

BLESSED SELF-FORGETFULNESS

Practical Grace: How the Gospel Transforms

1 Corinthians 3:21-4:7

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INTRODUCTION

We are doing a series in which we are looking at the marks of a supernaturally changed heart. We're not looking so much at morally virtuous behavior. You can do all kinds of morally virtuous things out of a heart filled with fear, pride and desire for power or out of a heart that's been actually changed at the root by the grace of God. So what we're doing is we're looking at the traits of a heart that's really been radically changed by the grace of God.

This particular letter, the passage that was just read to you, it's obviously a letter from Paul to the Corinthians. The Corinthian church was filled with division. The reason for all the references to Paul and Apollos and Cephas was because this church had originally been planted by Paul but later on other ministers came through, other speakers, other evangelists came through, and there's different people who had connections to these different prominent ministers.

So one person was mentored and disciplined by Paul. Another one was mentored and appointed into leadership by Apollos, another great teacher. And so forth. Instead of everybody just being happy that they had this relationship with Paul or Apollos, these relationships are now the basis for a power play. Parties have arisen. Divisions are tearing the church up. People are saying, "I should be the leader because Paul is the one who disciplined me. Another said, "So what! I have a relationship with..." And so on.

Paul in this passage shows that the root cause for why we cannot get along, the root cause for why there is no peace in the world and why we can't live at peace with each another, is pride and boasting. Verse 21 starts off, "*No more boasting.*" The last verse, chapter 4, verse 7, "*Let's stop the boasting.*" And especially, "*Let's not have pride of one man over another*" in verse 6. So we're at the trait of humility. We're here to talk about humility. And that means we get into a very, very culturally interesting subject which is self-esteem.

I'll tell you how interesting it is. Up until the 20th Century, every traditional culture, and this is still true in most cultures of the world, the traditional cultures have always believed that too high a view of yourself is the real root cause for most of the evil in the world. Most of the crime, violence and war-likeness. Why do people abuse? Why are people cruel? Why do people do the bad things they do? Traditionally, the answer was hubris. That's Aristotle's term. Of course, Greek. Pride, too high a view of yourself is the reason why we misbehave.

But in the modern Western culture, and particularly in the United States, we have an utterly opposite cultural consensus. The basis of our education, of the way in which we treat incarcerated prisoners, the basis of a lot of our legislation, certainly the basis of our counseling, in our culture is exactly the opposite of the consensus of all the other societies that have ever lived. And that is, our belief today, and it's deeply rooted in everything, it's a cultural consensus, is that people misbehave because of a lack of self-esteem, because they have too low a view of themselves.

The reason husbands beat their wives, why people are criminals, is because they have too low a view of themselves. Traditional cultures said the problem is you have too high a view. Pride and too much self-esteem. Now we say it's too little self-esteem. Probably the simplistic approaches are going to be jumbled up pretty badly in the next few decades.

Did any of you notice that the February 3rd New York Times Magazine had an article by Lauren Slater, a psychologist, called "The Trouble with Self-Esteem." It was not a groundbreaking argument. It wasn't some new bolt out of the blue. All she was doing was beginning to report what the experts have known for years. What is significant about the article is that there is enough accumulated evidence now that is starting to come down into the popular consciousness but has a long way to go. What she says is there's no evidence in the last 15 to 20 years that low self-esteem is a big problem in society.

She says for example, *"Last year, there were three withering studies of self-esteem released in the United States all of which had the same central message. People with high self-esteem pose a greater threat to those around them than people with low self-esteem. And feeling bad about yourself is not the source of any of our country's biggest problems."*

Now it would be fun to go and explain why and how that works and so on, but suffice it to say, she is right when she says it will be years and years for modern Americans especially to accept this. It is so deeply rooted in us that lack of self-esteem is the reason why there's drug addiction, abuse, crime, wife beating and so forth. She says it's going to take forever and here's the reason why because what is so wonderful about the low self-esteem theory of misbehavior is you have to make no moral judgments in order to deal with these problems. All you have to do is just support people and build them up.

In traditional cultures, the way you dealt with these problems was you clamped down on people and convicted people. You called them bad! "We don't want to go back to that, do we?"

What's intriguing about this passage is it gives us an approach to self-regard, an approach to the self, a way of seeing yourself, that is absolutely different than traditional cultures and modern/postmodern contemporary culture. The three things we learn here is Paul shows us the natural condition of the human ego and then the supernatural condition that can be brought about through the Gospel, and lastly, how to get it. The natural condition of the human ego. The transformed sense of self and identity that Paul had discovered. And how to get it.

