

The Gospel That Makes A Gospel Community Part 4

a sermon in the series
A Gospel-Oriented, Mission Driven, and Community-Centered Church

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by S. Michael Durham
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Romans 1:16-28

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

We have seen that you and I need a Savior who is Christ the Lord. We need a Savior because we are guilty of sin and under its penalty—the wrath of God. There are undoubtedly people here today who would say, “I don’t agree with that.” If you don’t feel the weight of needing to be saved it’s because you don’t see your need of a Savior. You think you’re doing pretty good. That’s the problem. That’s what happens when God is not known intimately or personally. You see yourself distinct from God and you see yourself taking care of what needs to be taken care of. Let me say it again: we all need a Savior. I want you to be clear, this preacher needs a Savior right now. I need Him right now and not just to preach to you. I need a Savior to deal with my heart that at times wants to wander. I wish it weren’t so. I look forward to the day when it won’t be. But I’m so thankful that while it is so I have a Savior.

The wrath of God is the worse thing God can do to a sinner. What is the wrath of God? Paul explains it as simply leaving the sinner alone, to abandon him or her to a life without God and the knowledge of His goodness. That's an important statement. If you're not a Christian or you're wondering if you are because you don't have the reality of Christ in your life, you are not able to really be thankful for God's goodness even though God is extremely good to you.

Before I was saved, God was good to me and He hasn't stopped. God is good to every one of His creatures. The Bible says the sun shines on the good and the evil; the rain falls on the just and the unjust. God is very good to you, you just don't recognize it, and that's part of the wrath of God. God is abandoning you to think whatever good things happen to you is just life or that you're decent enough or done something to achieve these comforts and pleasures of life. No, God has given them to you. Do you realize that breath in your lungs is there because God is permitting it to be? But there will come a day and an hour and a minute when He will say, "Enough," and He will take that breath, that life, and you will be no more. You can't change that. So even you sitting here breathing is a goodness, but the problem of lostness is that you can't see that. It doesn't compute. It doesn't seem real. But it is real. I can't explain electricity but that doesn't mean I'm going to sit in the dark. Just because you can't understand or explain it doesn't mean it's not real.

The Bible says right now you're under the wrath of God. You may know things about God but this is not what he's talking about. The fact that God is not a real, vital, principle or person in your life, is what he's talking about. God is in your life but there is no vital connection. That's wrath.

I don't know what hell will be like, we only see little glimpses in Scripture but we don't know it fully. If God were to share what it was really like we would lose our minds. I think that's why it's not in there. It would be a torture for me if I knew the agony loved ones and friends were experiencing now. How could you live knowing what they're experiencing? I'm thankful I don't know a lot. I think that's God's goodness again to us. But we do know that hell is this wrath of God, this abandonment of God, the only difference is there will be no goodness there. He withdraws that and gives you exactly what you've been asking for all the days of your life, for Him to just leave you alone. And God says, "OK, I'm going to leave you alone. I'm going to withdraw My goodness and grace from your life. All the kindnesses and joys in your life, they're going to be withdrawn and you're going to sink within yourself to a level of depravity you didn't even know was in you." That's not even mentioning the other torments we have no clue about.

I'm standing here thinking what it would be like to live without all of God's mercies and kindnesses, and it's enough to bring me to tears. To think I couldn't enjoy my God, my Father, and to have a life empty of all His life and kindnesses is almost unbearable. Therefore, you need a Savior who can deliver you from this penalty of sin, that you're now experiencing if you're not a Christian. We need Jesus to connect us with God and His goodness so that we can say we know God and know that He is good.

We also need a Savior because our sin against God is to reject the truth of God and exchange it for a lie and worship something or someone we think could comfort, help, and provide for us

better than God. In other words, we are natural idolaters. We churn out idols; we spit them out all the time, idols that will make us feel better about ourselves and fulfill our desires. Getting saved doesn't stop that. That's why we continually need to be saved. That's why I need the Gospel today. So I'm going to preach to me as I preach to you. I'm going to talk to my heart because I have a heart that wants to make these idols and believe a lie about my God and a lie about an idol that it could somehow provide for me better than Jesus.

