

Transformed Into Christ's Image

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2 Corinthians 3:17-18
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Will you open your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 3, 2 Corinthians 3? That's page 1067 if you have one of those blue Bibles that the ushers give out. And as you do that, I have a question for you, how many of you have made a New Year's resolution or are even thinking about making a New Year's resolution of some kind? Raise your hand. All right. So, I see we don't have a very ambitious group today. Well, for those of you who do have some ambitions next year, you're going to crash and burn most likely, so there you go, that's my pep talk for you heading into 2024. Actually, only 6% of people, according to a poll and a survey done by Forbes Magazine, only 6% kept their New Year's resolutions last year by the end of the year, 6%.

"So what are these failed resolutions?" you may be wondering. Well, the top five, starting with number one, are improved fitness, followed by improved finances, improved mental health, losing weight, and improved diet. So listen, those are all good goals and certainly those would have a positive impact, you're able to grow in those areas, but they pale in comparison to the goal that we're going to talk about today. It's a goal that all of us as Christians should have, and it's a goal that as this becomes more and more true in our life it impacts every aspect of our life. Take heart, you have the Holy Spirit to help you to live out this goal, and it is God's will for you. And so, you can be living this goal out a year from now, 10 years from now, for the rest of your life, decades from now.

Let's read about it. Will you stand with me, if you're able, as we read God's Word together? 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." That's God's Word for today. You may be seated.

All right, so what is this goal? What is this resolution for Christians? Well, it comes from this passage, and the main idea today is our goal, our resolution is to become more like Jesus by the power of His Spirit and for His glory, to become more like Jesus by the power of His Spirit and for His glory. Now, that may seem like a daunting goal, but hopefully by the end you'll see that this is not just something that we can do, it is God's will, and He will help us to do it.

And so, we're going to look at how that happens and what our part is in that and how that impacts us and how that impacts those around us. We're going to find this passage, again in 2 Corinthians 3:17-18. And 2 Corinthians was written by the apostle Paul to the church at Corinth. Really, the issue there was false apostles had infiltrated that church and they were trying to undermine Paul and his preaching that it is salvation by grace alone, by faith alone. They were

trying to undermine him, criticize him so that they could slide in there with their false gospel, which was one of trying to be saved by earning it through keeping the law, through obedience to the law. This is primarily what he's dealing with in 2 Corinthians, which is why in the preceding verses to our passage today, verses 6 through 16, Paul gives the most thorough explanation of the new covenant of anywhere in the Bible outside of Hebrews 3.

Now, don't raise your hand on this one, but do you know actually what the new covenant is? Do you really know what that is? Because if you don't, you should. It's at the core of the Christian faith. It is the new covenant that offers us forgiveness of sins through the death and resurrection of Christ. It is the gospel, and it was originally given to the Israelites in places like Jeremiah 31, but it was ultimately extended to the Gentiles or non-Jews after the resurrection of Christ. In fact, every time, I don't know how often you think about this, but every time we take communion, we are celebrating the new covenant.

Do you remember what Jesus said when He spoke about the wine at the Last Supper in Luke 22:20? He said, "This cup is poured out for you, is the new covenant in My blood." But it's not just salvation that is offered through the new covenant. It gets even better, a new heart, as well as the promise of the Holy Spirit. It's like grace upon grace for what God has done for us. In Ezekiel 36, God says in verses 26 and 27, "I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh." That's what we have as unbelievers, a heart of stone that doesn't care about God, doesn't love God, "And I will give you a heart of flesh," that now beats for Him, that loves Him, that wants to honor Him. "And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and to be careful to obey My rules."

It's through the new covenant that we get a new heart that loves God and does want to honor Him. The spirit that He gives us helps us to do just that, helps us to live that out. In fact, the gift of the spirit is so critical that Jesus said in John 16:7, "It is to your advantage that I go away." I don't know about you, but if I was standing there with God incarnate and He's like, "Hey, it's better that I go," I think I would respond by going, "I mean, I know you're a God and everything, but I don't think that's the case. I think it's better that You stay right here, God incarnate. Please, Jesus." But He says, "If I do not go away, the helper will not come. But if I go, I will send Him to you."

