faith? Lord, increase my faith. Touch my heart. Enable me to believe. Touch my mind. Enable me to understand. Oh, Lord, touch my lips. Enable me to witness. Touch my soul. Enable me to be submissive.”

Our growth in grace and wisdom and knowledge of Christ is so slow, so very, very slow. And it troubles us and causes us great anguish and pain. We read the Word and we just don’t remember it. We hear a message and we just don’t remember it. We lay hold on something real good and we say, “Now, I will carry that with me to my grave.” And it is not six weeks and we have forgotten we even heard it.

We seem to make one step forward and two backward or two forward and three backward or just...growth is so slow.

And I will tell you another thing that really causes anguish and heartache and that is our dullness in prayer. Is there anybody here who prays as much or as fervently as you would like to? Our dullness in praise. I have tried to praise God this morning. But have I really praised God as he is worthy to be praised or as even I ought to praise him?

And then we worship. We are here worshipping, but I look around at sleepy eyes and I am not just looking at them. I am look through them, you know. And we are just so dull in the worship of the Lord.

How could anybody doze while the Word of God is being read or while his praises are being sung or while his gospel is being preached? How can my mind wander off somewhere else when we are dealing with eternal matters, when I am so near the grave, when I am so near judgment, when I am so near meeting God, when...when am so empty?

John Newton said, "If I love Christ, why am I thus? Why this dull and lifeless frame? Hardly sure can they be worse who never heard his name. If I pray or hear or read, sin is mixed with everything I do. You that love the Lord indeed, is it that way with you?"

I carry these three burdens all the time. I admit it. I confess it. I own it. My sinful nature causes me great anguish and pain. I will be glad when God eradicates it. Thus far he hasn't. My slow growth in grace and wisdom, understanding of the Word of God. I have to struggle and dig for every thing I get out of this book. I have to struggle and dig for every meaning of every verse. It doesn't come easy at all. It doesn't come any easier now than it did 15 years ago. And I find so much dullness in worship and prayer and praise, so much dullness, so much unlike in Christ in attitude. Are you that way? So unlike Christ in spirit, so unlike Christ in my motives, so unlike Christ in my daily living, just unlike enough that if they were condemning and sentencing men to prison for being Christians, there is not many of us there would enough evidence against us to put us in prison. There wouldn't be enough, certainly not by our attitude and not by our motives and not by our conduct and not by our conversations, so unlike our merciful and gracious and compassionate and affectionate redeemer, so unlike him.

But that is not what I want to talk about today. At the forefront of my burdens, you may not believe it, but I think some of you share it. At the forefront of the thing that brings me the most sorrow in this world is the treatment that we receive at the hands of men for believing and preaching and standing for the free and sovereign grace of God.

Families, our families, our relatives, people with whom we have lived all our lives, parents, brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews, nieces, grandmothers, grandfathers become our enemies because we believe the free and sovereign grace of God. I mean enemies. Friends, old friends...I have some old friends right over here in the community where I live. They said they were friends. We used to be friends. But they hate me with a positive hatred for some reason. I have never stolen anything they own. I have never defaced or marred their property. As far as I know I have never brought any charges against them. Religious people, preachers, people who claim to be Christians, neighbors, even people who don't even know us. This is what utterly destroys me. People who don't even know us, don't even know us, have never met us, have never heard us preach speak harshly of us because of the gospel of his grace. I don't understand that.

The apostle Paul wept over this. He said to one of the churches, he said, "Have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"

I recently...well, Thursday night, what gave the greater motive to this message, Thursday night I went up to Dingus, West Virginia to preach. I went there three years ago and it was a congregation of emotion and flesh, just pure flesh, singing songs that were contrary to Scripture and contrary to the gospel and contrary to truth. People praying in unison, everybody scattered over the congregation all praying at the same time in utter confusion just division and flesh and emotion and all these things. And I preached what the pastor believed and what I believed is the gospel of Christ, just preached the gospel. I preached how that God is almighty, that man is a sinner and Christ is the only mediator, the only Savior, prophet, priest and king, the only Lord. Our hope is in him. He puts away our transgressions and pardons our iniquities, makes us accepted to God in his person, sanctifies us, justifies us, makes us righteous, redeems. Our hope is in Christ. We are to do things in order. We are to do things led by the Spirit. We are to sing his praises and pray in the Spirit but with the understanding. I just laid out the gospel.

