

## Introduction

We are continuing the "Jesus Is Better" series, in the Book of Colossians. It is our prayer, our hope, that you'll see, in the truth of God's Word and by the power of His Spirit, that Jesus is better... that whatever the world has offered you or presented to you or anything that maybe you have conjured up in your own mind that is apart from Christ and think this is the path to success or this is the path to righteousness or whatever you think it is... to be content, to be satisfied... it is our hope and prayer that God would show you that in His Word and in His Son, He has sent "Better." He has sent a better way in the person of Jesus Christ. So we've been looking at that week by week: that "Jesus Is Better" than this, or "Jesus Is Better" in His "whatever the trait is" that we're looking at each week. Today, in Colossians 2, we're going to look at Jesus being better in His fullness. Even as I was sending the notes and writing the notes, I thought, "This is such a weird trait or characteristic to try to tackle." Usually, if you said, "What are the top five best traits of Jesus?" ... as crazy as that may sound... we would probably rattle off something different... love, forgiveness, mercy... some of those kinds of things. But when I looked at the passage, the "fullness" idea just kept jumping out at me. So it's my prayer that today God will give us understanding of what that means. I think there are really far-reaching implications of the fullness of Christ in our lives... not just some vague, broad category... but it has really true and real eternal implications for us, if we're in Christ or if we're not in Christ. So we're going to look at the fullness of Christ today.

In Colossians chapter 2, starting in verse 6. We are going to read through to the end of the chapter so get comfy: *"Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*

*"See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in Him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him.*

*"Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.*

*"If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—'Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch' (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh."*

## 1. Being Filled With Christ (vv. 9-10)

There's a lot there, but I think what stands out though is this idea of fullness, in verses 9 and 10: "...in Him..." (So that's 'in Christ') "...the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in Christ..." You who have come to Christ for salvation by faith have been filled in Christ. And if you back up... Christ has been filled with all the fullness of God's deity. So all that it means to be God... all that it is to be God, the person of God, the being of God... the content, the substance... is in Christ. So everything that it means to be God is in Christ. Christ is not lacking any part what it means to be God. "Then, believer," he says, "You are filled in Christ." So we have the fullness of Christ who is not lacking anything from God, the Father, and we are filled in Christ. So what I want to try to make a distinction here is that sometimes we think, "Okay, I come to Christ, kind of an introduction, and I get a little bit of Christ... and as I grow, I get more of Christ... So as I prove that I'm faithful, they kind of pull back the curtain and they let me access more of Jesus, like an allowance or something like that." But what Paul is saying here is that when you come to Christ by faith and are saved, you get all of the Christ you are ever going to get. You have access to all of Jesus... the fullness of Christ, you have access to. There's a difference there, right... between realizing what I have and not having all that I have.

I had this analogy... this is the failed one... I'm going to give you the failed analogy first. (Laughter) I was running these by my wife... "I've got this analogy about a hot dog-eating contest. And in the hot dog-eating contest, they're eating hot dogs. They do it in a really gross way, right? They soak them in water and they swallow them whole or something. Where the analogy is going is that as they are eating those hot dogs, they're eating everything it means to be a hot dog. They're not leaving part of it out. You have to eat the whole hot dog for it to count. But at the end of the timer, some of them have eaten more hot dogs than the other. So there's a difference between, "I didn't get as much hot dog as he did... he has more of the hot dog." So that's the failed analogy. That's your Memorial Day hot dog analogy. (Laughter) But this one, I think, makes more sense. We're going to spend a little more time on this one. Say you have a giant diamond, like my wife... (Laughter) Just kidding... she doesn't have a giant diamond. (Laughter) No... I'm in the ministry, remember? (Laughter) So... say you have this giant diamond... a real one... It's cut; it's not like the raw, chunky ones that you find in the craters or whatever... but it has been cut. It's just pristine; it's got all the carats and clarity... all that kind of stuff. That's all the diamond you're going to get; you've got it. But if you are in a poorly lit room, and you kind of hold it at a bad angle... you're like, "It's big and it's kind of pretty, I guess." You don't realize all that you have, but you have all that you're going to get. But when you put those jewelry-store lights on it... and you hold it at the right angle... maybe you kind of spin it a little bit, back and forth. The light starts to refract off of there and bounce off of there, and it shines and it sparkles and then what happens? You realize, "Wow... I see the beauty I have in my hand. I see the value. I see the worth. I see and appreciate all that I have," and my affection for it has grown. My understanding of it has grown, and yet it hasn't changed at all. You have the same amount of diamond you always had.