That's how precious and critical the Holy Spirit is for us as Christians. And it is through the Holy Spirit that we get to experience true freedom. Look at verse 17 again, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." And so, Paul is pressing into the freedom that we get to experience in the new covenant through Christ and His Spirit. In verses 6 through 16, Paul has just compared the old covenant with the new covenant. He's trying to help them to really understand the freedom and the hope that they have in Christ. That comparison of the old covenant and the new covenant is vivid, as I hope you'll see.

So Paul says, "The old covenant which was made at Mount Sinai is of the letter or the law which kills. It is the ministry of death carved in letters on stone." That's the two stone tablets that Moses brought down from God to the Israelites. "And it is the ministry of condemnation." That's the old

covenant. That's pretty grim stuff. But what about the new covenant? "The new covenant," Paul says, "is of the spirit who gives life. It is the ministry of the spirit and the ministry of righteousness. It is the gospel." Does that sound a little better? Paul is helping the Corinthians to understand that the law wasn't given to provide life like the false apostles were saying. Yes, the law is holy, and it is righteous, and it is good according to Romans 7:12, but it was given, it was there to reveal sin and to give crystal clarity that no one can be righteous enough to save themselves.

Ultimately, the law was given to point us all for our need for Christ. We can't do it on our own. Galatians 3 says in verses 23 and 24, "Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian," or tutor, "until Christ came in order that we might be justified by faith." The old covenant was a tutor. It was teaching the Israelites that they needed a savior. In our chapter today, Paul is pointing the Corinthians to the new and better covenant, the ministry of the spirit that brings life and righteousness and freedom through Jesus Christ.

That brings us to ***point #1), Be Free by the Power of the Holy Spirit, Be Free by the Power of the Holy Spirit***. As Christians, we are people of the new covenant, and we have been freed through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. But it begs the question, so what is this freedom that we have now? What does that even really mean? This is not a comprehensive list, but I want to help define a little bit. We're going to look at two sides of the same coin of what freedom looks like. On the one hand, Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit frees us from the captivity of the devil. It frees us from the slavery to sin, which is the most horrific in the world. And he frees us from the penalty of sin, which is eternal death and torment in hell.

The Holy Spirit also frees from the guilt and the dominion of sin, as well as the fear of the law and of death and of hell. But we're not just freed from things. As Christians, we are also freed to things, glorious things in fact. We are freed to everything in the Bible, the promises, the hope, the comfort, the power. We're free to pray. We are free to approach the throne of grace with confidence. It's no longer a throne of judgment for us, it is a throne of grace. We don't have to grovel forward; we actually can approach the throne of grace of God with confidence. Not arrogance, but confidence because we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, totally accepted by God through Christ.

We are free to have a relationship with our creator and our redeemer. God didn't just save us and keep us over there and say, "Okay, yeah, you're saved. You can be in heaven one day." He brought us near. He brought us so near that He placed His Spirit within us. And so, we have freedom to have access to His loving presence. Every second of every day His Spirit is within us. He freed us to bear the fruit of the Spirit. We have been freed to glorify God and freed to open our eyes in heaven the moment we close them here on earth for the very last time.

And we are freed to forever be God's children. Galatians 4:6 says, "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father.' You are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. What glorious hope and freedom we have

as Christians." Paul also writes in Romans 8:1-2 that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Does that sound familiar? Ministry of condemnation, the old covenant? "Because through Christ the law of the spirit of life..." Does that sound familiar, the new covenant? "... set me free from the law of sin and death." We are free indeed as Christians.

Our culture, we hear a lot about freedom all the time as our culture defines freedom. Again, there's other things our culture will say, but we hear these a lot, "You are free to do whatever you want to do." Right? "This is your life. You only live it once, live it for yourself, whatever makes you happy. That's what your free to do. That's what real freedom looks like. In fact, even to the point where it might even mean others are in your way, and if you feel like they're tying you down in any way or they're not making you happy, just get rid of them, loose that anchor, and then off you go. You are the captain of your own ship. You command your own destiny." But here's the thing, our culture has gone way beyond that. Our culture really preaches this idea of be as sinful as you want to be because there really is no such thing as sin because there's no such thing as God. So just enjoy every hedonistic, sinful thing you want.