THE NATURAL CONDITION OF THE HUMAN EGO

First thing we learn is the natural state of the human self. He uses a word in verse 6 that you say, "Sure, OK, I know about that." He says let's have no more pride. But you have to understand that Paul is using the word pride here that's unusual. What's really significant about it is it's not the hubris word. It's not the normal word for pride. It's a word that Paul uses in this particular book 6 times. It's used by no one else in the Bible. It's only used by Paul in one other place, in Colossians. It shows up every couple of chapters and every commentator now realizes it's a special theme of Paul. He is trying to help these Corinthians by teaching them something about human ego by using this particular word.

This word for pride is a word that literally means to be over-inflated, swollen, distended beyond it's proper size. It's related to the word bellows. It's very evocative and kind of painful. It evokes the image of some organ of the human body that is distended because so much air has been pumped into it that it's ready to burst. It's over-inflated, distended, swollen, inflamed

because it's been extended past its proper size. That, he says, is the condition of the natural human ego.

Now I think because it's so evocative and such an interesting metaphor, we're supposed to reflect on what does the metaphor mean. What is he trying to say? Here are some things we learn. The natural condition of the human ego is to be empty, painful, busy and fragile.

The Human Ego is Empty

The image, first of all, gives us, obviously, is that at the center of the human ego, no matter how big it is, is an emptiness. Soren Kierkegaard in his book, "Sickness Unto Death," says it is the normal state of the human heart to try to build its identity around something besides God. Spiritual pride is the illusion that you are competent to run your own life, achieve your own sense of self-worth and find a purpose big enough to give you meaning in life without God.

Kierkegaard says the normal human ego is built on something besides God, something that will give you worth, a sense of special-ness and a sense of purpose. And of course, as this is a very well known metaphor in the history of Christian communication, if you try to put anything in the middle of a place that was originally made for God, it's going to be too small. It's going to rattle around in there. Therefore, the human ego is empty.

The Human Ego is Painful

Because it's empty, secondly, it's painful. The idea of being distended and over-inflated means that it's painful. Have you every noticed that you don't notice your body unless there's something wrong with it. For example, I didn't come to church today saying, "My toes just feel great tonight. My elbow just works like a charm." You would only talk or think like that if something had been wrong with it because parts of your body do not call attention to themselves unless there's something wrong with them.

The ego has got something incredibly wrong with it. Your self, your identity, has something unbelievably wrong with it because it's always drawing attention to itself every single day. How you look. How you were treated. People are always saying, "My feelings were hurt." How can feelings be hurt? It's your ego that's hurt. Your feelings are fine. You're having bad, bad, bad feelings about your ego.

Just walking around doesn't hurt my toes unless there's something already wrong with them. And yet you can't get through the day without feeling snubbed, ignored or stupid or getting down on yourself. There's something wrong with your identity. There's something wrong with your ego. There's something wrong with your sense of self because it's always never happy. It's always drawing attention to itself.

So first of all, it's empty. But it's like a bloated stomach that hurts like crazy because it's distended in it's emptiness so secondly, it's painful.

The Ego is Busy

Thirdly, because it's empty and painful, it's incredibly busy and this explains what we mean when we say it's always drawing attention to itself. It's incredibly busy trying to fill the emptiness. It's incredibly busy doing two things in particular. Those two things are comparing and boasting. Do you see them in here?

...Busy Comparing

First of all, notice he doesn't say in verse 6, "Then you will not take pride." He says, "*Then you will not take pride in one man over against another.*" This is the very essence of what it means to have a normal human ego. The normal human ego is not only empty, but the way it tries to fill it's emptiness and deal with it's discomfort is by comparing yourself to other people all the time.

C.S. Lewis points out in his famous chapter on pride in "Mere Christianity," that pride is by nature competitive, the very essence of pride is competitive. He says, "*Pride is something that is essentially competitive. Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only having more of it than the next person. You may think you are proud of being successful or intelligent or good-looking. But you really aren't. You are only proud of being more successful, more intelligent and more good-looking than other people.*"

"When you are in the presence of people who are much more successful, intelligent and good-looking than you, you lose all pleasure in what you had because you really had no pleasure in it. You were proud of it. Pride is the pleasure of having more than the next person. Pride is the pleasure of being more than the next person."

“Lust may drive a man to sleep with a beautiful woman but at least lust makes him want her. Pride drives a man to sleep with a beautiful woman just to prove he can do it and to prove that he can do it over the others. Pride destroys the ability to have any real pleasure from her.”

