

I'm

Y'all ready to get after it?

All right, hey, before we jump into what God has for us this morning, I wanna take just a moment to re-announce what I announced about a month and a half ago.

For many of you, this will simply be a reminder.

For some of you who are newer to Heartland, this might be new information, but this is my last Sunday preaching for, whoa!

Whoa!

Whoa!

You do not have to identify yourself, but listen, the Lord knows who you are.

Wow.

Let's start it again.

Jan, I would expect that from you, but okay.

All right.

My last Sunday preaching for several months, one of the rhythms that we have built in here at Heartland is that pastoral staff takes a sabbatical, an extended period of rest, if you don't know what that is, every seven years.

By the way, it is really hard to believe that it has been seven years.

years since we moved back from India to replant Heartland Church.

Time flies when you're having this much fun, I think.

But if you don't know the story, it really is staggering what the Lord has done to grow His church for His glory over these last seven years.

Heartland, if you don't know, Heartland was less than a week away from closing its doors.

I

There was a plan in place after several attempts to merge with other churches, because Heartland had gotten down to about 25 people.

So there were several attempts to merge with other churches, and when those were unsuccessful, they rolled out a plan and were about to present that to shut everything down, but God had different plans.

Starting with those 25 or so people, God has grown his church at Heartland to the point where, if you can believe it, we have about 10 times that many people who call Heartland Church their home now.

And listen, it's all God's work.

It's all God's work.

That's what we're talking about today, actually, in our theological topic.

But I want to say that it's all God's work, but God calls us to participate in that work.

And there's a lot of things that go into that as we participate with him.

And so we are ready for an extended period of rest.

And that's important for a lot of reasons.

Physical rest is important.

Like if you don't take a Sabbath and rest once a week, that's a problem.

We're gonna talk about that later in Exodus.

God made us to rest, right?

And so physical rest is gonna be important for us, but also just emotional and spiritual recharging where we can be filled.

And my prayer is that we would be prepared for this next season, this next seven years of...

graduating from being a church replant to what does it look like to be a healthy, growing, multiplying church where we're thinking about the advance of God's kingdom, not just in our community, but throughout the world.

And so very, very excited about that happening as God fills us while we're away.

But more than anything, I'm just gonna say this because it's important for all of our lives.

Me taking a sabbatical is a tangible expression of the fact that Heartland does not need me and I don't need Heartland.

Heartland needs Jesus and I need Jesus.

And we always need to be reminded of that because we'll find ourselves very quickly living from misplaced identity where we tie our identity to the wrong stuff.

You know what I'm talking about?

So you'll start to think, oh, like my role as a husband or as a wife or as a mom or dad or my job or whatever it is, you start to think that that's who you are.

You are a redeemed person.

child of God, and what Jesus says about you is what shapes and forms your identity, and everything else in your life, including all those roles, flows from your identity in Jesus Christ.

Amen?

If we don't keep that straight, what happens is all the horizontal stuff in our life starts misfiring where that vertical piece is not kept straight.

And so we want to be reminded of that.

So this is going to be good for our family.

It's going to be good...

for Heartland.

I can tell you that we have some amazing preachers lined up while I'm away.

I'm jealous because I'm wishing I could be here for some, I will be here for some of this.

You'll see me like in the back with a hat on and sunglasses.

You're not allowed to talk to me apparently, but no, it's not true.

Say hi.

But amazing preaching lined up for you.

We're going to have two of our elders, John Tagg and Austin, get to preach.

Excited about that.

But you're also going to hear sermons

from guys like Kenny Petty.

If you don't know Kenny, he's my good friend.

He's been here twice before to preach.

God saved him from North City gang culture in solitary confinement in prison.

He's been pastoring and leading.

He currently works for Mission St.

Louis.

He's one of my dear friends.

Kenny's gonna be here.

Paul Fernandez is gonna be with us.

If you don't know Paul...

I don't know if I've met a guy who preaches with as much gospel energy and exuberance as Paul.

It's a lot coming from me because I tend to sweat when I preach.

But listen, Paul from Living Hope Church, one of our funded church plants over in Belleville, Illinois, they're seeing phenomenal stuff happen through their church.

Paul's going to be with us to bring the gospel.

That's going to be a blessing.

My good friend Josh Jones is actually gonna kick things off next weekend.

Josh planted Church of the Redeemer in South St.

Louis City.

He and I have known each other for about 15 years.

He's never preached here before, but you're gonna love him.

Fantastic.

Y'all gonna be spoiled in July because John Ryan's gonna be with us for a four-week series.

He's gonna preach through some of Ephesians chapter five, talking about what it looks like to redeem the time.

John is a dear friend to Heartland Church in Acts 29.

We're very excited about that.

Sean Boone will be with us.

Many of you don't know Sean.

He's one of our new funded church planters in Ferguson.

He planted the bridge.

church, which is amazing.