Salvation from the penalty of sin, which is called justification, does not solve this issue. It doesn't deal with idolatry. All it does is put you in right relationship and keep you in right relationship with God. It makes you relate rightly to God. That's justification. Becoming a Christian is only the beginning of our salvation; it begins a lifelong process of dealing with the lies I believe about God that make me pursue other gods. These lies are the power of sin and from this we need deliverance. I still need deliverance because I still believe lies about God. There are times I think, "God, if You were good, this wouldn't be happening." Lie.

"God, if You were gracious, I wouldn't still feel this condemnation." Lie.

"God, if You were great, we wouldn't see turmoil in our society." Lie.

"If You were as glorious as You say You are, why would I pursue all of these earthly pleasures? You must not be as glorious." Lie.

We still need saving. Jesus has promised to deliver us from sin's power, if we trust Him to be all that He has promised to be for us. "The just shall *live* by faith."

But there is one more reason we need a Savior and that is we need deliverance from the very presence of sin. Today, I want to discuss with you salvation from the presence of sin.

We've discovered salvation is in three stages.

The first stage is deliverance from the penalty of sin, which is the wrath of God. But remember that salvation is always *from* something *to* something. He saved us *from* the penalty of sin, which is to not know God, *to* knowing Him. Now I have a vital relationship with Him. I don't just know *about* Him. I *know* Him.

The second stage is deliverance from the power of sin, which is the appeal of idolatry, to believe something or someone can do or serve or provide better than Jesus. I am being saved from worshipping idols to being able to worship God. He is all I'm building my life on and my life revolves around Him. That's what worship is. Remember the more you worship something the more you become like what you worship. That leads us to the third stage.

STAGE THREE OF SALVATION: DELIVERANCE FROM THE PRESENCE OF SIN FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONFORMITY TO CHRIST

God is saving you to make you what we ought to have been, but what Adam and Eve—and all of us since them—have rejected. We've rejected what He has made us to be.

I. Deliverance From the Presence of Sin

A. What is the Presence of Sin?

Does this mean I have a little devil on my shoulder whispering in one ear suggesting I do bad things? No, not at all. Sin is more than temptation by a personal devil. Sin is a principal or law that works in a person.

For example, there are laws of nature. You don't break laws of nature without severe penalty. Laws of nature will always be. The law of gravity, the law of thermodynamics, the law of aerodynamics, these are all laws of nature and they work all the time. Sin is also a law, a natural spiritual law—or a spiritual natural law, however you want to say it—that is working in every person. Listen to how Paul explains it.

"I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good." (Romans 7:21)

Paul is saying that even when I want to do good I still find that sin is with me. It's a presence in me.

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." (Romans 7:23)

In my body, in my person, there is a law that works at this very moment. It's the law of sin, and it's in every one of us. We've clearly preached over and over and over again from this pulpit that one of the great things that Jesus has done in His death on the cross is break the power of sin and its dominion over us. I don't have to be a slave to sin. But that doesn't mean He's eradicated and removed this principle and law of sin in me. It's still there and it's working. It works against the mind. Did you see that in verse 23? It works against the mind, bringing that person under captivity. Listen, I might be free from the dominance and slavery of sin but I can still choose to let it reign in my body. It can't reign over me but it can reign in me.

How is that possible? Where does this law of sin come from? Of course, it came from our first parents' rebellion in the garden.

B. The Fall Turned Man Within Himself.

When the fall occurred, it was like a house of cards collapsed upon itself. Man turned within himself. Up to this moment he had lived by a source of power and light outside of himself—God. But once he rebelled there was no other power except in himself and he turned within.

God is the only definition of reality. He made it. Everything that exists was made by God. Therefore it's safe to assume that if He made everything then He gets to say what we do and how everything is to operate. He is the standard definition of reality. There is no other definition besides God.

Listen carefully, if you want to know how Adam and Eve functioned before the fall. They lived directed by the Holy Spirit who communicated to their spirit. You're a spirit that also happens to have a physical body, but you're still a spirit, and God is a spirit and God communicates with the spirit of a man.

When Adam was walking in the garden or naming the animals, the Holy Spirit was communicating with his spirit—because he is spirit—and the spirit then took that information and illuminated the mind. The mind was directed by the truth that the spirit showed the mind. The truth that was in the mind then dictated to the will what to do. What is the will? It's the part of you that makes the decisions. It decides why you do what you do.

