

How To Work It Out Part 2

Thank you for leading us this evening, Abe. Appreciate you reading the scripture and leading us in our singing. Hopefully you have your Bibles open still to Philippians chapter 2. I just want to jump right in this afternoon, this evening, to pick up where we left off the last time. in continuing our thinking through how to put legs on the gospel, how to put legs on the salvation that God has given us with Philippians 2 verses 12 to 13 in mind.

That, I would say, is our anchor verse for tonight.

We're going to be all over thinking of different things that the Lord expects to see from us as individuals who make up the church in response to a text like this so that we would demonstrate to one another and to our community what it looks like to be saved, what it looks like to apply the gospel to our lives, such that our witness for Christ would remain vibrant. I want us to keep in mind, of course, that the nitty-gritty details, the practical things that we're to put off and put on, are always going to be anchored, always going to be subservient to the grand plan that God has for us, to redeem us, to give us newness of life, to forgive our sins and set us on a completely different trajectory. We don't want to think through the things that we're thinking through tonight, the confession, the repentance, the offering forgiveness, in disconnection from the big gospel message that has touched our hearts as a church. Indeed, all of the things that we're going to discuss are important aspects of our making the gospel known to one another and to our community. So with that big picture in mind, let me just read our text again, put it in our minds, where Paul says in Philippians 2, verses 12 to 13, therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Last time we saw that in working this out practically, we need as a church, as individuals who make up the church, to keep God's word central.

That's the very thing that keeps us headed in the right direction as it reveals God and his plans for us. We said also that we ought to let God's word be our guide to examine what we're most devoted to in any particular decision that we make. Again, as individuals and as a church. Will we be devoted to Christ and His kingdom, or will we, in times of weakness, in times of sin, maintain our own agenda as more important? God's Word is going to give us the ability to diagnose which direction we're headed in, and so it remains central.

Tonight, I want to add two more things, two more points, two more practices that we need to be seeing in our lives as we work out our salvation together. First one, we need to be confessing and repenting of specific sins. I'm so thankful for the message that we heard this morning as Pastor Scott led us through that passage in Acts chapter 19. We're gonna get a double dose of what it looks like to repent of our sins because that's what the Lord has for us today. So we need to be confessing, repenting of specific sins. Secondly, we need to be forgiving as those who recognize the great forgiveness that we have received. We need to be forgiving as those who have been forgiven.

I don't think it's alarmist, I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that without these two particular things making up the warp and woof of our lives, our gospel witness as individuals and as a church will be hindered. It will be hindered if we leave these things aside. Confession and repentance from specific sins and offering forgiveness to reflect the grand forgiveness that we've been shown really are necessary if we would keep a vibrant witness for what Christ has done in our lives. So they need to be front and center for us as those who would advance the gospel which as we've seen, Paul is very, very concerned about in the context of the Philippian church.

These things, as we've said, are gonna be evidence of our salvation, key practices that we need to put on if we would maintain that vibrant witness for Christ. Let's be listening in, let's be looking to follow what God's word has for us tonight in light of that.

And when closing the last time, if you can remember back a month. I gave you some questions, diagnostic questions, that were really there to help you think through what might be happening in your heart in any given situation. You're in a situation, those questions were there to diagnose, am I living for God and his kingdom, or am I more self-centered than I should be? Those questions were intended to diagnose your devotion, to grasp what was going on in your heart, in any given moment. And with Paul's focus in Philippians 2 on the church's call to be other-centered and Christ-exalting rather than unified around our own little kingdom purposes, those questions were helpful for discerning whether we were serving Christ or not. Assuming we took those questions and did something with them, assuming we held our lives up to those diagnostic questions, we may well have found that certain sinful desires were present in our lives.