And the pastor started preaching it.

Well, half the congregation turned against him. He was raised in that church. He was a deacon in that church. He was everybody's friend. And most of the congregation turned against him with such hatred, such utter, complete hatred. You wouldn't believe. They quit the church. They split. The people left. A handful of folks stayed there. And I have seen this happen time after time after time. I saw it happen in Dalton, Georgia. I saw it happen in Jacksonville, North Carolina. These are people that have worshipped together for 25 years. Suddenly the gospel comes, a gospel in its beauty, in its strength, in its saving power. The gospel of the Word of God comes.

And they are not satisfied to say, "Well, I just don't see it that way or I just haven't learned it that way or I am going to have to study that a little more."

It brings out hatred, anger, the worst kind of hatred. And then someone in the car with me was telling me when he came to learn the gospel, the gospel of God's grace, delivered out of Arminianism and emotionalism and freewillism into the grace of God. His whole spirit and attitude and life changed. He came to adore and to love the...and to worship Christ and to see his beauty and glory. And the Word of God opened to him and he thought, "I will tell my brother this good news. I will go to my brother. He will be so glad to hear what God has done for me. He will be so glad to hear about how God will save sinners through Christ."

Well, he sat down with his brother, started telling him and the more he talked, the madder his brother got. His eyes crackled with fire. His veins stood out. His whole countenance changed. He was livid with rage. He said, "I don't believe that. Who have you been talking to?"

And this man who had been converted and come to know Christ was shocked. "What made you hate me? What made you turn against me?"

So he wants to tell his mother and his aunt about it. They are people who claim to love the gospel and love God, sweet, lovely people. Same reaction. Same reaction.

What is wrong? Doesn't this trouble...doesn't this tear your heart out? You sit down with your mother or your father or brother or sister, people with whom you have had some understanding, some fellowship, some love through the years, you share the same blood or neighbors or friends. You are not a fanatic. You are not a radical. I am not a heretic. I am just trying to tell people what the book says, what God says about himself. I don't intend to change. I am not ashamed of the gospel of God's free grace. That is the only gospel there is. The Gospel, the Scripture says, is the gospel of God. It is the gospel of his grace. It is the gospel concerning his Son. It is the gospel of his mercy and free favor. There is no other gospel. That is good news.

I am not ashamed to declare openly what God declares in his Word concerning himself and concerning the redemption of sinners. It is in Christ Jesus. It is nowhere else. The whole of the work...here is my theology. I am saying the whole of the work. And this is your theology and this is what men despise. This is what turns on their anger and their resentment to the point that they want to destroy you. They want to put you out of business.

Now, as long as you were a drunk they didn't care. As long as you were a blasphemer they didn't care. You go your way, I'll go mine. But when you became a believer in the grace of God, in the free grace of God, in the sovereign grace of God, in the grace of God that says I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful. That is when they set out to destroy you and to put you out of business and to close your mouth.

And I am talking about people who claim to know God. I am talking about people who claim to be versed in the Scriptures. I am saying that the whole of the work whereby sinful sons of Adam are lifted from the dung hill of sin, that is where we are by nature, by birth, by practice, by identification. We are in the dunghill of sin. We are in the rubbish pile. We are on the garbage heap. And we are lifted from that dunghill of sin and made to sit with Christ in heavenly places. I am saying the whole of that work, the totality of that work is of God and of him only. We don't do it. God does it. That is what I am saying. God does it and God does it through the merits and mercy of his Son. God does it. You don't make one contribution to your redemption, to your justification or to the sanctification of your soul. God does it and God is going to get the glory. That is what I am saying. I am saying salvation is of the Lord.

He purposed it in eternity past. He said, "I declare the end from the beginning." That is the only thing he can do and be God. A person can't be God who doesn't know everything. A person can't be God...this one can't be God who can be frustrated, who can be defeated, who can be turned from his course. He can't be God. God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. God almighty is almighty and none can stay his hand or say of him, "What doest thou?" To talk about God trying to do anything is a misnomer. There is no possibility of God trying anything. God does things.

Just in a simple illustration I decided to pick this Bible up and close it and put it over here. I have the power to do that. If I will to do it I am going to do it. That is just a simple act of a human being. When God almighty wills to do a thing he is going to do it. He is going to do it. He is going to carry it out. And none can stay his hand or say unto him, "Hey, what are you doing? Why did you make me thus?"