Before man fell in the garden the spirit informed the mind and the mind then informed the will. Therefore man always chose to do what he was supposed to do because God was establishing and regulating reality. The truth in the mind set the will in motion. Man acted on the truth, which was God. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

But man, unfortunately, denied the reality of God as the only viable reality. He rejected that and turned to what he perceived to be reality but was only a mirage, an illusion. Satan said God was not the one who should establish right and wrong for them and that they should be able to do that. He told Adam and Eve if they would only eat of that tree, they could establish their own reality.

Does that sound eerily familiar to anything you hear today in our society?

When you deny the reality of God, all definitions become like shifting sand. Everything is skewed from that moment on.

Why? Because only this Ultimate Reality, from which all reality comes, can define truth. As a result of man's rebellion you now have human minds trying to define reality and the boundaries for that reality. The reason man is in pursuit of finding and establishing truth is because he's rejected the only Truth and is searching for a substitute, which he will never find satisfactory.

After the fall, instead of the truth, which is the reality of God, influencing the mind and the mind dictating to the will, everything was reversed. Now the will communicates to the mind and dictates to it. No longer is the mind under the influence of the truth leading the decisions of the will. Something else has taken place over a mind guided by truth. What is it? It is the will consumed by its desires. Man has collapsed inside of himself. All man wants to do now is to fulfill his desires. The will is consumed with trying to fulfill those desires and that overrides the mind, which overrides the will and rationalizes the decision made.

How else can you explain the lunacy that is going on in our culture? Please explain to me how you can say a baby in a mother's womb is not a person and that it's OK to take its life? Just because it hasn't had a birthday yet they say it's OK, it's permissible, it's not murder, to kill it. That

not logical. It's not even logical under biological science. Science tells us that at the earliest stages of human formation a baby can feel pain and other human emotions. But just simply because it hasn't had a birthday it's OK to justify its "ceasing to be." That's madness. That's the mind trying to justify what the will does.

Today we're taught that all forms of sexuality are acceptable. Why? Because the mind has become foolish. Look at Romans 1. Paul shows us that the desires of the body, the human appetites and propensities of both body and mind, influence the will. The mind simply follows a will that is under the pressure of fulfilling desires.

"because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts,"

"Futile in their thoughts" simply means *empty, purposeless*. This is a perfect sociological and psychological analysis of man. The Apostle Paul is under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who made man and therefore He knows what He's talking about here. He is communicating with Paul why man does what he does. What's the answer? We've rejected ultimate reality and we're searching for it now. The mind has no bearing or fixed standard on what is right or wrong.

"and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools," (Romans 1:21-22)

This is irrespective of your educational level. It doesn't matter the socioeconomic status from which you came, it doesn't have anything to do with ethnicity or IQ, you can be a genius in IQ and profess to be wise but still a fool when it comes to God. Listen to some of the things that are stated by people who have spent half of their lives in higher education. It is idiotic, some of the things that are being stated and if you wait around another 10 or 15 years, someone will contradict what that person said. Why? Because there is no fixed bearing. Professing to be wise they become fools. God is the only ultimate reality.

If you were a seaman before there were the modern radars and navigational system, the only way you could have navigated in a bearing-less world of the open seas were by fixed bearings called astronomical objects; the sun, the stars and the moon. Why? Because they're fixed, they're in the same place according to the time of year. A seaman could chart his course by something fixed and certain. He could navigate in a world where there were no road signs. When you remove the reality of God, my friend, even if you're moral and you believe in God, but you're not truly His, there is no fixed bearing in your life. You're wandering. When you wander around without bearings, the mind becomes thoroughly confused.

"Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves," (Romans 1:24)

In other words, He gave them over to their desires. But the problem is the desires are never satisfied. Never. I've never had a physical or mental desire fulfilled that made me happy as I thought it would. We're not talking about spiritual desires.

Remember the first car you bought? Mine was a 1967 Ford Mustang. I thought it was going to be so cool to drive a '67 Mustang. I loved the Mustang. I loved everything about it. I saved money for years working summer jobs and finally I purchased a '67 Mustang. And within nine months I saw a 1976 Monte Carlo. It was only a year old and had all the bells and whistles. When I saw that, the Mustang just didn't do it for me anymore.

That's how desires work. The moment you get what you think you wanted it doesn't satisfy. That's the nature of human desires. When you live by the desires of the moment you're never satisfied. Then a further digression happens. A spiraling downward and the perversions get worse. The downward spiral of sin causes a man to turn deeper within self.