It's this multi-ethnic, diverse church that exists in Ferguson, which almost exactly matches the community demographics of Ferguson.

The church is like 60% African American, 40% white.

They're doing life together in a community that desperately needs to see reconciliation, racial reconciliation lived out.

It's happening in Ferguson.

That's what needs to be happening through the church.

Amen?

So we get to partner with a guy like Sean Boone and Nathan, his co-pastor.

And so he's going to be here to preach for us.

That's going to be a blessing as well.

And then our dear brother, Mike Bird.

I had dinner.

Maren and I had dinner with Mike and Tracy last night.

He's going to be here on August 9th and August 16th.

to preach.

I'm trying.

I haven't told our worship team this.

We're trying to figure out maybe if Tracy can step in and help us lead worship a little bit on one of those days.

But anyway, I want you all to mark August 9th on your calendar.

Circle that date.

Because that first date that Mike is here, he's bringing his whole church with him.

And then afterwards, we're going to have a barbecue picnic with both churches here at Heartland.

You're like, how does that work logistically?

I have no idea.

We don't have that many seats as it is.

We got an overflow room downstairs.

So we're going to figure it out together for the glory of the Lord.

And we're going to eat good barbecue.

And so August 9th, that's going to be happening.

Make plans to stay for lunch that day.

It's going to be a great summer.

So y'all are in for it.

You're going to be like, Jeff, we are so ready for you not to come back.

And that'll be fine.

But I love it.

Now, some people have asked how you can be praying for us.

I just wanna, just the things I talked about earlier.

Like I would love for you to be praying for our family that we get physical rest, that we get recharged emotionally, relationally, spiritually filled.

I just, man, I wanna come back more in love with Jesus and more in love with the church than when I left.

And so just be praying for us while we're away because we're anticipating God to do great things, all right?

Okay.

So that's what's happening.

So I'll see y'all after this morning in mid-September, and we appreciate your prayers.

All right, you ready to get after it?

Okay, two people.

Here we go.

We're gonna be all over the place in Scripture this morning, so I don't really, if you wanna turn somewhere, we're gonna get started probably in Romans chapter eight, but I'm bouncing a little bit this morning.

That's not typical at Heartland.

We typically preach systematically and expositionally through books of the Bible.

In fact, we are in the book of Exodus right now, and what we've been doing is walking through these four,

theological lessons six to be specific theological lessons that we see underlying the account of the plagues and so we thought man instead of just going through and just being like boils

frogs, flies, and working through some of the mechanics of that, because there is a good bit of repetition.

We thought that it would be really cool to organize the entire time around the areas of theology that we see underlying the plagues.

And so that's what we've labored to do.

I don't know how you felt about this, but I've loved getting to explore these areas over the last five weeks of doctrine together.

really chew on these things with lots of charity and grace.

Did you know that the study of theology is actually meant to create greater love and humility in us?

That's what theology is supposed to do.

Oftentimes we see how theology puffing up and creating pride or dissension or disunity.

It's not the purpose of theology.

It's actually soften us to allow us to see more of God, to be driven to greater humility and worship and

So that we can experience greater love and charity with one another.

In fact, you can think about it like this.

The aim of theology isn't just information.

It's transformation.

And I hope that you've experienced that over the course of this study.

We have one area of doctrine left to broach today.

this morning.

By the way, totally forgot to mention this, and I should have.

We are going to hit pause on that study of Exodus that we're doing until after my sabbatical.

I've asked these preachers just to come and preach whatever God's placed on their heart.

So we're going to pick this conversation back up on September 27th.

I also forgot to say that we have house Bibles.

Jan, I see you back there championing those house Bibles.

And Karen, so if you need a copy of God's Word this morning, you want to follow along,

raise your hand and we'll get that to you.

All right, one area left to explore.

Before we get into that, let me tell you where we've been.

Over the last five weeks, I'm gonna move quick through these, but I think it's important that we talk about them because of how interconnected and symbiotic each one of these areas are.

It's hard to understand what we're talking about today without understanding what we've talked about over the last five weeks.

So here's where we've been.

First, and we got a slide on these in case you're taking notes, monotheism.

We started week one talking about monotheism.

Super simple to understand.

There's one God and you are not him.

I'm not him, right?

We are creatures and he alone is creator.

So you and I were made by God to be dependent upon God and to delight in a relationship with God.

And unless you understand that that's the purpose of your life, to be with God, to be dependent upon him, to find delight in his presence, life won't make sense to you.

right?

God alone is self-existent.

He depends on no one and nothing.

We are fully dependent upon him for all things.

Now, the truth is, is that our sin makes us chase after

All kinds of other lesser created things as though those things are God.

That's called idolatry.

Calvin said that the heart is a factory of idols.

We're constantly just chasing after lesser things.

So in a very real way, we become in our sin polytheists where we believe that there are many gods, but that's not true.