Salvation is of the Lord in its purpose. He purposed it. He executed it. He sent his Son into the world. Sure, wicked men crucified him, but God predetermined it. God ordained it. God announced it. He announced it over and over again. He applies salvation. He sustains salvation. He will perfect salvation. The covenant of grace is the gift of God, the free, absolutely free gift of God. It is a covenant of grace. It is a covenant of mercy. It is an everlasting covenant and God almighty is the author of it. He is the essence of it. He is the fulfillment of it. Christ is the unspeakable gift of God. Christ is the gift of God. He gave his Son. We didn't earn Christ or merit Christ or seek Christ or desire Christ or ascend to heaven to bring Christ down. God purposed to send him and he sent him. Eternal life is the gift of God. Even the goodness of God led me to repentance. Even faith is the gift of God. Faith is the gift of God.

Turn to the book of Philippians. I was reading a Scripture over here the other day in Philippians chapter one, verse 28. Paul says in Verse 27, the first line, "Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel. Let's talk in gospel terms. Let's preach in gospel terms. Let's converse in gospel terms." What is this? This is terms of grace. Just let your conversation be seasoned with grace, the grace of God. Talk about the grace of God, the goodness of God. Talk about going somewhere, the Lord willing, I am going to go. The Lord willing, the Lord's providence.

I married a couple here last night and I said this in my prayer, "God's providence brought them together." That is seasoned with grace. I didn't say any...lucky they met each other. I am sure glad you all ran into each other down in the corner. God's purpose brought them together.

Talk that way, think that way, live that way, act that way. That is what Paul is saying. Act like God is on the throne. Talk that way. God's providence, the good providence of God, the purpose of God. Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel.

Verse 28. Don't be afraid of your enemies. Don't be terrified by your enemies. It is to them an evident token of their condemnation. Their hatred is a token of their lack of...their ignorance of God. That is exactly right. You tell someone a truth from the Word of God and they grow livid with rage, it is an evidence of their condemnation. That is what he is saying. Your enemies, the very fact they hate you. They hated Christ without a cause. I am going to show you in a minute some of the instances in which they...and things he said that brought out their hatred which revealed...it says here it is a token of their perdition. It is a token of their condemnation. Their hatred for you for no reason other than the gospel of grace is evidence they are damned. They are damned. They are just waiting execution.

And you...of salvation. It is a token of your salvation. And that of God. Do you see that, those four words? And that of God. Your salvation is of God. The whole thing is of God.

Look at verse 29. Unto you it is given...it is given to you in behalf of Christ not only to believe on him...did you ever see that before? Not only to believe on him, that is the gift of God, but also to suffer for his sake. That is the same trouble Paul said in verse 30 that I am having, the same conflict you saw in me, same conflict all over the world. They hate the grace of God. Faith is the gift of God.

But, my friends, when you stand here and preach or in any other congregation and preach who God is, what man is as a result of the fall, what he is by nature and God's eternal grace and God's purpose, there are no accidents with God. He is doing everything on purpose. All that he can wisely save he will save. All whom he can save for his glory he will save. And the mysteries of the gospel of God's grace, you preach these things and churches, just they grow angry. They fight these things. But they did when Christ preached them.

Turn... Let me show you a few Scriptures. Turn to John chapter 10, John chapter 10. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ...

You say, "Well, preacher, don't preach these things. If this is what divides and causes trouble..."

You know, the world...as long as Christ just healed people, as long as he fed them, as long as he just talked about morality and so forth, righteousness, he didn't get any real static. But now let's see where he got the real problem. In John 10, verse 30, he said, "I and my Father are one."

Well, back here in verse 24, let's read back a little bit. Then the Jews came round about him and they said, "How long do you make us to doubt? If you be the Christ tell us plainly."

He said, "I told you and you didn't believe me. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bare witness of me. But you believe not because you are not of my sheep. I said to you, 'My sheep hear my voice. I know them. They follow me and I give them eternal life.' And they will never perish neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

Then what happened? Then what happened? Do you see what I am saying? They took up stones to stone him.

They came around and they said, "Well, if you be the Christ, if you be the anointed, the consolation of Israel, if you be the king for whom we look, tell us."

He said, "I told you."