"For this reason God gave them up to vile passions"

This is important. *God gave them up*. Watch the language, it's very purposeful. God gave them up. It doesn't say God gave them vile passions. You cannot sit there and say, "God made me this way." You cannot say that. No sinner can say, "My temptations, my problems, my desires are there because God made me this way." No, the Bible is clear. He didn't make those vile passions. Man chose to deny the reality of truth and the result was a man collapsed within himself. God responds by letting men have what man wants. But God did not create those vile passions.

"For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature"

It's not that homosexuality is a worse sin than adultery. It's not that homosexuality is worse than being disobedient to parents. Paul will list in later verses disobedience to parents among a list of sins that include adultery and homosexuality. It is not that homosexuality is the worse, it's that it's more unnatural. It's further away from God's created order.

This is how sin works, it takes you further and further from God's best. Sinful desires fulfilled do not satisfy, therefore, you must go further to intensify the rush. You need more exhilaration because *this* doesn't do it for you anymore, so you begin to go further and further away from God's creative design. For those of us sitting here saying, "That's not me because I have no same-sex attraction, I've not been guilty of adultery," or "I'm a pretty good kid," or "I've never cheated on my income taxes and I don't steal," please hear me. If you are not a Christian, it doesn't matter how religious or moral you are, your desires are working the exact same thing that homosexual desires are working. You're doing exactly the same thing you're just doing it in such a way that brings less social stigma. The desire that motivates you is to have everyone approve of you and be pleased and accept you. It has nothing to do with God or His glory.

You can't sit there and say "Oh, I'm not him or her," but to say "I'm not him or her," is a perversion called self-righteousness. It's an idolater's heart revealed.

²⁷ Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. ²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;" (Romans 1:26-28)

In the same Apostle's letter to the Ephesians he further analyzes the the unbelieving soul. You find it in the fourth chapter starting with the seventeenth verse.

"Therefore, I say this and testify in the Lord: You should no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their thoughts.

Who is a Gentile, according to the Apostle Paul? He's writing to Gentiles. The ethnicity of this church is predominantly Gentiles, but he's telling them not to walk like Gentiles. He is not talking about an ethnic group but rather referring to sinners. The word *Gentiles* here means sinner. He says Christians should no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, or as sinners walk. How do sinners walk? In the futility of their thoughts. Their brain, their intellect, doesn't work in reality; it walks in a disharmonic, skewed way.

"They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God"

Why are they darkened in their understanding? He answers, they are *excluded from the life of God*. When you don't allow the light of God to shine into your life, regardless of what it exposes, then your understanding is darkened and your decisions will be irrational because sin is irrational.

because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts. They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more." (Ephesians 4:17-19 HCSB)

What's a callous? What does it mean to be calloused? He's using a word picture here. It's when the skin toughens up. You don't lose your ability to feel, but you lessen the ability to feel. What is Paul saying? They have become hard in their feelings, in their senses, their sensuality. It's more difficult for them to feel—not physical feelings—but the emotions of their soul. They no longer feel deeply the way God made them to be. I know this is going to sound prejudiced but I don't mean it to be, but a Christian can enjoy life so much more than a non-Christian. Why? Because the soul is not calloused anymore. We feel very deeply. But the sinner is calloused and it's hard for them to feel joy, peace, and contentment. They can do it but it's much more difficult because they're calloused and the result is they give themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more.

What happens when you have no objective standard like God in your life? You begin to pursue your desires but you can't feel them as deeply as you would like. They don't satisfy so you've must have more and more and now you're enslaved to your desires. You don't want to be enslaved. You see the ill effects it's producing, but you are trapped. You cannot turn over a new leaf and find a way out. It's a spiritual problem. This pursuit of desires is the essence of self-rule and self-trust. You have now become your own god.

That's the explanation of the non-Christian. But as a Christian, I don't have the same excuse as the sinner. God has done something supernatural so I can feel now. I can experience Him and His love for me. He has illuminated my mind and put His Spirit within me so now I don't have to walk according to the futility of my mind, I can know true objective reality, which is Christ. My life can be ordered accordingly. Yet, even though that's true, I still have problems with sin because it's a law within me. Therefore, if I'm to be saved, God's got to deal with this law of sin, this presence of sin that's in me; otherwise I'm just a forgiven sinner. But a Christian is more than just a forgiven sinner. He is God's workmanship, created *in* Christ Jesus.