...Busy Boasting

When I was a junior in high school, maybe this happened to you, my parents kept coming to me and saying, “Honey, go out for the chess club.” I said, “Mama, I hate chess.” “Yeah, I know,” she said, “but it would look so good on your college application. Why don’t you volunteer to do some of that, don’t they feed the homeless and the hungry downtown every Saturday morning?” “Yeah, mom, I don’t want to go there. I hate that.” “I know, but it would look so good on your college application.”

So my junior year in high school, I just did all kinds of stuff that I absolutely had no interest in doing for themselves but I was putting together a resume. This is what your ego is doing all the time. You’re in jobs that you take no pleasure in. You’re doing diets that you take no pleasure in. You are doing all kinds of things that you’re not doing for themselves but you are comparing yourself to other people. You’re boasting.

The word boasting here means to recommend yourself. It means you are creating a self-esteem resume desperately to fill the sense of inadequacy and emptiness. So busy, all the time!

The Human Ego is Fragile

And lastly, it’s not only empty and painful and busy, it’s fragile because anything that is over-inflated is imminently about to be deflated. To be over-inflated means to be in constant danger of being deflated and you are. People who seem to have no pride because they hate themselves and they tell you they hate themselves and tell themselves they hate themselves are deflated.

To be deflated means you were inflated. If you’re puffed up by air and not filled up by something solid, then to be inflated and to be deflated is all the same thing. To have a superiority complex or an inferiority complex is just the same thing. They’re both results of being over-inflated, distended, empty, painful, busy and, of course therefore, fragile.

I’ll read you a perfect example of this even though I’m not trying to lift her up as an example of being worse than other people at all. As a matter of fact,

she shows a tremendous amount of awareness. I have a lot of admiration for her. This is something I lifted years ago out of a Vogue magazine interview with Madonna in which she was talking about her career. *“My drive in life comes from the fear of being mediocre. That’s always pushing me. I push past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being. But then I feel I’m still mediocre and uninteresting unless I do something else. Because even though I’ve become somebody, I still have to prove that I’m somebody. My struggle is never ended and I guess it never will.”*

She knows herself better than most of us know ourselves. What she is saying is every time I accomplish something, I say now I’ve got the verdict that I’m somebody. The next day I realize that unless I keep going, I’m not. My ego cannot be satisfied. My sense, my desire for self-worth and to be sure I’m somebody, I need a verdict and it’s not coming. I keep thinking I’ve won it from what people have said and what the magazines have said and the next day I’ve got to go somewhere else.

Why? Because my ego is insatiable. It’s a black hole. It doesn’t matter how much I throw into it, the cupboard is bare. I put all kinds of stuff in it every morning and the next night it’s bare. She says I’ve become somebody and I realize I’ve still got to become somebody. Now you say, “How neurotic?” No, she knows herself. She’s ahead of most of us. Now that’s the normal state of the human self.

But Paul comes around and then in the middle of this passage, for their sake, all these people who are fighting over him and saying, “I know Paul,” and they’re showing all this pride. They can’t enjoy the fact that they know Paul. They have to use the fact they know Paul for one-upmanship on the other people in the church.

What he does is he says, “Let me show you how I do it.” In verses 3 and 4, we have Paul giving us an example of how now that he understands the Gospel, how his own sense of self-worth works, how his own self-regard operates and how his own identity works and his own ego, in a sense, works.

First of all, he says, in verse 3, yes, I’m a minister and have a job to do in verse 1 and 2, but with regard to it he says, *“I care very little if I am judged by you or any human court.”* Do you see what he is saying? The word judge is verdict. It’s a thing, by the way, that Madonna is looking for. He says one

thing I want you to know is I don't care what you think about me. I don't care what anybody thinks about me.

He doesn't just say I care little if I'm judged by you or any human body. He says I have come to the place where my identity owes nothing to what people say. I don't care what you think. I don't care what anybody thinks. My identity, my self-regard, is not tied in any way to your verdict and your evaluation of me.

A lot of us say, "OK, that sounds great. He doesn't seem to be suffering from low self-esteem." No, he isn't. How do you get to the place where what people think about you, doesn't control you anymore?

Now almost everybody would say it's very obvious. Every counselor I know, practically, would go like this. If they met somebody who was too controlled by what other people thought, here is what they would say. "It shouldn't matter what other people think of you. You shouldn't be living according to what they say. You shouldn't be living according to their standards. It shouldn't matter what they think of you. What should only matter is what you think about you. It should only matter what your standards are. Choose your own standards. Decide who you want to be and then be it."