In the kind providence of God, perhaps there's a relational breach that has occurred between you and another brother or sister, between you and a spouse. Your sinful words and actions have been revealed. So too, the sinful desires that drove those sinful words and actions, as what was in your heart spilled over into contaminating someone else with the corruption that's still in your heart. In one way or another, let's say, for example, that your sin has been exposed. Perhaps a brother or sister came alongside, and in the spirit of Matthew 18, 15, told you your fault, just between you and he, you and she, and your sin was revealed. Perhaps in another context, you were drawing near to worship and there remembered that your brother had something against you. Whether you were confronted or the Spirit of God convicted you of a sin that you now recognize you have to deal with, your sin has been exposed. However it's been exposed, whatever means or relationship the Lord used to reveal it, What are you now responsible to do before God in order to make progress and put the gospel on display?

That's what I want us to look at as we go into thinking about these two things. Here's where the word of God would direct us very clearly that the first necessary practice that we'll look at this evening is to confess and repent of the specific sinful actions and attitude you've come to realize were present in your life that you're now convicted of. Again, here's where we would realize, as the Word of God guides us, that the right course of action is to confess and repent of the sinful attitudes and actions that we're now convicted of. So you've realized your sin, what do you do next? You confess and repent of it. What is confession?

To confess our sins means to say the same thing about them that God has already declared. It's simply to use the same language to agree with God about those things being sinful. It's to agree with God that what we desired and then did or didn't do was in fact sinful because that's what He's declared about that sinful action or attitude.

We recognize, even as we reflected on this morning, that because of that sin, we are indeed deserving of His judgment that He should render to us because He's a just judge. We've come to recognize out of the study of his word, out of the help of other people in our lives, that what we did or didn't do in those moments failed to demonstrate the greatness of his character. We failed to bring him glory, and thus we need to confess that what we did was sinful. Confession happens in two directions, as I'm sure we know.

There's vertically, as we confess our sins to God, and then there's horizontally, if indeed what we did was sinful against another person. Consider first the vertical direction, where David's words in Psalm 51 verse four become words that we

can use. Against you, God, you only, you preeminently, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. God, you have declared this to be sin, and here I am humbling myself under your just judgment. I agree.

Do you remember the phrase fear and trembling that we read in Philippians 2 verse 12 and 13? We're to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. The humble person trembles at the word of God and a true confession of sin will agree without any argument what God has declared to be true, that we have offended him and him preeminently. There's no if, but or maybe to defend ourselves, to try and justify what we did. No, no, no. The case is closed. The judgment is rendered. What we've done is sinful before the Lord. We confess our sins.

Consider for a moment how we might work this out in practice. Let's run through a little case study. You remember the desires that we mentioned the last time, maybe a desire that we have out of selfish ambition to be loved, accepted, understood, to have our own way, to be viewed as competent, these fleshly desires to be held in high regard. You can fill in the blanks with what you know you struggle with. But each of these desires becomes incredibly destructive as we allow them to take root in our hearts because we see how they exalt our own kingdom above that which the Lord Jesus would have us to pursue instead. Maybe in this made-up scenario, you suggest a wonderful idea that you think the congregation would profit from, and you approach the leaders in the church that this idea would be a wonderful thing to pursue.

However, for one biblical or prudential practical reason, you're told, not right now. We really love what you have in mind, but There's a different time and place to be doing

this. Maybe we could talk about that later. Instead of submitting to the leadership's decision, let's say that you dig in. Let's say that you take that idea as someone takes a bull by the horns, and you're not letting go. My way or the highway starts to raise up in your heart. You start burning with anger. Where's the respect for my ideas?

You might not ask that verbally, by the way, you might be thinking that in your heart. Maybe out of fear for how others now consider your reputation, you also start to take that idea and you start trying to persuade people that your idea is the best and they should listen to you and they also should listen to you.

Before you know it, there's disastrous movement toward division in the church because you're turning people against what the leaders have already said, not right now, in favor of pursuing your agenda. Now take a step back, imagine in that scenario that you can see, just for a glimpse of a second, that that self-centeredness has begun to cause trouble, not only in your heart, but among the people of God. Do you realize, do you see how that's your kingdom being grown, not the kingdom of God, as you pursue your agenda? Your commitment to yourself is sin not only against other people, as the case reveals, but sin against God, whose kingdom is at work to grow his church.