There's God and God alone.

And the gospel is bending our hearts back to that reality where we worship him as God

the one true God.

Second week, we talked about God's covenant faithfulness.

Our redemption is based entirely on God's faithfulness and not on our ability to measure up to a standard.

And that is incredibly good news.

That is incredibly free news that we're going to unpack in greater detail this morning.

But it's such good news.

Because listen, God is the only one who is faithful.

You and I are not faithful.

The reality is that anything that we have in us that accords with faith has been put there and then cultivated by God for his glory as a gift.

We're going to talk more about that again this morning.

Week three, two weeks ago, we talked about, or a few weeks ago, we talked about divine sovereignty.

That simply means that God rules and God reigns over absolutely everything.

There is nothing that exists or happens outside of God's say-so, His ordination, which means that everything in your life falls under the sovereign working of God and has great purpose.

There's nothing that...

befalls you that has not passed through the sovereign hand of God and has not been purposed for your good and for His glory that's incredibly comforting right because we we'll get tossed to and fro by the circumstances of our lives and how we feel about those circumstances but the beauty of the gospel is by the Spirit we can now take our emotions and our feelings and

And all of that and subject it to the mastery of the gospel, realizing that God speaks an infinitely better word.

That God can be trusted in that cancer diagnosis.

That God can be trusted in that broken relationship.

He can be trusted in that loss of employment or that loss of a loved one.

That he is God.

good over all of it, and he is in the business, Genesis 50, 20, of taking what the enemy would mean for evil and turning it for good.

He does it all the time.

God is sovereign over all things.

The calling on our lives is not to push back and fight against that sovereignty, kicking back against the goads.

It's to actually learn to find rest.

in the sovereign goodness of God, which is where our faith grows.

Two weeks ago, we talked about divine justice.

The fact that God is always right.

God is always just, even though there is massive injustice.

Turn on the news.

Massive injustice happening in a fallen world all around us.

Even though that's true, everything will one day be put in its right and proper place.

All things will be paid for.

and reconciled so here again God can be trusted with everything even when things don't make sense you ever had something happen and it hurts so deeply and you're like God I have no idea how this can be can be good ever had that happen come on sure

It makes sense in God's economy.

We talked about that tapestry with the back and all the strings, and it just looks like chaos.

But when you turn it around, it's this beautiful masterpiece, this work of art that God is cultivating in each one of our lives.

Last week, we talked about compatibilism.

Fancy church word that just means that God is sovereign and man is responsible at the same time.

That those two things are actually compatible.

So we think about that and we think that, yes, man is responsible.

human history but God is sovereign over human history we make choices but God is in control of absolutely everything in other words our choices don't somehow move outside or circumvent the sovereign will and providential working of God they actually fit within God's sovereignty

And as is the case with all of these areas, we're like, how does that work together exactly?

There's mystery there.

We don't know how all this necessarily fits together, but God knows how it fits together and God can be trusted.

You with me?

Today we're talking about monergism.

Now, monergism is a fancy word.

You can impress people with that, theologically probably, but it's actually not that hard to understand.

In fact, let me just start by defining the word, and then we can work to unpack it together.

The word monergism is just the combination of two root words, mono-  
which we already know what that means from our study of monotheism.

There's one God.

So mono just means that there's one.

And then the word ergon, it's that second word, and it means work.

It's where we actually get the root word for our word energy from the word ergon.

So the word monergism literally means one work or one working.

Here's the easy way to think about it.

I'll give it to you like this.

This is how I remembered it.

There's one who is working salvation.

I'll give you one guess as to who that is.

It isn't you and it isn't me.

It's God.

God is the one, the same God who holds, what did we talk about last week?

The whole world in the palm of his hand.

He is the one who is working salvation.

He's doing the work.

of salvation in our lives, not us.

Now that's not a new conversation for us here at Heartland because this is a drum that we beat all the time.

You know, it's religion, and specifically like in our world, it's empty Christian religion.

It's religion that tells us that this is all about doing things for God.

That's what religion is all about.

You and I doing things for God in order to be right with Him.

But the gospel, the good news of salvation, as outlined in scripture, isn't about us doing anything.

It's an invitation for us to find rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ and to enjoy his presence as he continues his work in and through our lives.

And those two positions, religion and the gospel, are completely different.

One, empty religious activity will lead you further and further away from God.

This idea that you have to do more and be more and live up to a standard and not embarrass God with your behavior.

I've heard somebody articulate it like that before or whatever else.

That will put you on a performance scale.

treadmill which will lead your heart away from God and breed exhaustion and frustration in your heart.

It'll happen every time.

That's the opposite of what the gospel actually does.

The message of the gospel, which is that you are saved by the gift of faith alone and that there is nothing you can do, there's nothing you must do to enter into the rest of God's salvation, that message will drive you straight into the arms of a God who loves you so much

That he actually died in your place so that you could know him and have relationship with him.