Is that what Paul does? No! In other words, all we know, we in our modern world do not know how to deal with low self-esteem without remedying it with high self-esteem. We're saying, "You need to see that you're a great person. You need to see how wonderful you are. Look at all the great things you've accomplished. You just have to not worry about what other people think about you. You set your own standards and then you accomplish them. You evaluate yourself."

Paul says, "I care very little if I'm judged by you or by any human court. Indeed, I do not judge myself." Let me paraphrase this. Paul says, "I don't care what you think but I don't care what I think. I have a very low opinion of your opinion of me. But I have a very low opinion of my opinion of me."

Look carefully at what he says here. *"I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court. Indeed, I don't even judge myself. My conscience is clear but that does not make my innocent."* He will not fall into the trap of high self-esteem. He says, "Just because my conscience is clear, maybe my

conscience is clear, that doesn't mean I'm innocent." Hitler might have had a clear conscience but that doesn't mean he was innocent.

It's a trap to say, "It doesn't matter what other people think. Don't worry about their standards. You just set your own standards." That's an answer? I feel terrible when I can't live up to my parent's standards. I feel terrible when I can't live up to your standards. I feel terrible when I can't live up to culture's standards. I feel terrible when I can't live up to other standards. So now the solution is I set my own standards? So I feel terrible when I don't live up to my standards! Unless I have incredibly low standards. Is that a solution? Then I feel horrible because I said, "I'm the kind of person who has low standards."

Paul is not biting. And yet when he says, "I not only don't care what you think. I'm not looking to you for my identity. The verdict that Madonna is looking for, that I'm somebody. I don't get it from you but I don't get it from me." Here is what he is doing. He is moving off of our map. He is moving into territory that we don't know anything about.

Here's what he is doing. Some people think he's got high self-esteem. "Look, he says his conscience doesn't bother him. He says he doesn't judge himself. Good, you shouldn't condemn yourself." But that's not what the word judge means. The word judge here means a verdict whether positive or negative. Here's what he is saying.

We know this. Paul is off our maps because we know Paul was a man with incredible ballast. He was one of the five to seven most influential leaders in the history of the human race. He had incredible confidence. He moved ahead. Nothing fazed him. And yet he says in 1 Timothy, "*Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.*" Not "I was chief," but "I *am* chief." That is off of our maps.

How can somebody have incredible confidence and say, "I am one of the worst people?" How can somebody be absolutely honest and aware of all kinds of moral flaws yet have incredible poise and confidence? We can't do that because we're judging ourselves.

When Paul says, "I don't let you judge me. I don't even judge me," here's what he means. "I know about my sins but I don't connect them to me and my identity. They're not connected. I don't play that game. I don't see a sin

and then say, 'Bad job, so I'm bad. Over here, good job, so I'm good.' I get rid of the 'So I'm.' There's no connection. I don't play that game. I see all kinds of sins. I see all kinds of accomplishments. And I do not connect. Yeah. That's the reason why I'm one of the chief of sinners. That's not going to stop me from doing the things I'm called to do."

We don't know anything about that! We know, "If I thought I was a bad person and if I thought I was a sinner, if I thought I was filled with pride and lust and anger and greed and all the things that Paul says he's filled with, I wouldn't have any confidence." No, because you're judging yourself. You set your standards. Congratulations. And now you're condemning yourself because the ego will never be satisfied that way. Never!

What Paul says is something astounding. "I don't care what you think and I don't care what I think." Paul is bringing us into new territory we don't know anything about because Paul's ego is not puffed up; it's filled up. He is saying and this is why I almost hate to use the word humility because it's not like anything you think of as humility or we think of in the world as humility. He is saying, "I have come to the place where my ego does not draw any more attention to itself than any other part of my body. I've come to the place where I'm not thinking about myself anymore. When I do something wrong or I do something right, I don't connect it anymore. I'm not thinking about myself."

That's why C.S. Lewis says in a fascinating little spot at the very end of his chapter on pride. "*Do not imagine if you meet a truly humble person (he's talking about the kind of Gospel-humility we're talking about here) you would ever come away from him thinking he was humble. He will not be somebody who is always telling you he is a nobody. (This is actually a self-obsessed person, a person who is judging himself, either up or down, doesn't matter). All you will remember from coming away from a truly humble person, how much he seems to be totally interested in you. The essence of Gospel humility is not thinking more of yourself or thinking less of yourself. It's thinking of yourself less.*"

It's not needing to think about yourself. It's not needing to connect things. Every conversation is, "I'm in this room with these people. Does that make me look good? Do I want to be here?" I stopped thinking about myself. The blessed rest of self-forgetfulness! An ego that's not puffed up but filled up!