Now, in his kindness, and it is a kindness, recognizing that God disciplines those he loves, in his kindness, those attitudes and actions are eventually brought to light. They're revealed. Your sin is revealed. Perhaps it's even made public as more people are involved. They're revealed to be sinful in God's sight and conviction begins to prick your heart. The selfishness and rebellion you've demonstrated are seen to be what they are in God's sight. Their sin, their self-centeredness.

What do you do? That conviction you feel is a good thing as your conscience bears witness to the fact that what you've done is sin in God's sight. What do you do?

Where do you take that? Where do you go? You're now moved as the spirit works to make David's words your own. I have sinned and done what is evil in your sight. You're confessing the wayward attitudes and actions, saying the same thing about them that God has already declared.

What a wonderful grace of the Lord Jesus toward us that he would reveal those sins and then give us direction for what to do with them. Confession is what is in order. Here's where the wonderful promises of passages like 1 John 1, 9 come into play, folks. If we confess our sins, if we say the same thing about them that God has already said as he reveals them to us, then he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us to wash us of all unrighteousness. That's good news, isn't it?

Because of what God has done for us in Christ, God has authority to cleanse us from the filth of our sinful attitudes. Our guilty conscience is unburdened. Fellowship with Him is restored and we walk with Him in the freedom of forgiveness. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to cleanse us, forgive us.

Now that's to talk about the blessing of confession in the vertical direction, isn't it? With the attendant benefits of His gracious promise to cleanse us and forgive us, to move us along by His grace. But I also mentioned that there was a horizontal dimension to confession.

This is where After having gone to God and been forgiven by Him, we humbly approach a person that we may have mistreated along the way because of our disordered desires. To bring to light before them what we now realize is sinful and needs to be made right. In the scenario that we just played out in this make-believe thing in the church that we just walked through, it's not difficult to imagine that the person with those disordered desires has offended certain people in the congregation. Maybe he mistreated the leaders he was grumbling against as angry thoughts bred angry words, or perhaps slanderous words as he tried to turn people behind those leaders in a slanderous kind of way. In either case, confession in this case looks like telling the one that we've offended that we now see with God's humbling perspective that our desire to be right, our desire to be well thought of, our desire to be respected, you fill in that desire. led to those hurtful words and the slanderous tales we told. To see how we move from the vertical direction into the horizontal direction and begin to name the specific ways, we begin to confess the specific ways that the disordered desires in our hearts have produced ill effects on the relationship that we have. Those things are indeed against sins against the Lord, but they need to be dealt with in a horizontal dimension because certain people have been offended by our sins.

It's worth noting here too, folks, that we want to reconcile with people, we want to grow deeper in our relationships, we need to be confessing, we need to be repenting, we need to be drawing near and working through these issues, not just ignoring them, sweeping them under what I like to call the relational rug of our lives. Too many of us have this giant rug before us between us and the next person that just gets piled with unresolved conflict so that there's rocks, there's boulders, there's things in the way of our relationships. Rather than dealing with these things through confession and repentance, we let the pile grow. Before long, we can't even see the person on the other side of the room. Confession is a big part of dealing with that big pile of mess in the middle of the room between us.

Now, Ken Sandy, in his wonderful book, *The Peacemaker*, gives some very, very helpful insight into what confession should look like. I'm going to list four A's that he gives. First off, address everyone involved as you're confessing to them. Perhaps it's just you and your spouse, you and one other brother or sister. The addressing everyone involved has a small audience.

If I sin against my wife and my wife alone, I confess to my wife. If I sin against my wife in a way that spills over into my kids, such that they need to be confessed to, that's the arena in which we perform the confession. Being sure everyone impacted by our sin is included. We avoid if, and, and maybe, those things that completely undermine the ownership of our sins.

I really want to tell you how sorry I am. But if you hadn't have done what you did, no, no, no, no. No, no, no. That's not how we confess. That's to completely undermine the confession that you started. We avoid if, but, and maybe. We don't blame shift. We don't downplay. We avoid if, but, and maybe. Admit, thirdly, admit specifically what we did and what we were desiring that drove us to mistreat the other person.