And that's what I want for us to be reminded of today.

That our salvation, and I mean all of our salvation, is about the grace of God at work in us so that we can truly find rest today.

for our weary souls.

That's what the doctrine of monergism is all about.

Finding rest in the working of God's grace.

So that's what we're going to unpack this morning.

But before we dig into that, I want to make sure that we see how this is evident in the account of the plagues.

Because that's essentially what we're talking about.

Again, if you're new to the conversation, instead of unpacking all those plagues specifically, we're saying, what is God showing through the plagues about his character and his nature?

And I'll tell you, like...

Monergism should be really obvious when we think about the plagues because God makes absolutely certain to everyone involved that what is happening in the Exodus, the administration of each of these plagues, that it is completely and entirely his work.

One work.

You look at the plagues and you're like, God's doing it.

He's doing all of it.

No one reads the account of the plagues and thinks, wow, the Israelites are really making things happen right now.

Like nobody.

They were hopeless and helpless in their captivity in Egypt.

The burden placed upon them was so great in their captivity that all they could do was groan.

Even Moses, right?

This great deliverer who God chose was completely incapable of doing what God had called him to do.

Do you remember God's calling on Moses?

He's like, I'm certain you have the wrong guy.

I'm certain that I'm not it.

I can't even speak correctly.

God's like, bro, who made your tongue?

Maybe I'm picking you to show my glory and my power through your weakness.

Isn't that kind of God's MO, right?

God once spoke to a guy through his donkey, right?

Look up the account of Balaam in Numbers.

God once, and I know you're like, every weekend that happens at Heartland, donkey on the stage communicating.

God always does this.

He will take what is weak according to the world's standards and he will use that to put what is strong according to the world's standards to open shame because there is one boast in this world.

There is one boast and that is in God alone.

And all of this is about reorienting our hearts to the fact that this is God's work.

So he's like, yeah, Moses, you're a mess.

You're weak.

It's not about you.

It's about my glory being revealed.

God made it obvious that he was the one who was doing everything in the Exodus, just like God has made it obvious throughout all of scripture that he's the one who's always been doing the work of redemption in the lives of his people.

It's the work that God still does today as he shows off his glory.

There is never a time when we can look at ourselves and say, I am really nailing it right now.

Never.

If you find yourself in a position and you're like, look, I don't want to say it, but I'm just going to say it like I'm killing it for Jesus right now.

And I know you're not dumb enough to say it out loud.

I'm talking about if you're saying it in your heart.

Because y'all don't act like you don't say that in your heart sometime.

You're like, man, I got this thing on lock.

That is a bad position to be in, right?

Pride goeth before a fall.

This is not about us.

Listen, that's not how it works.

Here's how it works, okay?

The only thing that we bring to the equation is our sin, right?

our brokenness, our messiness, our neediness of his grace and mercy.

God brings all the other stuff.

So you and I don't bring stuff in our hands to him.

That's not how it works.

We come to him empty-handed out of our extreme need for his grace.

For some of you in the room,

I'm guessing that you've experienced some frustration or maybe even indifference at times in your spiritual life and it's probably because you've been caught up in the lie of religion that you have to bring something to God of value in order for him to accept you and love you.

But that belief is actually, listen to me now, that belief is actually what is keeping you from coming to him.

It's this idea that I have to clean myself up or I have to have something of worth or value that I can bring to him.

The only way we come to God is empty handed.

We bring to him only our brokenness and our mess.

And God is the one who cleans us up.

And then, listen, it doesn't stop there.

God doesn't justify you, clean you up, adopt you, make you righteous in Christ, and then everything's magically delicious.

You just float around in the Shekinah glory of God, Jesus Jr.

It doesn't work like that.

God continues to sustain you and show off his glory through you as we walk around as trophies of his grace.

That's how this works.

And he continues that work by his grace until he brings us all the way home and finishes the work that he began in us.

By the way, into eternity past when he had us in his heart before he ever made a star or a planet or came up with things like gravity.

That's the point of monergism.

There is one who is working salvation, and that is God.

And it is all happening through the working of his grace.

So here's my main point that we're going to drive at this morning.

You can write this down if it's helpful for you.

It's up on the screens.

It is the sovereign grace of God that initiates, that sustains,

that accomplishes, I'm trying to hit all the words, and that finishes the salvation of his people.

It's God's sovereign grace that's doing all of that.

The initiation, the sustenance, the sustaining work.

It's accomplishing, it's finishing the work of salvation for his people.

So it's entirely God's work.

Now there are dozens of passages.

I mean dozens of passages that we could unpack that tell us that this is true.

Psalm 3.8 says clearly, salvation belongs to the Lord.

I love how Psalm 68.20 phrases it.

It says, our God is a God of salvation, and to God the Lord belongs deliverances from death.

Psalmist in Psalm 68 is saying, there's only one who brings things from death to life, and that's our God.