Do you know how unique this is? Let me show you a couple of examples of this. Is this high self-esteem? No. Is this low self-esteem? No. Certainly not! But it's not high self-esteem. He just stops the game. He stops it. He says, "I don't care about your opinion but I don't care that much about my opinion." And that's the secret.

Let me give you an example. One of the ways you can tell a truly Gospel-humbled person, I know, when I start to describe this person, you're going to say, "I've never met anybody like that, including you." And all right. Touche! But look at this. One mark of a truly humble person, a self-forgetful person not a self-hating person, not a self-loving person so much but a self-forgetful person, a person whose ego is like his toes, or her toes, it just works and it doesn't draw attention to itself. Here's one little test.

On the one hand, it would never be hurt that bad by criticism. It would not be devastating. It would not bother you. It would not keep you up late. Why? Because a person who is devastated by criticism, you're putting too much stock in what other people think, in other people's opinion. But how does the world heal being thin skinned and devastated by criticism? What you say to yourself is, "Who cares what those people think? I know what I think. Who cares what the rabble thinks? I know what I think."

You either have people who are devastated by criticism or they're not devastated by criticism but they don't take it. They don't listen to it. They don't learn from it. "The reason it doesn't devastate me is I know who I am. I know what I think." In other words, we do not know how to heal low self-esteem except with pride and they are both horrible nuisances to your own future and to everybody around you.

But a person who is self-forgetful, whose ego is not puffed up but filled up, when you get criticism, it wouldn't devastate you but you'd listen to it. "Oh, criticism, an opportunity to change." I don't know anybody who does that. The closer you get to understanding the Gospel, as I'll show you here in a second, the more you'll be like that.

Friends, wouldn't you want to be somebody who doesn't need honor and isn't afraid of it, doesn't lust for recognition but on the other hand, isn't frightened to death of it? Don't you want to be the kind of person who, when you go by a mirror or a window, you don't admire what you see and you

don't cringe either? Wouldn't you want to be the kind of person who, in your imaginary life, you don't sit around fantasizing about hitting self-esteem home runs? Nor do you ever beat yourself up.

Do you ever sit around saying, "Boy I was stupid, I was wrong. How could I have done something like that?" Wouldn't you like to be free? Wouldn't you like to be the skater who wins the silver and yet be as excited about those three triple jumps that the gold medal winner did? You love it just the way you love a sunrise. You just love the fact that it was done. You don't care that she did it. You don't care if you did it. You're just as happy that she did it as if you did it because you're just so happy to see it.

You say, "I don't know anybody like that." That's the possibility if you keep on going where Paul's going. You could actually start to enjoy things. They're not about you. Your work is not about you. Your skating is not about you. Your romance is not about you. Your dating is not about you. You could actually enjoy things for what they are. They're not just for your resume. They're not just to look good on your application. They're not just a way of filling up the emptiness. Wouldn't you want that?

This is off the map. This is Gospel humility, blessed self-forgetfulness. Not thinking more of yourself like in modern cultures or thinking less of yourself like in traditional cultures. It's thinking of yourself less.

HOW TO GET BLESSED SELF-FORGETFULNESS

How did Paul get it? He actually tells you but you have to read kind of closely. He says, number one, "I don't care what you think." Number two, "I don't care what I think. I don't look to you for the verdict and I don't look to me for the verdict." And then, instead of jumping too quickly, you've got to read more carefully, he says, "My conscience is clear."

In other words, he is saying "Even if my conscience is clear, that does not make my innocent." That is what the translation says but the word is, "That does not justify me." The word he uses is the word justify, the same word he uses all through Romans and Galatians. He is saying that what Madonna is looking for, what we're all looking for, is an ultimate verdict that we're important and we're valuable. Every time we've done it, it doesn't seem to be there.

What that means is in the world, every single day, we go to trial. We're in a courtroom every day. Do you notice how Paul says, "I don't care what you think about me or what any human court thinks." Now that is odd. They're not a court. The people he is writing to are not a court. Why would he say, "I don't care about what you think or any human court."