God has to deliver me from this principle, this law of sin in me. How does He do that?

C. Salvation Must Be Deliverance From Self-Rule and Trust.

What does God do to help the sinner that is entrapped in his sins? He sets him free by revealing Christ to him. Then Christ becomes the object on which this person now builds his life. He is the most glorious, precious treasure, but he still has within him a law of sin. So what's God going to do? He reverses the fall. What did the fall do to you? It reversed you and turned you within. Now God is flipping that so that now you will be led by the Spirit by the truth being illuminated to your mind and the mind dictating to the will, "This is the way, walk in it." However, we still have another law working within us: the law of sin.

Paul says in Romans 8:2 that our Deliverer has given us a new law to work within us.

*"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."
(Romans 8:2)*

A few months ago I gave you a simple illustration. Here's my handkerchief. When I drop it, what happens? The law of gravity takes effect and it will always go down. I can even throw it and depending on the strength of my arm I may propel it quite a ways, but as sooner or later—it will fall. It doesn't matter what I do, it's going to fall. There's a law here. Gravity is at work.

There's a law working in you, even you, brother and sister in Christ, it's called the law of sin and death. It's working. It's bombarding your will with all those desires and the ideas that *this* will be better than Jesus. It suggests that if you do *this* you will be happier and satisfied and more joyful. That law is working. It's flooding the will. You want to oppose it but the will says, "This is hard."

Your only hope is that you have a Savior who has another law. Now when I drop that handkerchief I catch it and hold it up in mid-air. This represents that another law has overridden the law of gravity. The same is true spiritually. Another law comes in, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which is more powerful than the law of sin and death. Though the law of sin is still in you working, so is the Spirit of the Living God. Verses 10-14 proves this. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus gives you the power to cooperate with God's activity in you.

"And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin"

What does Paul mean that the body dead because of sin? It's dead because the law of sin works in the body. Where do your desires come from? From the body and the mind, which are both polluted, therefore they don't function the way they're supposed to.

"but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

Some believe Paul is talking about the bodily resurrection, but this is not right at all. The context is very clear that's not what he's talking about. He's talking about the law of the spirit of life that's in Christ Jesus that is now in you. That same power that raised Christ from the dead is working in you to give you victory over the desires of this body, this law of sin that works in the body, so you don't have to do what fleshly desires are crying out for you to do.

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors--not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh"

You don't have to live according to this body ruled by sin because God is in you and He's doing something within you, within your body. Your body doesn't change, but something within that body does.

"For if you live according to the flesh you will die "

If you let the body control your will and your mind, you're going to die. This is the message of the great apostle.

"but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." (Romans 8:10-14)

The only people who are Christians are those who are letting a Savior save them from themselves. Be careful. You take a picture of what you look like right now and you might not take a very striking pose. If we took a snapshot of just one day of your life when you have failed miserably we might say, "Look at that guy. He professes to be a Christian, but he isn't a Christian."

But you can't do that. You've got to look at *life and its general direction*. How are you living your life? What's the motivation? What's driving you? You look over time and it's not what you want it to be but, praise God, it's not like that one bad day when you failed miserably. There is a progression. I can say with no boast to me—I didn't do this, it's the Spirit—I am not who I used to be even five or 10 years ago and I've been saved 28 years. I'm not what I was 20 years ago. I can see where God is working by His grace. But at the same time what keeps me from being proud is seeing what I need help with today. Do you see my point? This is the salvation we need.

What God is doing is reversing the fall so that now you don't live by your fleshly impulses but by a mind that is illuminated by the truth and that truth informs the will of what should do.

God is reversing the order. He says He isn't only going to work in our soul and spirit but in our minds. But we have to cooperate with Him in order for this to work. We must renew our mind. God is in the process of revitalizing the intellect so that it thinks according to the objective reality of God. God is the source by which all decisions are made because He's the Truth. The more I renew the mind, the more in control of my will I am, because of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

The renewing of the mind is not just about getting your Bibles out and reading them so you can check off the religious list that you read your Bible today. Do you know why we do that sometimes? Because of the lust of the flesh. We want to check off our list so we can feel good that we did something for God today. It has nothing to do with God's reality. Perhaps we're good to a neighbor so we can walk away and pat ourselves on the back and reassure ourselves that we're pretty good people. It has nothing to do with glorifying God.