"Well, tell us plainly."

"I told you plainly, but you don't believe me because you are not of my sheep. My father gave me some sheep and my sheep will hear my voice and they will follow me and I will give them eternal life because I and my father are one."

The said, "We are not going to hear that."

Now, let's talk about feeding folks again. Let's talk about starving Chinamen. Let's talk about Bill in a hospital and heal some sick folk. Let's talk about taking care of the widows and orphans. Let's talk about doing good to your neighbor. We like that kind of talk. But now this sheep business and this shepherd business and this God giving the Son a people and you being equal with the Father and being one...

All right. Let's look at Luke chapter...let's turn to John eight while we are in John, John chapter eight, John eight. They hated being called sinners. He said in John chapter eight, listen to this. John 8:43. "Why do you not understand my speech? Even because you cannot hear my word." That is divine revelation. It is essential to a man understanding the word. "You are of your father the devil. The lust of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning. He abode not in the truth because there was no truth in him. When he speaks a lie he speaks of his own. He is a liar and the father of lies. And because I tell you the truth you don't believe me. Which of you convinceth me of sin? If I say the truth why do you not believe me? He that is of God hears God's Word. You don't hear them because you are not of God."

And then they said, "Didn't we say well when we said you had a devil?" They said, "You've got a devil."

That's damnable doctrine. That's what they say I preach, damnable doctrine. That is what they said to Christ. They said, "You have a devil."

In verse 59 then took they up stones to cast at him.

Luke chapter four, come over there with me a moment, Luke chapter four. I am bold to declare openly and publicly that if any man is saved it will be by the grace of God. And boldly and publicly I want to say to everybody to whom I have the privilege of preaching that if you go to hell it will be your fault. If you sing and rejoice with the redeemed in glory you are going to give God all the glory. He chose you. He sought you. He redeemed you. He kept you and he raised you. And he seated you. And he will get all the glory. And that is what Christ is saying here.

Listen to the reaction. He said, "Here is a whole bunch of religious folks, religious Jews." And they were there because they felt that Abraham was their father, because

they had the right religion, because they kept the laws, because they tithed, because they fasted, because they honored the feast days and holidays and kept the sabbath days and all these things. And our Lord said in verse 25, "I tell a truth. There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elias when the heavens were shut up three years and six months and great famine was throughout all the land. But God didn't send his prophet to any of the Jews. He sent his prophet to Sarepta, a city of Sidon to a woman that was a widow and was a Gentile." That is what he said.

And there were many lepers in Israel, in religious Israel in the days Eliseus the prophet. None of them were cleansed but a Gentile named Naaman.

Now how are they going to react to that, that sovereign purpose? That is God's sovereignty. Here were all these Jews that felt that they deserved God's presence and they merited God's mercy and they were children of God by heritage and by all these different things. And God just passed every one of them by and went over here and healed a Gentile and fed a woman who was a Gentile. And what was their reaction?

"Well, let God be God."

No, that wasn't their reaction.

"Well, praise God for his power and might. Praise God he fed somebody. Praise God..."

Oh, no. No, no, no. Verse 28. And all they in the synagogue when they heard these things that God is merciful to whom he will be merciful, that God is gracious to whom he will be gracious, that no man merits his mercy or deserves his praise or earns his favor, they were filled with wrath and rose up and thrust...

"Get out of our city and don't ever come back. We are religious, but we don't believe that. We believe in God, but not that God. We believe in God, but not that God. Your God is our devil." That is what they said.

John six, turn over there a minute. They hate the deity of Christ, the sovereignty of Christ. They hate being called sinners. They hate effectual grace. Listen to John six. Now what you are supposed to preach...I know what you are supposed to preach. You are supposed to tell all these rebels and God haters that God is doing all he can do and now it is up to them. You are supposed to tell them that the Holy Spirit is standing outside every door scratching or knocking or doing something trying to get that sinner to open the door because the latch is on the inside.

Now, listen to what Christ said, John six, verse 63. It is the Spirit that quickeneth. The flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life. My word is spirit and life. But some of you that believe not. For Jesus new from the beginning who they were that believed not and who should betray him. And he said, "Therefore said I unto you. No man can come to me except it were given him of my Father." From that time many of his disciples went back.

They said, “We are not going to go there to church anymore. We are not going to hear him anymore.”