That's what we have in Christ. When you come to Christ for salvation, you get full access to the fullness of God and the fullness of Christ. And yet, if we don't look at it the right way, if we don't appreciate it in the right way, if we don't press into Him the right way, we don't understand. We don't have the affection; we don't have the appreciation, we don't have the understanding of what we have. We act like, "I need more of it." But really we're just not walking in light of what we have. We don't understand and realize the value that we have in our hands. It's our capacity to understand and appreciate Christ that grows. As our faith increases... we don't get more of Jesus; we appreciate Jesus more. We understand more; we see Him in the true light, we see the glory and the characteristics and everything that we say... that Jesus is better in

this and this and this. Those things come to our mind and our heart. We start to understand and realize all that we have been given in Christ already. It's not that God is dealing out more of Jesus to us. Our eyes are being opened more to who Jesus is.

So how do we do that? If I'm not trying to get more of Jesus, I'm just trying to increase my capacity to appreciate the Jesus I have, how do I do that? Well, Paul tells us, at the beginning of passage here. In verses 6 through 8, he says, "...as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him..." Okay, so he kind of jumps to "walk." The key here is to walk in Christ. How? ...As you received Him. "Okay... well, how did I receive Christ?" So you have to kind of work backwards before you can even get to increasing your capacity to understand and appreciate the fullness of Christ that you have, you have to ask a couple of questions. First: Have you received Christ Jesus, the Lord? Paul says, "...as you received Him, so walk in Him." He is assuming, because he's writing to the church, that you have received Christ. I'm not going to assume that today... I want that to be the first question you have to answer. Before you can walk in Christ, you have to be "in Christ." You have to have received Christ. So he gives Him the three-term name there... "Christ Jesus the Lord." That's not first, middle, and last name. He is speaking to three aspects there... that "Christ" is the Messiah (that's what "Christ" means), "Jesus" is the Savior, and "Lord" is the all-authoritative ruler of the universe. There are different aspects of who Christ is that he's talking about when he says, "Christ the promised Messiah, Jesus the Savior of sinners and Lord of all." Have you received that Jesus?

I think today that has some special meaning for us because we say, "Yeah, I kind of agree that Christianity is the most in line with how I want to live my life." That's not salvation; that's not receiving Christ Jesus, the Lord. I checked the box; I repeated a prayer, but I didn't really mean it. That is not receiving Christ Jesus, the Lord. Hear me today, okay? If you come to Christ by faith, it's in faith that you believe in Christ who came to save you from your sins and is Lord of the universe. We don't understand what all that means, but when we come to Christ by faith, we're surrendering to whatever that means. Does that make sense?

I came to Christ as a child. I didn't have a clue as to what all it meant that I was receiving in Christ. But, I believe that when I came to Christ, I was surrendering to whatever that meant. The only hope I have, my heart is convinced, is to place faith in Jesus Christ. That's receiving Christ Jesus as Lord. You receive Christ by faith, okay? Then Paul says, "Hey, do you want to increase your capacity to appreciate all the fullness that you've been given in Christ? ...Walk as you received him." I received Him by faith; I need to walk by faith. I need to walk in faith and with thanksgiving. If you are truly saved... if you have truly come to Christ, and your heart has been transformed, you've been given new life, you are thankful for that. You understand what has been done for you. So he says, "...as you came to Christ, so walk in Him..." So I walk in faith with thanksgiving. And as I walk in faith with thanksgiving, the capacity, my understanding, to appreciate all the Christ that I've been given, increases. But I've been given all the Jesus I'm going to get... in a good way. I'm not saying, "Well, that's all you get; don't throw a fit." You've got more than enough than you need, of Jesus Christ, if you're "in Him." So our faith... our capacity to understand that grows, if we'll walk in Him... if we'll walk by faith.