Jonah proclaims the same thing in Jonah chapter two, by the way, when he says salvation belongs to the Lord.

This is, God made that lesson visceral for Jonah, right?

As Jonah ran from him and God redeemed him.

Jonah's like, look, salvation belongs to the Lord.

Jesus even said it clearly in John 15 five.

He said it like this, apart from me, you can do nothing.

You can't do anything apart from my intervening work.

There are dozens and dozens of passages throughout scripture that tell us that salvation belongs to God and not to us.

And listen, this certainly moves in concert with everything that we have talked about over the last five weeks.

He alone is God.

He alone is faithful.

He alone is in control.

He alone is right and just.

And he calls us to participate in the work of

But he is the one who is doing the work.

Is everybody tracking with me on this?

All this moves together in concert to give us this big, beautiful picture of God's character and nature.

So here's what we're going to do.

I'm going to try to get you out early.

I figured the good gift is to give you a short sermon before I leave.

But all I want to do is, much like I did in the discussion with God's sovereignty, is I want to unpack this monergism through the lens of the three parts of salvation.

That might be news to you, but there are three components that we think of when we think of our salvation.

And I think it brings a lot of clarity to the discussion about monergism when we think about it and see it through each one of the parts.

So let me start by explaining, and this is really kind of Paul's thinking.

theology of salvation.

Let me explain these different parts.

And actually, let's look at this passage in Romans 8, which sort of cues up the conversation in our hearts.

I love this passage in verses 28, 29, and 30 of Romans 8 because it encapsulates so much of what we've been talking about throughout this little theological series.

This is what Paul wrote.

He said, and we know, I prayed this earlier, that for those who love God, all things work together for good.

For those who are called according to his purposes.

Now, does that happen by coincidence?

No, that's God sovereignly working all things together for the good of his people.

God's working providentially, sovereignly in all the details of our lives from the biggest to the smallest.

He goes on, for those whom God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

And those whom he predestined, he also called.

And those whom he called, he also justified.

And those whom he justified, he also glorified.

By the way, I love how all of that is in the past tense because you know what?

In the mind and heart of God, this has always been a done deal.

Can we just marvel for a second at the omnipresence of God?

Like this blows my mind.

I think about this and I have to take a Motrin because smoke starts coming out of my ears.

Because we're creatures who are made to think in terms of time and space and calendar and physical space and all that.

And God's not constrained by any of that stuff.

The past, the present, the future, they're all the same to God in his heart.

So I love the idea like God's omnipresence isn't just that God's everywhere all at once.

It's also that he's in all times all at once.

Think about that.

So not only is God with you in your present circumstances, let's say you're suffering right now.

Think about how beautiful this area of theology is.

If you're suffering right now, not only has God planned that for your good and his glory from before the foundation of the world and had it in his heart, but he's with you in your present circumstances, walking you into what's next, where he's already waiting for you and has made provision for you there.

Come on, right?

This is the beauty of how God works.

It's all a done deal.

Our justification, our sanctification, and our glorification are all a done deal in the mind of God.

He's just playing it out.

By the way, that's the three parts of salvation I just said.

I think they're on the screen.

This is how it works, right?

Let me just define them quickly.

Justification is that moment in time where God does all the thing, regenerates the heart, enables repentance.

It's where our sin is taken from us.

The wrath of God assuaged, the righteousness of Jesus imputed to us.

It's a fancy word.

Just think the opposite of amputation is imputation.

Which, by the way, is happening too because our sin is amputated from us.

It's removed from us, put on Jesus, and his righteousness is then imputed to us, which means it's covering us, which means that's now the narrative.

The narrative in my life, at my justification and yours, is no longer shame, guilt, condemnation.

It's forgiveness.

It's not guilty.

It's forgiveness.

freedom it's the fact that Jesus has set us free from both the penalty and the power of sin now you don't feel like you're free from the power of sin most days and neither do I because we're being sanctified what is positionally true of us in Christ according to our justification is being lived out and grown in like practical reality as God is sanctifying us what does that mean

He's conforming us to the image of his son.

He's growing us spiritually.

He's teaching us that we are in fact free from the power of sin and we now have the ability to walk in the spirit as he enables that by his grace.

We're gonna be talking more about that in a moment.

So that's that lifelong process of us growing and being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

That's our sanctification.

And it's a mess.

It's a mess.

We've talked about that.

It's messy.

It's like the video of the older gentleman trying to get on the escalator.

I've talked to you about this before.

If you haven't seen it, YouTube it later.

Just put old man escalator.

It's the first thing that will come up.

It's got four gajillion views, and you're welcome.

Because the poor guy just starts to kind of wobble, and then he kind of falls, and he's laying then on his side, and then he rolls to his back on the escalator.

He's making a hot mess out of the entire escalator experience.

But you know what's still happening in the midst of all that?

He's going up.