Be specific. Did you use a specific harsh word? Are you aware of what that person is now feeling? How much it stung? Admit specifically what you did and what you were desiring that drove us to mistreat the other person. Finally, the fourth A here. Acknowledge the hurt we've caused. Take this as an example.

I'm so sorrowful as I confess to you that my selfish desire to see my idea implemented caused you so much hurt as I used my angry words to call your character into question and turn others against you. I deeply regret that my selfish choices brought shame to the name of Christ and drove us apart. that was not at all loving to God, that was not at all loving to them, that was not at all loving to you. Now, can you hear how much of a difference that is compared to a semi-committed sorry? Do you hear how much thought that takes and admission before the Lord and other people that what we have done is indeed wrong and has caused so much damage in very, very specific ways?

That's a genuine confession and expression of the genuine sorrow that we face that we need to be careful to demonstrate if we're walking out the gospel. This is a necessary work that we must practice if we're to work out our salvation with fear and trembling together. For how important confession is, that's not all there is to it. I mentioned that that pairs perfectly, biblically, with the requirement to repent of specific sins. We not only confess them, but we also repent of them. Pastor brought this up this morning, so we're going to bring it up again. Proverbs 28, 13 says, whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

Note the two things together, a confession and a forsaking of those sins. Confession of sin, repentance of sins is what is required for our relationships with God, our relationships with one another to prosper. Don't you want that? Do you want to see your relationships prosper with other people? Please say yes. Do you want your relationship with God to prosper? Of course.

The promise here is that the one who conceals his sins is going to be held back from those things. He will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. That forsaking of sins is to walk away from them, to leave them aside, because we now recognize that God promises our obedience to His Word in repenting from them. What is repentance?

Per passages like Romans 2.4 and 2 Timothy 2.24, repentance is a gift God grants to us.

But we recognize from other studies that we've done that it's something that we also walk out together. We recognize from our anchor text tonight that we live now in a certain way knowing that God is at work in us to will and to work for his good pleasure. Our lives are on a completely different trajectory than they were because God has given us new desires, a new goal to make much of him and we walk now in repentance. I love the definition that MacArthur and Mayhew give in their

systematic theology textbook.

And there they say that biblical repentance is not a mere change of thinking, though it does involve an intellectual

acknowledgment of sin. We have to agree that sin is sin, and we've got to think of it in a certain way. And there's certainly a change in attitude toward it. Neither, they say, is repentance merely shame or sorrow for sin, although genuine repentance always involves an element of remorse. True biblical repentance, they say, is also a redirection of the human will, a purposeful decision to forsake all unrighteousness and pursue righteousness instead. Thus, genuine repentance involves the mind, the heart, and there I want to point out that they're referring to the desires and the affections, what we love, what we hate, and also the will.

It's a complete reorientation of all of our being toward what God says is good in distinction from what God says is evil. Repentance is an aspect of the Christian life that is unfortunately so often misunderstood among the people of God. People will often say that they know what repentance is and yet fail to live out their Christian lives in recognition of that full-fledged definition of repentance that we just heard.

They're failing to grasp how much of a change God's Word requires of us as we walk out repentance. And that's a tragedy when you think of what it robs us of. It robs us of relationships that are vibrant with joy. It robs us of progress away from sins that were previously ensnaring us so definitively. What we find as we quiz ourselves and quiz people that we're trying to help is that repentance lacks the elements so clearly revealed in the passage that we looked at again this morning, 2 Corinthians 7 verse 11.

I'm going to encourage you to hang in there, because I'm going to give you a lot of definitions for these parts. Everything that I'm drawing can be found in the John MacArthur Study Bible. It's a resource that's rich in theology. I love it. But this particular set of notes is what I am frequently going back to as I gauge my own repentance and the repentance of others that I'm trying to help, because it really gives us a good idea of what should be manifesting in our lives.

Repentance first models earnestness. Earnestness, this is the initial reaction of true repentance to eagerly and aggressively pursue righteousness, an attitude that ends indifference to sin and complacency about evil and deception. If you and I are still okay with certain sins, then let's not convince ourselves that we're actually repenting from them. If you're still comfortable in those things, then repentance is not real.