## **2. Means Freedom From Penalty (vv. 13-15)**

So if we'll do that, that's the focus... that's where we need to go. What are the implications of that? Well, we have the fullness of Jesus... it means that we are freed from penalty. Because these things that we're freed from, I think, are what distract us from walking in faith. In verses 13 through 15: "*And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.*"

*This He set aside, nailing it to the cross.* "This is the penalty we're talking about. We are not born righteous. We are not born in Christ. When you're physically born into this world, we're separated from Christ because we have a sinful nature. That is the natural way of man, since the fall of humanity. So we have this natural tend away from Jesus... away from obedience... away from God. So your testimony, whether you mean this or not, should not be, "I've been a Christian all my life." You haven't... No one has been a Christian all their life. We're born separated from God because we are sinful people by nature. That's why we need a supernatural act to save us from our sin.

Scripture goes on to say, "Not only were you born separated from God by your sin, but that sin deserves payment... deserves punishment... deserves a penalty. But God, being rich in mercy, sent His Son Jesus to take that penalty." As it says here, Jesus "took our sin on the cross." If you're in Christ, your sin is covered. Your sin debt is paid. Your penalty has been covered by Jesus. He paid the penalty that we deserve to pay. It says in verses 11 and 12, when it's talking about the circumcision done without hands... it's not as scary as it sounds... "Whoa... circumcision without hands..." I would not attempt that or be subjected to that... (Laughter) "Circumcision without hands"... He is referring to Christ putting off the body of flesh, meaning "Christ gave up His life and died." He says, "When Christ died, He died physically." When you came to Christ by faith, you died spiritually. Your sinful nature was killed... nailed to the cross. Christ was also buried. Your sin nature, when you come to Christ... buried. Christ was raised physically. You, when you come to Christ by faith, spiritually, "raised" to walk in the newness of life... a new life that didn't exist apart from Christ. Right? So we identify spiritually with the physical death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. We spiritually die to self... old nature, buried... new life, raised to walk. So what Paul is saying is, "If you've done that, you are in Christ by faith. Your sin debt is paid." The penalty has been placed on Christ.

So, if this is true, here's the question: "Which past, present, or future sin in your life was not paid for on the cross of Jesus?" None... right? But we don't live like that, right? Some of us do... when we remember... when we walk in faith. That's the encouragement here. But our temptation is to not live like that. Our temptation is to think, "When I came to Christ, He forgave the sins I committed before I knew Him. He gave me a blank slate, but I start keeping tally again." And then we get into this terrible cycle of, "Wait a second... I'm still a sinner and how do I make up for this? How do I make this right? I've got to go back and I keep asking Jesus for forgiveness and all this kind of stuff," and we've lost sight of the fact that all of your sin, your whole lifetime, your whole catalog of wretchedness was placed on Christ on the cross. Paul said, "*He died once for sin.*" He is not getting back up on the cross. Sometimes we get that far and we think, "Jesus isn't getting back on the cross, so who is paying for my sins now and in the future?" Christ paid for them; the penalty has been paid. The sin was set aside. The sin was set on the cross. Your debt was set aside and forgotten. That is what he is saying here.

I love this... we sang this last week, "It Is Well With My Soul." This lyric is:

"My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought!  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more!  
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, oh my soul!"

As he is writing the lyric, he interrupts himself with how amazing this truth is. Right? He doesn't just write, "My sin is nailed to the cross." He says, "My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought! My sin, not just the little ones, not just the ones I've committed before Jesus... not just the ones that I think are bad or that the world thinks are bad... **all** of my sin... the **whole** of my sin... is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more.