The Christian struggles in this manner. I struggle in this way. Somebody can say, "Pastor, that was a good message, I really think it was profound," and if I'm not careful I can swell inside my heart with pride and I'm saying "thank you" but I'm saying, "Thank you, *Michael*," not "Thank You, *Jesus*." We can do good things out of fleshly desires. I need a Savior.

We're not talking about renewing the mind by just getting the Bible and reading it. No, you are to read the Scriptures listening for the Spirit to speak to your spirit, which will give understanding to the Scriptures. That's what will give you the power to control the will.

I'm going to give you one last illustration from the Bible about this. Jesus is resurrected and has appeared to the disciples for the first time, and these men do not even believe what they are seeing? In this case, even seeing is not believing.

In verse 40 He shows them His hands and feet then the Bible says,

"But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?" So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence." (Luke 24:41-43)

They didn't believe for their joy because they believed Jesus was a spirit, they didn't believe He was bodily resurrected. They were happy to see Him but they didn't believe He was bodily resurrected. So what did He do? He asked for something to eat, because a spirit doesn't eat. It doesn't need to. He ate the fish and they believed.

"Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures." (Luke 24:44-45)

I don't know what happened that night; all I know is something supernatural took place. He gave them illumination and they understood. Beloved, this is the way the Savior is saving us from the presence of sin, by giving us illumination in the spirit so the mind can understand. But what does the mind understand? Theology? Doctrines? No. Theology and doctrine are not ends in themselves, they only point you to a person. The doctrine of Scripture leads you to understand the person of Christ. If you understand Him, you experience Him, and if you experience Him, you worship Him. And whatever you worship you become like.

Therefore my great need is my understanding illuminated by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit takes the truth of Scripture and impresses the mind with the truth and the mind perceives and the will follows automatically. What must I do, as a believer? I've told you this so many times I'm fearful I'm saying the same things and it's bores you. You must feed the spirit. If you feed the spirit, the law of sin in the flesh weakens. But the more you feed your flesh and fulfill those desires—even good desires which are not done for godly motives—the spirit grows weaker and the flesh grows stronger. But if you feed the spirit by renewing the mind, letting the Spirit talk to you through the Word, what happens? The spirit gets stronger, the flesh automatically gets weaker, and the will follows that which is the strongest. You choose whatever is influencing you the most.

Oh beloved, this salvation is an amazing process in which God saves us. Don't give up on Him. Don't give up on God and His work of grace in you. I know you're not where you want to be, neither am I. I told a pastor friend of mine this week, I'm so stupid. I have to do the same lessons over and over again. You say you shouldn't talk about yourself that way, well; I'm just being real. I sometimes feel like an idiot. I know the truth. But I have fed the flesh and it influences my will. The spirit doesn't have any strength because I've starved it. But if I feed the spirit, the flesh gets weak and I can control the tiger. When you starve the flesh it is caged and controlled and has no strength.

If you're not a Christian, I know the last few minutes has no application to you. But I pray you hear this one thing and that it be a a clarion call, crystal clear to you: God is saying that you don't have to be trapped any longer. He has done what is sufficient to set you free. He has the power. He can break every chain that has enveloped your life. He can break every power that now rules the law of sin working in you. He can give you deliverance from that. He can make out of your life what you cannot even dream.

In a message next year, I'm going to show you that if you could see what you are going to be you would fall down trembling, wanting to worship what you saw. That's what God can do, sir! That's the kind of salvation I'm talking about. If you look at us Christians here, you're going to find some problems. I can tell you about some. I can tell you about mine right now. I know my sins, and then there's some I don't even know. You could say I'm in bad shape. Except that I've a Savior who has made a compact with me. A compact in blood.

Jesus has the scars. And He does remember you because He promised to never leave you or forsake you. He's willing to make a compact with you. Stick out your hand. You don't have to bleed. You don't have to cut yourself. What you do have to do is this, and it's very difficult unless God helps you, surrender your life to Him. That's not easy, I grant that. But if the Spirit gives you this kind of understanding and illumination, you will want to do it.

What do you do? Cry out to God, "Show me Jesus. Show me Jesus." If you really want to see Jesus you will. I believe that with all my heart. I ask God to do that for you. Amen.