True repentance, according to 2 Corinthians 7 verse 11, also demonstrates an eagerness to clear oneself. It's a desire to clear one's name of the stigma that accompanies sin. The repentant sinner restores the trust and confidence of others by making his genuine repentance known. And this, by the way, as Pastor Scott brought to our important attention this morning, requires sin to be made public. You and I are not repenting when we're hiding sins from others. How could we be repenting? There's no eagerness to clear oneself before other people if we're not repenting and bringing them public. There's indignation when we're repenting.

That's often associated with righteous indignation and holy anger. Repentance leads to anger over one's sin and displeasure at the shame it has brought on the Lord's name and his people. and notice the other's centered perspective. It's not predominantly interested in how I'm made to look, but how God and his church are made to look. There's indignation over sin. There's fear, there's reverence toward God who is the one most offended by sin. Repentance leads to a healthy fear of the one who chastens and judges sin.

We heard it this morning, we're hearing it again. Remember that the passage that we're anchoring everything in tonight is to be working out your own salvation with fear, there's our word, and trembling. to repentance demonstrates longing. This could be translated yearning, notes John MacArthur, and refers to the desire of the repentant sinner to restore the relationship with the one who was sinned against, whether that's God, it's always gonna be God, or the one that we've sinned against. Do we see that longing for restoration as we repent of that sin? Moreover, the truly repentant person has zeal.

This refers to loving someone or something so much that one hates anyone or anything that harms the object of his love. Zeal will move you to give up that which you once held most dear to protect and provide for someone else. It causes you to burn the books that you previously turned to for comfort through witchcraft. It causes you to give up all of your collection of whatever you once turned to so that you would demonstrate yourself to be repentant because you have a zeal to be right with God and others. You have a zeal, a passion to be repentant.

A repentant person will show a willingness to bear punishment. He's willing to see justice done even at a cost to himself. He's willing to be fired from his job. He's willing to be demoted in the church. He's willing to have that ministry opportunity taken away from him because he knows that God is just in declaring that what he did was wrong and it's a disqualifying sin, to use an example that might occur in the church.

Finally, considering 2 Corinthians 7, verse 11, The repentant person wants to prove him or herself innocent in the matter that he or she was convicted of. Folks, the essence of repentance, according to John MacArthur's helpful notes here, is an aggressive pursuit of holiness. That was certainly characteristic of the Corinthian church, as he says. The Greek word for innocent means pure or holy. The Corinthians that Paul was writing to there demonstrated the integrity of their repentance by their purity. You could see it in their conduct with and before one another. They looked completely different when they had repented from the sins that they were previously convicted of. How is it in our lives? What course are we now on? What sins have we not yet brought into the light that we need to repent of that are holding us back from living the vibrant Christian testimony that God has for us, where do we need to repent?

Now, I flew through those definitions, and I'm sorry for that. If you want my notes, I gladly give them to you. But hopefully what you're hearing through everything that was just said is that our repentance requires significantly more than a casual sorry for what I did. Sorry I shouldn't have done that to you, though I didn't know what I did and I'm still not convinced it was a sin. I can't even describe the way that you were offended, but sorry. Folks, that doesn't cut it. Shame on us if we think that's a repentant response to sin. how much different our relationships would be if we stopped rehearsing sorry and started repenting instead.

Some of our relationships in a church may be in the state that they're in because of a great deal of neglect here. Could be that for one reason or another, we're not seeing our sins with the biblical clarity that we need to. We still need people to come into our lives with the word of God to say, brother, sister, please, this is your sin, repent. If we do have that clarity, if we have that ministry in our lives, perhaps we're just not owning our sins.

Perhaps we're just not embracing God's perspective on them. We're not confessing to God and others. We're not agreeing with God, what he says about the nature of our faults. Still, there might be a lack of true repentance, which means that in light of having that clarity, in light of seeing them for how God sees them, we're not actually repenting. We want to sit in our sin. And that case there means that

despite what we're telling ourselves, despite what we're telling other people, we're not actually repenting. We're not actually walking out our salvation. We're not working out our salvation with fear and trembling at all. which is what repentance would demonstrate.