Oh, my. Turn back to John five. Listen to this. What will they hear? I’ll get you a brass band and a bunch of singers and get you some entertainers and chalk artists and things to attract a crowd and then stand up here and tell them what they want to hear, tell them what they want to hear and they will attend. They will back you. They will fill your coffers with gold. They will give you Cadillacs and mansions to live in. They will help you do all...anything you want to do.

Christ said in John 5:43, “I am come in my Father’s name and you receive me not. Let another come in his own name with his own message, with his own gospel and him you will receive.” That is human nature. That is human nature.

But here is the thing that disturbs me the most. And I speak out of experience and I...when I went over to Jacksonville North Carolina where the pastor was recently asked to leave and he left with a number of people and organized another church.... Just last week a pastor from Mississippi called. He had been fired from his church. He said, “I really didn’t...I really didn’t ring the bell too clear on grace, but they found out I didn’t believe in free will and they fired me.”

And I asked this pastor in Jacksonville, North Carolina. I said, “What are they after in the community? And these people you used to pastor, these people...what are they saying that you are saying?” I said, “Is this not what they are accusing...?”

Now, this...I find this everywhere I go. This is what bothers me. Their hatred and persecution for the sake of the gospel...they do not deal with the true issues. They accuse us of preaching things we don’t even believe.

And I said, “Gary, is anybody out there saying that you are preaching babies go to hell?”

He said, “How did you know that?”

I said, “They always do.”

One of the ladies of the church has one child. She is a school teacher, plays the piano in the new church. I forget her name. Do you remember her name, the blonde haired lady that plays the piano? I can’t think of her name. Anyway, she has three dead children. Now you talk about kind Christian compassion. She was a pianist in that other church for 15 years. Her husband was one of the leaders. Everybody adored her and loved her. She believed this gospel of grace. She left with this pastor.

One of her dear friends called her up and said, “You left with Gary, didn’t you?”

She said, "Yes. I believe this gospel of grace. I believe God is sovereign in salvation. I believe Christ died for his people."

She said, "Well what about your babies?"

She said, "What?"

She said, "Well, you have got three babies. Does that mean they are in hell? Gary preaches babies go to hell."

Can you imagine anybody doing something like that?

And, my friend, you say what you want to, but that is ungodly. That old drunk staggering down the street down there ain't near as ungodly as that woman who made that phone call. He doesn't have near the hate in his heart that she does and hell won't be near as hot for that drunk as it will for that woman. I promise you that.

I have never heard a grace preacher preach babies in hell, never in 35 years. I have never read, not one time, an evangelical well informed accepted preacher of the grace of God ever preach that. Where do they get it? Let me tell you where they get it. Old. L.E. Williams used to say where they got it. It is an egg hatched in hell and the devil sat on the egg. That is where they got it.

But they...they won't deal with the issues.

Here is another thing. I said, "They are accusing you of this, too, aren't they, Gary." I said, "They are telling out there that you believe God before the foundation of the world predestinated some to heaven and some to hell."

He said, "How did you know that?"

I said, "That is what they always say."

Predestination. What is it?

"Well, God predestinated some to heaven, some to hell."

Two seed predestination. That is a lie. God never predestinated anybody to hell. God predestinated men to be like Christ. That is what the Bible says. That is wall we preach. We are saying what the Scripture says. He chose us in Christ and he predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son. That is what the Word of God says four times.

Predestination has to do with what we shall be. We will be like Christ. He has ordered the means. He has ordered the effectual work. He has ordered the directions. He has ordered the ways. He has directed us in those ways and means that we are going to be like Christ. That is predestination. God doesn't have to predestinate a man to hell. All God

has got to do is just leave you alone, just leave you alone. You are going where you want to go. You are doing what you want to do. You hate God and you like hating God. You enjoy...men enjoy sin. They enjoy darkness. They love darkness the Scripture says rather than light. Isn't that what it says, Ron? They love darkness. God is not forcing any man to do what he doesn't want to do. Every man is doing what he wants to do.

"Leave us alone," they said to Christ. "Leave us alone."

"All right. I'll leave you alone. That is what you want."

"I don't want anything to do with a sovereign God."

"Ok by me."

"Leave us alone."

I said, "I'll tell you something else they are telling, too. They are saying that you believe if a man is one of the elect he will be saved no matter whether he ever hears the gospel or believes the gospel or perseveres in the gospel."