How's that working out for our culture? The problem is that anybody who's living that way isn't free at all, but they're totally enslaved to their own desires and to their sin. And that path leads only to emptiness and misery and spiritual death. On the flip side, though, many in our culture are enslaved to manmade religions. Really, these are doctrines of demons, 1 Timothy 4:1 points out, like Mormonism and Islam and Catholicism. And really, every religion apart from biblical Christianity is about good pile, bad pile. So, when you die, if your good pile's bigger, then we think, "Okay, I think God's going to accept me. I'm going to be okay." But you never really know. Through life, you're striving and you're earning and you're just hoping it's enough, so you don't face God and like, "Uh-oh, my bad pile's bigger." It is exhausting. It is endless work and effort leading to nothing but spiritual death as well apart from Christ.

And then there are Christians who are free, who are actually free but live in ways like they're still enslaved. There was a pastor that would emphasize this point by saying that before we're saved, we have a huge ball and chain connected to our ankle. Spiritually speaking, it's sin, striving, earning, whatever those things are. We're just going through life and we're just dragging this ball and chain along. And then the Holy Spirit comes where He saves us and He breaks that chain and we are free, and we take a couple of steps in freedom and then we look back and we're like, "I don't know, maybe..." And we go back, and we pick it back up again and we start carrying it with us even though we don't have to. It's a voluntary slavery.

You might be here and that might be you. You're a Christian, but you're carrying around your old ball and chain. And husbands, I'm not talking about your wives. Just know that wives, that's not where I'm going. Let's get focus back. I'm saying even though you're free, you're living out voluntary slavery. It might be that you're still trying to earn your Heavenly Father's acceptance and you're striving even though you have already been accepted fully through Christ. Or you might be enslaved to some sin like sinful anger or people's approval or pornography, fill in the blank, or all of the above. Or you might be enslaved to unforgiveness. There are people in your

life that you need to forgive and you're not willing to. And so now you're also enslaved by the fun things that accompany unforgiveness, like bitterness and resentment. Whatever it is, I want to encourage you to repent and to set down that ball and chain and to begin to walk in the freedom that you actually have through Christ.

It is through the Word of God and through prayer and the people of God and the Holy Spirit that we're free and we can walk that way and live that way more and more. If you're here and you're not a Christian, I want to encourage you to repent as well, to repent of your sins, and to put your faith and trust in Christ, in Christ alone, because He paid the price for your sin. As you've done that, you can begin to experience and live out the freedom that you can have through Christ in this life and, more importantly, in the next and forever.

But we're not just set free by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit also transforms us into the image of the one we worship, Jesus. And so go ahead and look at verse 18 again. We're going to focus on the first part of that verse for just a minute here. "And we all, with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord." Okay, so that's where the transformation takes place. But I want to focus, what does that really mean here? This verse, by the way, verse 18, pound for pound for my money is one of the most hopeful, compelling, inspiring verses in the Bible, and so I want to unpack it. What is Paul saying here? Because he goes on in this verse to say that as we behold the glory of Christ with unveiled faith, we are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. One commentator puts it this way, "When people... " excuse me, "When the people of God look into the Word of God and see the glory of God, the Spirit of God transforms them to be like the Son of God." That's what Paul's saying.

And so I want to spend the rest of our time unpacking this. Paul in the first part of 18 uses the terms veil and glory, and then in 6-16, those preceding verses, he uses them quite a bit as well. And so to understand their importance here, we actually need to go back in time to Mount Sinai in Exodus 34. When Moses would come down to the Israelites after talking with God to deliver to them the commandments that God had given, the skin of his face would shine with the glory of God. Can you imagine? But after talking to the people, he would put a veil over his face, because when he was done, the glory would begin to fade, and he didn't want the people to see the glory fading. Why? Why did he do that? Well, coming back to Paul's commentary on it in verses 6-16, it appears Moses didn't want them to see the fading glory on his face because it represented the temporary nature of the old covenant.

Paul also writes that when the Israelites in Moses' day, as well as his own, read the old covenant, there was a veil over their heart. So, it wasn't just that the veil was covering the glory of God so they couldn't see it, there was actually a veil over their hearts because of the hardness of their hearts. This veil represented their unbelief. This is also true, of course, for people today. For unbelievers, there's a veil over their heart. But Paul says the veil is taken away through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. And now you have the veil removed covering the glory of God,

you have the veil removed from your heart, and now we can look upon the very glory of Christ as Christians.