That's your sanctification.

That's my sanctification.

We're screwing the whole thing up and God's sovereign over it all.

He's made provision for it all.

He's ordained it all.

And he's gonna get us where he wants us to go.

That's good news, by the way.

Because I'm gonna make the argument in just a second that if your sanctification and my sanctification is up to our awesomeness, we got problems.

Because we're not awesome.

You and I don't know how to even stand on the escalator.

We just fall over.

But God's good and he's doing it.

We'll talk about it in a minute.

That's the second part.

Third part is our glorification.

And that is simply, remember I said we're free from the penalty of sin, the power of sin.

You know what glorification is?

We get freed from the presence of sin.

How good is that?

Unfettered by sin, worshipping him in his presence forever, completely free from the presence of sin.

What a beautiful reality.

That's when we're perfected in Christ, glorified in him, fully conformed to his image, and we're present with the Lord.

That's our salvation, justification, sanctification, and glorification.

Now, think back to our main point through the lens of

Of those three components.

Because you're going to see that.

Laced throughout this main point.

It's the sovereign grace of God.

That initiates.

We got this on the screen.

There we go.

Sustains.

Accomplishes.

And finishes the salvation of his people.

You see it?

It's all there.

From start to finish.

From before start.

To finish.

This is entirely God's work.

The calling, the justifying, the sanctifying, the preserving, the finishing, the glorifying, it's all his.

Now, think back also to what I said earlier about religion and how it actually leads you further away from salvation.

Religion says that you can justify yourself before God.

that you can somehow gain right standing with God through your behavior.

Religion says that you can gain a righteousness of your own through your own effort.

Religion says that you can change yourself through your own effort.

Like if it is to be, it's up to me.

And it's all a massive lie that is designed by the enemy to busy you straight to hell.

That's what religion does.

It busies you straight to hell.

It's meant to convince you that you have a relationship with God all while distracting you away from your desperate neediness of his grace, which is the only place where you will actually find healing and life.

Here's the truth of it.

You can't save yourself.

in any of these three areas of salvation.

You can't save yourself.

You can't bring yourself from death to life.

You can't transform your own heart over time through obedience.

And you certainly can't perfect yourself and finish the work.

Every single ounce of our justification, our sanctification, and our glorification happens by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone.

Period.

Hard stop.

So all I want to do is just show you all of that from God's word.

So let's think first about our justification.

Look at this very well-known passage from Ephesians chapter two.

Paul writes, for by grace you have been saved through faith.

For by grace you have been saved through faith.

This is not your own doing.

It is, specifically faith, it is the gift of God.

Which means God gives it to you.

You know that the moment you earn a gift, it stops being a gift?

It becomes a wage.

In order for it to be a gift, it means you can't earn it.

It's not a result of your working so that no one can boast.

That's what Paul says.

Now, if you think back to Ephesians chapter two, the beginning of the chapter, you might remember that Paul describes all humans as being what?

Dead in their sins and trespasses.

Dead.

Now, there is a universal truth that is pretty commonly understood and accepted that dead people don't do things.

I don't care how much you like The Walking Dead.

Dead people don't do things.

If you're dead, you're just dead.

Dead people, dead.

That's it.

That's all they do.

Paul, throughout the chapter, is making it abundantly clear that we are completely dependent upon God

moving in and regenerating the heart as we're born again spiritually.

And as we've discussed over the last several weeks, this new life that God brings to us in our spiritual rebirth is what allows us to actually engage in repentance and turn to him.

So when we talked about God's sovereignty and salvation, big argument is, ooh, do we choose God or does God choose us?

Yes.

The issue is who chooses first?

You're dead.

That means God has to bring you back to life in order for you to engage in repentance.

A believer can only say, I choose Jesus because he first chose me.

I love, this should sound familiar, by the way, this pattern.

I love because what?

He first loved me.

I can forgive.

Jesus tells these parables about forgiveness.

I can forgive because he has forgiven me.

I'm able to show mercy because he's lavished his mercy upon me and on and on and on it goes.

Anything good in us, including faith, has been put there by God because there's nothing good in us outside of his workings.

That's because God is the only one who gives spiritual life.

He's the only one who can replace a heart of stone with a heart of flesh.

He's the only one who gives us new desires and new affections that come from a new heart.

It's God's work alone to create new life.

That's always been God's work.

And that's what monergism tells us.

That God is the one who is bringing dead people back to life.

He's justifying them.

It's not something that we can do.

It only happens by his grace and through faith in Jesus Christ.

What about our sanctification?

The process of God transforming us spiritually over time.

Because I think this is where most people, most people get hung up here on performative living.

You know, they understand, well, yeah, I can't save myself.

I was a mess.

but they think that they can change themselves over time through their working.

So it's like, hey, God, thank you for rescuing me.

Now I need to get busy doing things for you.