He says, "Yeah. That is what they are telling."

I said, "Did you ever preach that?"

He said, "I don't believe that."

I said, "I have never preached it. I wonder where they...I wonder who they heard preach that. I never heard anybody preach that."

We believe God chose men to salvation but through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. That is what Scripture says. Have you been sanctified by the Spirit? Have you believed the truth? Have you laid hold on Christ? Whosoever will let him take the water of life. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, but how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? How shall they hear with out a preacher? That is what I am preaching. How shall the preach except they be sent?

It is so unkind to accuse a man of preaching what he doesn't preach, of believing what he doesn't believe. But what this is, it is a smokescreen to divert your attention from the real issues to these phony issues. If you can get men to talk about babies going to hell, about a false predestination, about election to life without grace and without Christ and without faith, then they won't look to the real issues. They are straw men. Barnard used to say they build straw men. They create straw men to...by refusing to come to grips with the real issues.

I said, "I will tell you something else they are saying, too, Gary. They are saying you don't believe in missions. You don't believe in evangelism. You don't believe in witnessing. You don't believe now in sending missionaries and calling people to Christ."

He said, "Yeah, that is what they say."

The most missionary minded people in the world are grace people, true grace. And you find a man who is not missionary minded and not concerned for sinners and doesn't give to send men to preach the gospel, I will show you a man who doesn't know God. He doesn't know the grace of it.

Listen to the apostle Paul. "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is they might be saved. I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren according to the flesh. Oh God, open...Pray for me, people," he said, "that God would open effectual doors where I can go and preach the gospel where Christ has not been named, preach the gospel."

Our master said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

I tell you this. Since coming to believe the grace of God in Christ this church has become more missionary and more evangelical than it ever was before. It is just a lie, such a sad, sad, heartless lie. And I will tell you this. This congregation here does more in the way of foreign missions and to send the gospel out than any church in this whole area. That is exactly right and it is not the largest church here either.

I tell you another thing we are accused of. I am accused of it everywhere. "Well, if you have him hold a meeting for you he will split your church." I have never split a church in my life. I have never divided a church, not one. The Word of God has divided some, but I didn't do it. I came in, preached and left. But the Word wouldn't go away. The word wouldn't go away. And it won't go away. You stand there and preach it. And you don't need to preach it belligerently. I get upset when I think about what they are saying. I think it is...I get upset when people...when people treat folks like they shouldn't be treated and don't deserve to be treated and bear false witness against them. But you can preach the truth of Christ as affectionately and kindly and compassionately as you please and when you go away that Word just hangs there. It just hangs there. It won't go away.

It is like I get amused at these... They have a court room, a trial, you know. And that little old gal sitting there hitting on that [?], you know, that recording every thing and the jury is sitting over there and some lawyer will say something that ought not be said and the judge says, "Strike that out."

How are you going to strike it out? That jury has already heard it.

"Make out like you didn't hear that. You didn't hear that, did you?"

"Unfortunately, I did and it stuck."

And that is what happens when we preach. Go and preach it, gentlemen, and it will stick. And it will hover over that congregation until they do something with it. And when they do something with it that is when the fur flies. But I didn't split it. I didn't split it.

Now, I am going to give you in five minutes something here. Here are the real issues and I am going to just sum them up. I have a whole message on this here, but I am just going to sum it up. Here are the real issues. Those aren't the issues. Those aren't the issues, babies in hell and predestinated to hell and no missions and splitting churches and teaching a man will be saved no matter what. Those aren't the issues and I think most people know.

Here are the issues. I will give them to you briefly. There are seven of them. Number one, is God absolutely, immutably, infinitely sovereign or isn't he? Now come on. Who is your God?

"Our God is in the heavens," David said. "And he hath done whatsoever he pleased."

I won't take that back. I worship at the throne of an absolutely, immutably sovereign God. He reigns over light and darkness, good and evil, over men and all creatures. He reigns in heaven, earth and hell. He has the keys of hell and death. Huh? He will do what he will when he will with whom he will and none can stay his hand. I believe that. And anything less than that is not God.

Secondly: Is man dead in trespasses and sin? Is he, now come on? Did the fall in Eden's garden rob men of spiritual life and plunge them in a state of spiritual death without hope, without help, without even a desire for God? Now, what happened in the fall? And if you believe original sin, if you believe by one man's sin death, judgment and condemnation came upon all men then brother you have got to believe the next question.