He's talking, I think, metaphorically. What he is trying to say is the problem with self-esteem, high or low, the problem with the way almost everybody's normal identity works, is that every single day you're in the courtroom. You're on trial. There's the prosecution and defense. And everything you do, you're stamping "Evidence" for the prosecution and "Evidence" for the defense. Some days you feel like you're winning the trial. Some days you feel like you're losing the trial.

Paul says he's found the secret. "The trial is over for me! I'm out of the courtroom. It's gone. Over. Because the ultimate verdict is in."

Now how could that be? He says it very simply. "You cannot justify me. I cannot justify myself. It is the Lord who judges me. His opinion only counts." And in Jesus Christ, and only in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, do you get the verdict before the performance.

Whether you're an atheist, "I get my self-image from being a very good person." Well, fine. What you mean is, "If I'm a good person, eventually I hope for some kind of verdict that I'm a good person." In other words performance leads to the verdict.

If you're a Buddhist, performance leads to the verdict. If you're a Muslim, performance leads to the verdict. Which means every day you're in the courtroom. Every day you're on trial. That's the problem.

But Paul says in Christianity the verdict leads to performance. The performance does not lead to the verdict. The minute I believe, God says, "You are My beloved in whom I am well-pleased." The verdict is in. Romans 8:1, "*Now there is no condemnation for those who are Christ Jesus.*" The verdict is in and now I perform on the basis of the verdict. He loves me. He accepts me. Now I don't have to do things just to build my resume. Now I don't have to do things to make me look good. I can do things to do things and help people to help people, not so I can feel better about myself, not so I can fill up the emptiness.

Every other form of identity in which you say, “What’s going to make me have a sense of worth is I’m liberal or I’m conservative. I’m a good person or a free person. I’m religious. I’m moral.” Whatever! It’s always the performance that leads to the verdict. But the verdict is never there. It never comes.

Madonna said so and she ought to know! Madonna has done things that you’re never going to do and it’s still not enough. Madonna is more talented than anybody in this room, more gutsier than anyone in this room. She’s done all kinds of stuff and she says, “Guess what? I’ve gone way beyond anything that you’ve ever done. The ultimate verdict that I’m looking for has not come yet.

But in Christianity, instead of the performance leading to the verdict, which it never does, the verdict can lead to the performance. How can that be? Here’s the answer.

Paul is out of the courtroom and out of the trial because Jesus went to trial, because Jesus went into the courtroom, because Jesus Christ became a Lamb that was sheared, was dumb before His shearers. He was struck in His trial and it was a kangaroo trial. It was an unjust trial and He was put to death.

Why? As our substitute, He took our condemnation we deserved. He took the trial we deserved so we don’t have to have any more trials. The minute I say, “Lord God, accept me because of what Jesus has done,” the only Person Whose opinion counts, looks at me and finds me more valuable than all the jewels that are under the earth.

How can you worry about being snubbed now? How can you worry about being ignored now? How can you care that much about what it looks like in the mirror? You say, “I wish I believed this.”

The only thing I can say is there are some people here who, hopefully, who have never understood the difference between Christian identity and any other kind. They say, “You’re a Christian? That means you’re very good. You go to church and you hope that someday, God will take you in.”

No! The Christian identity operates totally different than any other kind of identity. That’s the reason why it leads to blessed self-forgetfulness. It takes

you out of the courtroom. The trial is over. The verdict is in. Some of you have never seen that. Go find out what that means. Figure out the parts. I went fast.

Well, you say, “Why did Jesus have to die?” There’s a lot more to it. If you’re new, stay and keep coming until you understand the whole picture.

There’s a whole lot of others who say, “You know, I believe everything you said, of course. I’ve been coming for years and every day I find myself being sucked back into the courtroom. I’m not living like Paul says. I’m not living the way Paul is. I’m getting sucked back in.”

All I can tell you is you have to relive the Gospel every time you pray, every time you come to church. And you have to relive the Gospel on the spot. You have to say, “What am I doing in this courtroom? Court is adjourned. I don’t care what you think. I don’t even care what I think. I only care what the Lord thinks.

And He has said, ‘You are My beloved child in whom I am well-pleased.’” Live out of that.

Let us pray:

Give us what we need, Father, to develop this blessed self-forgetfulness. This is not really pride, of course, it’s not low self-esteem, it’s not high self-esteem. It’s so hard even to describe.

We just ask that you would help us to pull it into our own lives and begin to practice it. Think of how different we would be. Think of how free we would be.

Show us how we can make this more central. Show us how we can live out of it. Help us to be everything we can be in Jesus.

In Whose Name we pray,
Amen.