By God's grace, we'll come to see how problematic this is. He is such a wonderful savior, so patient and gracious with us that he helps us to see where we're lacking. We heard last time as we reviewed the Lord's desire for us as his people to be transformed, to put his glory on display, What he wants for us is to be free from sin's penalty and power. So what an opportunity we have here to repent of our repentance.

If you're convicted this afternoon that you're not really repenting as you should, then praise God you're convicted of that. Let's repent of that. Even as we've come to see afresh this evening the grief that we've caused our God, the grief that we've caused other people for our failure to repent, we can be confident that our God waits for us as a loving father with his arms outstretched because the gospel is true, there's no condemnation for us who are in Christ. We can be confident that as we turn from that specific sin or from our failure to confess it to him, that he's waiting eagerly to forgive. because of what he's done for us in Christ. Even sending Christ to pay for that lack of repentance, while we were still his enemies, we'll be welcomed home, forgiven, equipped with the necessary grace to persevere. That sets us up wonderfully to consider the second point that we want to consider tonight. As part of our walking out our salvation, working it out in a way that he intends, we need to be forgiving as we have been forgiven.

Now if you haven't had in the last few days. the opportunity to forgive someone for their sins against you, then I'm no prophet, but I'm gonna guess that it probably won't be long. We recognize, don't we, the presence of sin in our hearts, the presence of sin in our midst, we're still being transformed. There will come times when in the household of God, in the household of our homes, bumps and scrapes, relational turmoil will occur. The question is, what are we going to do when it happens?

Maybe as a result of what we're saying tonight, maybe as a result of someone's ministry in your life, you've come to recognize that you are so self-centered. The person who is recognizing their sins against you is coming to see, by the Lord's grace, how selfish they have been. And they're being moved to confess that, they're being moved along the path of sanctification such that they now want to confess that to God, they want to confess that to you, They thought they were doing the Lord's work, but they recognize how hurtful they've been. They recognize now that the next thing to do is to confess that sin to you and ask for your forgiveness.

What are you gonna do? You're now at a fork in the road. What will you do knowing that this sermon is all about walking out your salvation with fear and trembling? to put God's tremendous forgiveness on display. Here's where the Lord comes along and says, pay attention to yourselves.

If your brother sins, rebuke him. And if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in the day and turns to you seven times saying, I repent, you must forgive him. Paul joins our counseling encounter here and he says in Ephesians 4 verses 31 and 32, let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.

Now this ought to be familiar to us, and I believe it is. I believe Emmanuel grasps this wonderful thing. Though I perhaps think that we don't practice it as freely and frequently as we ought. We're called to forgive those who have sinned against us. Is that not true? Do we grasp that? As the saying goes, forgiven people ought

to be the most forgiving people.

We could say a lot, and perhaps we should say a lot at certain times, about the grievous things that people do against us. You know, Scripture recounts a multitude of abhorrent abuses from one person against another. We don't have to rehearse those. We know that the Word of God is not shy about recounting hard things. Friends and family members share hard things with us that make us share in their pain. We know how hard it can be to forgive because of the grievous things that people do against us.

But, and this is the important thing to remember as we think God's thoughts after him, as we take the word of God and submit ourselves to it, much more grievous are the sins we have each committed against our God. for which we have been abundantly forgiven than the sins that have been committed against us. To use Jesus' teaching in Matthew chapter 18 as the backdrop here, where he gives the parable of the unforgiving servant, you and I shouldn't come away from that parable with any other conclusion than I've been forgiven so much more by God than I'm called to forgive the person who's now seeking forgiveness from me. Those who have been abundantly forgiven should be abundantly forgiving. Now, what is forgiveness? It's a very financial term.

It's the releasing of a debt with a commitment that the forgiving person will no longer reckon that debt to the record of the one who previously owed it. If I take a debt that you owe me and I scratch it off the list, one of us no longer expects it to be repaid. I lost track of who's got the debt and who didn't. You get the point. When a debt is paid, it's paid. We don't bring it back up. It's the releasing of a debt with commitment that the forgiving person will no longer reckon that debt to the record of the one who previously owed it, though the seriousness of the offense that debt incurred is never downplayed. The debt for it is covered never to be held against the debtor again.