Did God choose men to salvation or did men choose God? Dead men don't choose anybody. Dead men do not seek anything. Dead men just lie there. And that is what sinners are. They are dead. But God chose us.

Well, if he did choose us, when did he choose us? Before the foundation of the world.

Why did he choose us? Why did he choose you? According to the good pleasure of his own will. That is what the Word says. That is what I am preaching, Dick.

Here is the fourth one. Is salvation a gift or an offering? The Bible says, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his Son. This is a faithful saying. God hath given us eternal life. This life is in his Son." Gift, gift, gift, gift. Nowhere in this Bible does it say salvation is an offering, nowhere. It is offered. Men are invited, but it is a gift.

Fifthly, is the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and the call to Christ only an effort on the part of the Holy Spirit? Is it only an effort or is it an effectual work? Did the Holy Spirit come down here just to...in an effort, in an adventure try to get somebody to believe this book, try to get somebody to look to Christ, try to get just somebody to come to the feeding? No, sir. The heavenly Father sent him on an errand to call out his sheep, to call out his sheep. And he comes with an effectual calling. He breaks the door down. He breaks the sinner's heart. He puts him in the dust.

Saul of Tarsus is his example as he rode his religious horse to Damascus. The Spirit of God smote him. God arrested him. That is effectual.

In the sixth place, is Christ's perfect righteousness, his perfect obedience, is his perfect life my righteousness? Did he clothe me upon with his holiness and his righteousness and his life and that is my righteousness and acceptance with God or do I have to add something to what he did? What could I add? Anything I do is imperfect. Anything I do would spoil his righteousness. If he made me a coat, a beautiful robe of righteousness and I put anything on it that originated with me it would spoil the whole thing. God couldn't accept it. God couldn't look upon it. God couldn't deal with it. God couldn't help... Anything that I touch I putrefy. Did you know that? You do, too. I contaminate it like the lepers of old. Don't touch me. Anything I touch I contaminate.

Am I complete in Christ, complete? You can't find a better word than that. Complete means it is all that is needed, all that is required. Or is something ought to be added. Now, that is the issue.

And then, last of all, did Christ redeem me by his blood? Did he pay the debt? Did he pay the debt? Did he satisfy God's law? Did he honor God's...did he or didn't he? If he did I am heaven bound because my hope is in him. If he didn't I am hell bound because I ain't got a hope. That is all there is to it. If Jesus Christ when he came down to this earth in the flesh, if he fulfilled and supplied for me a perfect righteousness and on the cross a perfect redemption and a perfect sanctification, then I am as sure for heaven as if I were already there because in Christ I am already there. But if it is anything...if it is left up to anything I think, feel, do, decide or am persuaded to perform, no hope, no hope.

Now, my friends, I still...I rejoice in my friends. I rejoice and I hope love my enemies. But one of the burdens I carry...and I don't understand it. I just can't understand it. I can't understand the wrath. I can't understand the feelings. I can't understand the attitude of people who claim to know God against those who declare the truth. And if you are one of them, may God have mercy on your soul?

He said, "Touch not my anointed and do my prophets no harm." If you bring one tear to one eye, one of God's sheep, I feel sorry for you. I feel sorry for you. May God have mercy on your soul? But he won't. But he won't.

Moses' hands were held up by those who loved God. And as Moses' hands were held up God sent blessings upon his people. May God enable us to hold up the hands of those who love Christ, to give cups of cold water in the name of a disciple?

Our merciful Father, we pray for you to honor your Word here this morning. We believe the message has been one given to us by thee. We have tried to deal from the heart sincerely from the Scripture with the issues of this day. These are the issues. It is your glory. It is man's emptiness and inability. It is Christ's sufficiency. It is the effectual work of thy Spirit. It is the perfection of his holiness and righteousness. It is the sufficiency of his sacrifice and his precious blood. Those are the issues.

And, Lord, we pray for enemies. Never let us engage in the conflicts in which they are engaged. Never let us use the methods that they use. Never let us bring harm and reproach and sadness and grief to the hearts of those who are your jewels and your sheep and your beloved. Grant, oh Lord, that our spirits shall bear witness with their witness to this gospel of thy saving grace.