So what is God's glory? I think it's something we say a lot and we have a sense of what it is, but I want to quickly try to define it for us. What is God's glory? One commentary says, "God's glory is the revelation of God's being, His nature, and His presence to mankind, sometimes with physical phenomenon. His glory is often compared to power and weight and brightness." Glory is God's honor and praise and majesty and holiness. And as Christians, we get to behold the very glory of Christ without a veil.

That brings us to our *point 2), Behold Christ by the Power of the Holy Spirit. Behold Christ by the Power of the Holy Spirit.* For new covenant Christians, which is all Christians, the Holy Spirit, as we talked about, has removed this veil that was covering our hearts, He's removed the veil that prevented us from beholding the glory of Christ, and so now, where do we see that glory? Well, we can see it in the Word of God, we see it in each other. We're made in His image. We reflect the glory of Christ, and we're going to talk about that. So as a body, we get to experience and see the glory of God. The Bible says when we look at creation in Romans 1, we see God's glory in creation.

But it is in the Bible that we most vibrantly and clearly see the glory of Christ, and it is the Spirit of Christ who teaches us the Word. 2 Corinthians 4:6 says that God has given us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We can gaze at the very face of Jesus Christ. And where do we find the knowledge of the glory of God? In the Bible. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says that the natural person, an unbeliever, does not accept the things of the Spirit for they're folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. But verse 12 says that Christians, we've been given a great gift, have received the Spirit who is from God that we might understand things freely given to us.

The Holy Spirit teaches us about the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. In fact, all Scripture points to Jesus and reflects His glory, so why wouldn't we spend time every day gazing upon the glory of Christ in His Word? I don't mean legalistically, I don't mean checking a box, I mean sitting down to see Jesus and to love Jesus, because Scripture is the glory of Christ. Is that how you look at the Bible? Or is reading the Bible for you drudgery? Is it, "I have to do it," not, "I get to do it."? Or maybe you're just apathetic. Maybe you're like, "Well, I don't feel a burden. I don't really have a big desire to read it either way. I know I should."

In Exodus 34, when Moses asks God to show him His glory, God gives him a limited view of His glory to see, but He also reveals to Moses who He is in words. In this very famous passage, God said, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." Moses, yes, he saw God's glory, but he also heard Him express words that revealed His glory as well. And it is the same God that invites us to sit down with Him in His Word and behold the very glory of Christ.

Charles Spurgeon said of the Bible, "Here is a never-failing treasure filled with boundless stores of divine grace. It is the bank of heaven. We may draw from it as much as we please without hindrance. There is not a promise, not a word in the Bible that is not ours." Is that how you view the Bible? In verse 18, Paul writes that we behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces. So this word beholding, looking upon, gazing upon the glory of Christ, it's in the present tense, which means it should be a continual ongoing action in our life.

The Bible is the food that we need a steady diet of. And so, what happens when we do this, as we behold the glory of Christ? Well, let's go back to the second half of verse 18. "As we behold the glory of Christ, we are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." What does that mean to be transformed into Christ's image? Well, Genesis 1:27 says that God created humans in His own image. Now, this doesn't mean that we're physically like God. In fact, Scripture says that God is Spirit and He's invisible, according to John 4:24 and Colossians 1:15. But what it does mean is that we share in some of His divine attributes.

Now, we're not infinite. We are eternal now, we're eternal beings, but we're not infinite. We're not all-powerful. We're not all-knowing. Even though some of our spouses may think they know it all, we're actually not all-knowing. But we are loving and compassionate and kind like God. We're rational. We have the ability to reason. We have a sense of justice, and we're creative like God. We also bear the fruit of the Spirit. Now, the fruit of the Spirit, Scripture talked in three general categories, would be good works, so we're to be a people of good works. So we live like Christ, we talk like Christ. It's sharing the gospel, and so as we share the gospel, people come to saving faith. And then it's also, of course, the fruit of the spirit. So this fruit, when Jesus says, "You're going to bear much fruit if you remain in Me," that's the fruit He's talking about.