Picture what happened when we were saved. When we cried out for God's mercy in Christ, believing that all our sins would be imputed to Christ, we were understanding that, based on God's word, based on his promise to us, in his grace, God would cover the penalty that we deserved by punishing Christ for our sins. As Isaiah 53, six says, the Lord has laid on him, Christ, the iniquity of us all. How much is left for us to pay now? Absolutely none. That debt is paid. In making Christ to be sin for us and punishing him as our substitute in that way, God was dealing with the debt that each of us owed for our sins, placed it against him for him to pay. Trust in our resurrected Jesus as we now do. We stand as we sing. We stand forgiven at the cross, no longer indebted to God because of our sins. Isn't that good news?

And with the language of Jeremiah 31 verse 34, God forgives to forgive our iniquity, remembering our sins no more. It's no wonder, friends, that David could say in Psalm 32, blessed or happy, rejoiful is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed or happy is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

David says, I acknowledged my sin to you. I did not cover my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Do you hear the joy-filled relief there? Burdens indeed are lifted at Calvary, aren't they? All that in a knowledge that the guilt of our sins past, present, and future has been put on Christ. There's full redemption, full payment for those sins. We stand before him not condemned, but forgiven. Understanding that wonderful gift, recognize now that in response, as we walk out our salvation, that's something that we're now required to grant to others.

Now, as we've said, might that be hard at times? Yes, but through the meditation on

what God's word says about how much we've been forgiven, friends, that becomes all the more easy to do, becomes a blessing to see other people forgiven as we have been forgiven. Are there times that people remain unrepentant? Sure there are. And yet Jesus counsels us, whenever you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone so that your father Also, who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. What's his point? Even if someone is unrepentant, you have a duty to be ready to forgive, recognizing that forgiven people are forgiving people.

We want to model the grace of our Lord has shown to us, as he promises in passages like Psalm 103 verse 12, as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. To use the language of Micah 7:19, he has had compassion on us, he has tread our iniquities underfoot, he has cast our sins into the depths of the sea. Friends, we don't bear those sins anymore, he's forgiven us for them. That's wonderful news, isn't it? but it also fuels the recognition that forgiven people forgive. To dwell on this some more, because it's so important, 1 Corinthians 13, 5 declares that love is not resentful, it's not irritable, it does not count up wrongdoing, Love keeps no record of wrongs. And what a Christ-like thing to do to forgive in such a way as to not dwell on the incident, releasing our offender from his or her debt like we've been released from ours, to not bring up the incident and use it against the person, to wave it in their face. not to talk to others about it, that would be slanderous, that would be to bring it up for other person's harm, and not to let it stand before us. Again, the purpose of our forgiveness from the Lord is that we might be reconciled to him, isn't it?

On the human plane, on the horizontal plane, it works just the same, to be forgiven. To be forgiving is to promote the reconciliation that puts the gospel on display. Some of you have grasped this very well. Some of the relationships in this church are just beautiful to watch. They're rooted in gospel grace. Others are not so vibrant, are they? Some relationships are marked more like a courtroom with one party on one side, one on another, each having access to a stenographer, a perfect keeper of record. He did this. She did this. Yeah, but you did that. She did that over there.

Issues from decades ago are left unresolved. And some of you, unfortunately, are expert archaeologists. You're adept at digging deep, digging up bones that were buried long ago under the dust of unresolved conflict. It's no wonder there's no progress in your relationships because you're not ever doing anything other than keeping record of wrongs. Friends, can you see how far from the gospel that is? If I can be direct for a moment, you need to put down the archeological tools, the things that you use to dig up these bones. You need to pick up your Bible, spend time digging through the riches of scripture and remind yourself of what God has done in Christ for you, rather than digging up the bones to hold against one another.