And so that they get engaged in this performative way of living that I'm telling you will only breed frustration and lead you further away from his heart.

You will not experience joy on the performance treadmill.

You will not experience joy when you're hiding and pretending, because they usually work together, don't they?

It's not just that I'm running hard to try to change myself, it's that I'm wearing a mask and pretending like I'm awesome and better than I am in front of you, and then I'm working to change myself behind the mask, and the whole lie is that, well, once you figure some stuff out, Jeff, then you can be honest with people and take off the mask, and they're gonna see this sweet, polished version of you.

It's all a lie.

It's meant to keep me in the shadows and keep me chained to empty religion.

So let's think about this.

Look at what Paul wrote in Philippians chapter two.

This one passage gives us such clarity on this issue.

It says, therefore, my beloved, writing to believers there in Philippi,

As you have always obeyed, take note of that word, it's important.

As you've always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

You hear that?

Now that's where most people stop.

They're like, all right, I gotta get busy.

Paul's like, I'm not there to watch.

So much more than when I was there to watch, you better be making sure you get busy working out your salvation with fear and trembling.

But it doesn't stop there.

He says, for, that's an explanatory, I'm terrible at grammar, whatever the technical term is.

He's saying, here's what this means.

I'm gonna explain it further.

For, it is God who, what's the word?

works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

You see that?

He's saying work out your salvation with fear and trembling and here's how you need to understand that.

It's God who's actually working in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

So Paul is making it clear that yeah, we're to work, are we participants?

Yeah, God invites us.

Isn't it great that he invites us into this process, by the way?

I love it.

He's inviting us into this process of our sanctification.

And so we're called to do work.

And listen, that has everything to do with our obedience to what God has said.

That's essential in understanding how we see discipleship.

Here's how you need to remember discipleship at its core, hearing and obeying.

That's what discipleship is.

God said a bunch of stuff and we need to obey him with properly motivated hearts that are finding rest in the finished work of Jesus, right?

Not I go to scripture and it's like a manual for living and I'm like, okay, well, here's all the stuff I gotta do and here's all the junk I can't do.

Right?

And that's what's going to please God.

No.

Jesus says, John 15, 3, already you're clean because of the word that I've spoken to you.

Right?

Now abide in me.

Find rest in me.

Because apart from me, you can't actually do anything.

So as we're finding rest in Jesus and he's changing us from the inside out, do you know what he's enabling in us?

Obedience with properly motivated hearts.

Not obedience like all this should stuff.

You should, you should, you should.

I think that's what we do a lot of times.

We should all over each other.

And nobody wants to hear that.

Should this, should that, should this.

That's religion.

We need to be transformed from the inside out because of what Jesus has already done.

And that then frees us up to grow in obedience from a heart that looks more like him over time.

So we assume, I think, often, that our growth is about our ability to obey.

But we must not lose sight of the one who is working in us to enable and drive and fuel obedience in us moment by moment.

The obedience that is coming out of our lives as we grow is the produce of the work that God is doing in us to transform us from the inside out.

God is working and his working is driving our rightly motivated obedience.

You know, here's what I love about this.

One of the knocks against monergism, which is not justified, is that it creates passivity.

Yeah, the idea is, well, if everything's about the working of God's grace, then why should I do anything?

Right?

Well, that just illustrates that you haven't actually been invaded by his grace.

That's what that shows.

Because I'll tell you right now, the invasion and working of God's grace in the human heart makes us want to be with and look like the one who's done this to us.

That's what grace does.

This idea of like, well, all the legalists are like, well, what are people going to do?

Paul talks about this in Romans 6.

He says, what, should we go on sinning so that grace should just abound?

No, by no means.

All the legalists over here are going, if you just preach grace all the time, everybody's going to take advantage of that, do whatever they want.

Nobody's going to do anything.

And that's nonsense because grace begets grace.

Grace invading the heart and driving us into the presence of Jesus creates a desire to want to be with Jesus and look more like him over time.

But it's not because I have to.

It's not should.

It's because he's changed me and given me new desires and new infections in the heart as he's working.

Work out your own salvation for it is God who works in you.

Your working is God's working.

God is the decisive worker.

Believers actively obey because of the working that he is doing in and through us.

So listen, how do we add this up?

moving from justification to sanctification.

We don't graduate from our neediness of grace.

I think we think wrongly about this.

Oh, okay, so as I mature, I shouldn't be repenting as much.

As I mature, I shouldn't be as dependent upon his grace.

It's the opposite.

As we mature in Christ, we recognize just how deep the rabbit hole goes.

Jeremiah 17, the heart is wicked and desperately sick.

Who can understand it?

We're like, oh, I'm way worse than I knew.

We're repenting more.

It becomes a lifestyle of turning back to Jesus.

As we grow in maturity, right, we understand, no, no, I'm more needy of his grace.

And the truth is, we've always been infinitely needy of his grace.