We also share in dominion over creation with God. However, and there is a however sadly, when Adam and Eve sinned, the image of God in us was distorted and twisted and bent. Have you ever been to a funhouse where you stand in front of one mirror and you look just like you look normally, and then you step over to this mirror and all of a sudden, your image is doing this? Have you ever seen that in the movies or done that? Those mirrors are crazy. All of a sudden, your image, you can't quite make yourself out. That's what happened when Adam and Eve sinned to the image of God that's within us.

But the Spirit when we are saved begins to transform us, begins to restore, or renew Christ's image in us over years and decades as we fix our eyes on the glory of Christ in His Word. This word transform only appears in three places in the New Testament, here on verse 18, at the transfiguration of Christ when He revealed His glory to His three closest disciples, Peter, James, and John, and finally in Romans 12, which says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

So how is our mind renewed? By the Word of God. Colossians 3:10 says that we have put on the new self. So when we're saved, we've put the new self on, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. So what is the knowledge that renews the image of our creator in

us? It's the Word of God. And as we're transformed more and more by the Holy Spirit, we talk and we think and we live more like Jesus. This transformation for the glory of God is the goal of the Christian life. Let me say that again. This transformation for the glory of God is the goal of the Christian life, and it is a glorious transformation. In fact, verse 18 says, "It's from one degree of glory to another." What that means in the original language is from one degree of glory to another, to another, to another, to another. It is an ever-increasing glory that we're being transformed into, and it will ultimately culminate when Jesus returns.

This brings us to our *third and final point* today: ***Be Transformed by the Power of the Holy Spirit. Be Transformed by the Power of the Holy Spirit.*** So Jesus said in John 15:5, as we mentioned earlier, that if we abide or remain in Him we're going to bear much fruit. And so, as we spend time in the Bible and in prayer, and as we're connected to the Body... Whose Body is this? It's the Body of Christ. As we're connected to the Body in significant ways as serving and being in biblical community, we are filled with the Holy Spirit who transforms us more and more into the glorious image of Christ, and ultimately, we become like what or who we worship.

As we worship Christ, we become more like Him. But Psalm 115:8 says, "Those who make them," talking about idols, "become like them. So do all who trust in them." Now, this verse is talking about physical idols, but the Bible also talks about idols of the heart. An idol is anything other than Christ that we turn to for our hope, peace, comfort, joy, satisfaction. And it can be anything, it could be your kids, it could be a good marriage, it can be good things like that, or it could be pornography. Whatever that is, it's something we're turning to other than Christ, and we become like the idols that we worship. But when we worship Christ, we become more like Him. It is the Holy Spirit that starts doing that at the moment that we're saved.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "If anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation." Titus 3:5 tells us that when the Holy Spirit removes the veil, He regenerates us or He rebirths us. We are born again as children of God. But that's just the beginning. That would be enough, but that's just the beginning. Romans 15:16 and 1 Corinthians 6:11 help us to understand that the Holy Spirit then begins to sanctify us. That's what we've been talking about this whole time. Sanctification is this process of God making us more and more like Himself through the power of the Holy Spirit over the course of our lives. I will say this, I've been a believer for 30 years, I am more sinful than I ever knew I was. The more I become like Christ, the more I see my sin. But here's what's great: but God's grace covers more and more now. His grace was this big when I was saved, it's this big now.

But He does sanctify us, He does make us like Christ. And as we become like Christ, we reflect more and more of His glory to those around us. Just like when Moses would spend time with God and his face would reflect the Lord's glory before the Israelites, when we spend time in the presence of Christ in His Word, we reflect His glory to those around us. However, unlike Moses' face that the glory faded and he would put a veil over it like the old covenant would fade, the glory that we reflect only increases, and it is permanent and it is eternal like the new covenant.

And then one day when Jesus finally returns, we will finally be fully glorified. John explains this in 1 John 3:2-3 when he writes, "We are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared. But we know that when He," Jesus, "appears, we will be like Him because we shall see Him as He is." When Jesus returns and we see Him, we will be fully conformed to His image and His nature. We will be fully glorified. This means that we'll be totally free from sin, continually filled with the Holy Spirit, completely pure and holy and righteous, reflecting the glory of Christ forever and ever and ever without end.