To say this one more time, folks, forgiving people, forgiven people, forgive as we work out our salvation with fear and trembling. What a wonderful opportunity we have in reflection on how forgiving God is toward us, to go back to the relationships that we know are struggling and offer forgiveness where it's been requested, to seek forgiveness where we need to seek forgiveness. As we maintain the centrality of God's word in all we do, that was from the last sermon, as we keep watch over what rules our hearts, that was also from back then, we can constantly keep track of the direction in which we're headed. To focus on today's message as we confess and repent of sins that we're made aware of, ready to extend to others the forgiveness that we've been granted in Christ. We'll put on wonderful display God's transforming glory because we're demonstrating the practicalities of what it looks like to put the gospel on display. We have a tremendous opportunity here as individuals and as a church that's made up of individuals to demonstrate the gospel in tangible ways by taking these things, walking them out in our relationships. Just look at what God will do

to bring you close together to a spouse with whom you're fighting, a brother or sister with whom there is conflict as you confess your sins, as you repent of them, and as you forgive as you have been forgiven.

Let me close with some more questions because I want these things to percolate in our minds. I want these things to be walked out in relationships this week.

Am I addressing the sins I see in my own life so as to work out my salvation with fear and trembling? Am I seeing my sins? Are you seeing your sins? Are you letting other people show your sins to you? When it comes to confession, am I seeking to understand how God sees my sins and how they're impacted those I've offended? Am I agreeing with God when he says that that is a sin?

As I consider those particular things, am I repenting of them in the way that we've described repentance tonight? As I bring these things into the light, do I feel a zeal to turn from them in a way that would demonstrate to others, boy, there's a change in that person's life. Look at how the glory of Christ has enraptured that person's soul and caused them to think differently about the conflicts that they were having.

If you don't know how to do that, if you're struggling with whether your repentance is real or not, find someone to help you. And as we consider forgiving others, as we have been forgiven, are we holding that back? Are you in a relationship, are you in a conflict right now in which you are holding back forgiveness for those who are asking you for it?

I want to warn you with some urgency here. A refusal to forgive is a significant indicator that something is wrong with your salvation experience. I'm not saying that you're not saved. Let me read it again. A refusal to forgive is a significant indicator that something is wrong with your salvation experience. You might well be saved. You might be struggling to forgive someone.

But at least what you need to remember is that forgiven people should be the most forgiving people. To hold that out as a gift from those who want it from you is to call into question whether you have fully grasped how much you have been forgiven by your God. Does this all take effort? Does it all take humility? You bet it does.

We have in our God a richness of resources. In all His glorious wisdom, power, and love, He's working in us to will and to work for the very things that He's calling us to, the confession of sins, repentance from sins, the giving of forgiveness. He's gonna enact that in us as our anchor text shows. So let's be doing just those things, confident that He's gonna move us in the right direction. Let's be confessing, repenting, forgiving as we work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Christ is worthy that we would put his gospel on display in these practical things. Let's be known as confessors, repenters, and the most forgiving people others have ever met. Let's pray to our God together.

Father in heaven, we're so thankful that you make it so plain to us the way that we should go, the way that we should engage our relationships, the way that we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling in such practical ways. God, I recognize tonight that these are some hard things to hear. These are some really convicting things to hear. Nevertheless, Lord, that's what you had for us today in both of our services, to think carefully on what it looks like to repent, to what it looks like to be people of the book, of your book, of your word, that people would eventually come to see what the gospel have done in our lives. Lord, I pray that you give us humility and insight, that we as individuals might evaluate our lives, and become humble enough to confess our sins to you and others, that we, Lord, would have insight enough and humility enough to repent of those things, to truly turn from them, such that people would see true and lasting change in our

lives, and that we, Lord, would fully grasp afresh how much we've been forgiven by you because of what Christ has done for us on the cross.

We stand forgiven as your people, even tonight, and we're so thankful to reflect on that, how freeing that is, Help us to walk into freedom of forgiveness because of the sins that we're confessing, but also to extend that forgiveness to others that we might be seen as a congregation, even as individuals that make up this congregation, to be unoffendable because we recognize how much you've forgiven us. Help us to put that on display, Lord. We need your help. By your grace, we'll make it known. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.