We're coming into the practical realization that I'm so dependent upon his grace for everything.

We don't graduate from the gospel.

We don't graduate from our neediness of grace.

It only intensifies as we get closer to our glorification.

And by the way, our glorification, I think we know, happens by the working of God's grace.

Just like we are completely needy for God's grace to justify us and needy of his grace to sanctify us, we are needy for his grace to finish the work and to walk us into his physical presence.

Many passages we could look at.

Philippians 1.6, one of my favorites.

I'm sure of this.

Paul says, I'm going to take a bullet for this one and I'll die on this hill.

He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

God always finishes what he starts.

I do not.

I'm terrible.

I'll start projects and they just sit.

I know, we try, right, Dave?

But we're terrible.

God doesn't operate that way.

He always finishes his work.

Jude 24, I love the doxology in Jude.

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.

freed from the presence of sin, perfectly conformed to the image of Jesus, standing in his presence for all of eternity, being brought into the ultimate realization of why we were created and why we exist.

This is our glorification in Jesus Christ, and it is completely his work to accomplish.

My friends, my invitation to you this morning is not to...

try to do more for God, or be more for God, or get busy trying to do things, my invitation to you this morning is essentially to give up on your own efforts.

Whether, listen, whether you have thought about, you might be stepping in here this morning, you might have grown up around churches, and you might have believed, look, I got to do more good stuff than bad stuff, right, in order for God to accept me.

That's a scary scenario, by the way.

Who's keeping that score?

You're not.

I'm not.

I don't remember what I had for lunch yesterday.

I'm not able to keep that score.

Right?

So is God going 50-50?

Are we scales?

Is God grading on a curve?

How's this work?

I'll tell you how it works.

God knows that there's nothing good in you outside of his working.

And so he has done everything necessary through Jesus Christ so that you can be reconciled to him.

He lived the life that you and I could not and did not live.

He died the death that you and I deserve to die, paying the penalty for our sin, removing the guilt, the condemnation, the wrath.

all of it on Jesus Christ.

And then he rose victorious over Satan's sin and death because death had absolutely no claim on his righteous perfection.

It couldn't hold him.

Couldn't hold him.

So when he comes up out of that grave, he comes up with the keys to our salvation.

And it has nothing to do with us ever trying to improve.

How would you and I ever improve on the work that Jesus has done?

It makes no sense.

We give up.

We run into his arms.

We embrace, we trust, we have faith that is a gift that's been given to us by God.

This is what drives all of salvation.

So if you're here and you're like, man, I always thought it was doing a bunch of stuff.

Listen, hear the freedom with which Jesus calls you this morning to find rest in his finished work and just run into his arms.

What a gift.

There are ways, I know there are many of us here, we've been walking with Jesus for a long time, but there are so many performative subtleties in our lives where we really think, I've told you, I've been honest with you guys before, I've told you, even as a pastor, for many years,

I lived with this low-key anxiety that almost like I've used the illustration of like a coupon book.

Like when God saves us, justifies us, he gives us a coupon book, right?

And every time you screw something up, every time you sin, you tear out one of those coupons.

This is a big book.

But at the end of the day, how many Christians are living with that underlying thinking that it's gonna run out?

So that's how we live.

I don't have that many coupons left.

I better not screw things up.

This is not what the gospel is or does.

You cannot outpace God's grace with your sin.

You can't.

God is beckoning you to live in the freedom of his finished work for you.

What does it look like for your heart to be rewired to truly believe that Jesus has paid it all and that you are truly free in him?

Lay that down this morning.

So whatever's tugging at you, wherever you are this morning, the invitation is the same.

whether you have been walking with Jesus for days or decades or not at all, is to drop everything and run into his arms and find life and healing in his redeeming work.

The invitation is into Jesus this morning.

I want you to hear that clearly.

We're going to sing a song and we're going to pray together.

I want you to take this opportunity to really ask the Spirit to search your heart and to reveal what's there that you're holding on to that does not accord with the gospel, that does not accord with the fact that our salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone.

Heart stop.

Let's pray.

Father, we ask that you would stir in us, orchestrate these things in our heart as only you can.

God, this is your work.

We've just given testimony to that.

It is the working of your grace and your grace alone, God, that is saving us, that saved us, that's saving us, that will one day bring us home.

And so God, I'm asking now,

That we would understand, God, that this is your work in us.

So, God, we're asking, please awaken us to the truth.

Reveal the things in our heart, God, where we're holding on to performance or trying to pretend, minimizing our sin.

Whatever those tendencies are in the heart, God, would you show us the beauty of the gospel?

And would you beckon us into the arms of Jesus?

God, we love you.

We are so thankful.

Just think about how we started our gathering, God, being awed by your goodness towards us.

It is staggering, God, how immeasurably good you are to us.

So God, lead us to respond to you this morning with open hands as we run into the arms of Jesus.

We pray in his name.

Amen.