Do you live like this is the reality you're in as a Christian? I really think too often as Christians, myself included, have a mundane worldly mindset as we go about our day-to-day lives, and I think that reflects in our lives. But having a new covenant mindset will have a huge impact on how we think and how we live. After all, it's in Christ through the work of His Spirit that we are free and we get to behold the glory of Christ in His Word. And as we do that, as we take in the Word of God, we reflect Jesus. Have you ever seen something in the sunlight that's laid out that's shiny, especially, let's say, Arizona summer sun when it's really beating down how brightly that shines? It's like if you took polished silver and you set it out, it would take in the sun's rays, and what would it do? It would reflect the brilliance of the sun out.

As we take in the glory of Christ, as we abide in Him, as we are in His Word and with His people, we more and more reflect the brilliance and glory of Jesus. We reflect it, by the way, in a really dark world, and so it shows. It shines brightly. By the way, this is not just something we can do or get to do, this is something we're called to do in Scripture. In verse 6, Paul says that as Christians you are ministers or servants of a new covenant. When he says ministers there, he is not talking about pastors, he's talking about every Christian. He's saying, myself included, "You are ministers. You are servants of a new covenant, an eternal covenant of the Holy Spirit and of life and of righteousness and glory. You're ministers of the gospel."

And then in verse 12, Paul writes, "Since we have such a hope... " and he's talking about this new covenant reality, "Since we have such a hope, we are very bold." Which means that if you live with an awareness of this new covenant reality that you are in every second of every day, you will be courageous enough to speak and live more and more boldly for the gospel. And as you are more and characterized by Christlikeness, reflecting His glory in your life to those around you and sharing the gospel, God will save some of those people, and they will become fellow partakers of the gospel with you.

The very fact that people make New Year's resolutions shows that there is something within us, I think typically as we end one year and we head into the next year, that really gets us to think a little bit about our life and how was 2023 and like, "Is there ways I want to grow? Yeah, I just feel like I really need to grow here," whatever that is. And so, we make that commitment for 2024. And that's, I think, a good thing. Anytime we slow down enough in our busy culture to take stock of ourselves, I think that's probably a positive thing. But the resolution that I hope you have, not just for 2024 but for the rest of your life, every year, every decade, is to walk more and more in the freedom that God has granted to you through His Spirit and to spend time more and

more in God's Word and with His people, and to be transformed more and more into the glorious image of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit and then reflect that glory out into a dark world around you. That is all by the power of the Holy Spirit, and it is all for the glory of God.

Now, that is a glorious resolution that God has given us, and it is one, again, that you can keep through the power of the Holy Spirit, abiding in His body, in His Word. I mean, He gave us so much, and He continues to continually be a generous God giving us everything that we need. In fact, the Bible says that He has given us everything we need for life and for godliness through the true knowledge of His Son Jesus Christ. If you don't know Jesus, I pray that you would hear today about this new covenant, about what is offered through Christ, and that you would repent and put your faith and trust in Christ and that you would taste this freedom that is only found in Christ, this purpose and this hope only found in Christ.

And so, if you're wanting to talk to anybody more about this, there's pastors that you can talk with. The person you came with is a great person to talk with. It could be ushers, whoever. But don't leave without talking to somebody and letting us pray for you. I want to close with the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:16, He said, "To let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." Let me pray.

Father, thank You so much for this truth, this reality that we get to live in every day. Father, thank You so much for Your grace. Thank You that we don't have to earn and strive to be saved or to stay saved, that you have given us your Holy Spirit as a seal and a guarantee that we will be safely delivered to Your hands. And so, Lord, I pray that we would more and more abide in Christ, that You would help us to spend time in Your Word, to gaze upon His glory, to know You more and to love You more, and to reflect Christ's glory out.

Father, will You help us to do that? And will You help us to help each other to do that? Will You help us to pray for one another, encourage one another, to speak the truth and love to one another? I pray that more and more You would graciously do this work in this body here at Redeemer. Father, we love You because You first loved us. And so help us, Father, help us to love You more and more every day and to live for You more fully. And Father, thank You that when we don't, when we sin, that we can say like Martin Luther, 'All of life is repentance,' continually turning from our sin and back to Christ over and over and over every day, all day long. Thank You for that grace. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.