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, oh my soul!" (Clapping) It should be well with our souls when we understand and realize that the penalty for our sin was placed on Christ and paid for. We have been freed from that penalty. We've been freed from that debt, if we are in Christ.

Listen to Paul again, in Romans 6, a very similar theme because he is talking again about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and us being set free from sin. Romans 6:1-14: *"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

*"For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now, if we have died with Christ, we believe that we also live with Him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death He died He died to sin, once for all, but the life He lives He lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

*"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under the law but under grace."*

Verse 11 there is the key, I think. The difference between understanding what I've been given in Christ. Right? He is talking about a spiritual reality that has already occurred, and he says, "Consider yourselves dead to sin." I think, again, the temptation for us, if we just kind of glance over that, is to think, "Oh... so I just pretend... just consider." It's like, "Put on the mask of... this is the part that I'm playing. And maybe if I act it out enough, even though I don't mean it or it's not true, it will become true. I can kind of self-fulfill that prophecy." It's not that kind of pretending. You may fool yourself, but you're obviously not going to fool the God of the universe with that.

In the late '60s (this is a little before my time), the Chicago Bulls (pre-Jordan, obviously) were on a seven-game losing streak, and coach Johnny Kerr decided to give them a pep talk and try a little psychological experiment. "Let's rebound from this. Let's win. We're not going to lost eight in a row. Let me try something here..." So in his words, he says, "We had lost seven in a row, and I decided to give a psychological pep talk before the game with the Celtics. I told Bob Boozer to go out and pretend he was the best scorer in basketball. I told Jerry Sloan to pretend he was the best defensive guard. I told Guy Rodgers to pretend he could run an offense better than any other guard, and I told Eric Mueller to pretend he was the best rebounding, shot-blocking, scoring center in the game. We lost by seventeen. I was patient..." That was funnier in the first service. (Laughter) I don't know if it was funnier, but it was the same... Okay. "...I was patient around the locker room afterward, trying to figure out what to say. When Mueller walked up, put his arm around me and said, 'Don't worry about it, coach. Just pretend we won.'" (Laughter) Ahh... that's the funny part; that's the zinger.

We do that all the time, spiritually. "I don't feel a certain way, so let me act a certain way so that maybe I'll feel that way." But it never really is that way. I feel like I'm Dr. Seuss sometimes when I get up here. (Laughter) But pretending that we're dead to sin is not the same as being dead to sin. Paul is saying, "If you're in Christ, you're dead to sin so act like it." That's what he means when he says "consider." He is saying "Recon"... right? He is saying, "Look at the ledger; look at the math; look at the account. It reads 'Paid in full' – Sin debt, 'Paid In Full'." And yet, sometimes we walk around like, "Oh my gosh...", checking our balance like we do in real life, seeing if it's going up or down... "Has the check hit? What's going on?" We do that spiritually, thinking, "Where is my righteousness balance? Is my good outweighing my bad right now? What's going on? What do I need to do to make up for it?" What Paul is saying is, "You're not getting any more of Jesus; meaning you're not getting any more of the righteousness that you need." You have been given all of Christ's righteousness. Your sin debt is paid. You are freed from the penalty of sin. Quit hemming and hawing over it in such a way that it's changing by every good or bad deed you do, like your eternity hangs in the balance. It doesn't. Jesus made a way. Jesus took the punishment and the account is set... the balance is set. So when Paul says, "Consider yourselves dead to sin..." he doesn't say, "Pretend you're dead to sin..." He says, "You are dead to sin; act like it. Remember you are dead to sin and act like it. Walk in that freedom."

### **3. And Freedom From Performance (vv. 16-23)**

So, if the sin debt is paid, we've been given the fullness of Christ's righteousness; we're not earning our salvation, so we're freed from not just the penalty but also from performance. At the end of the chapter here, he gives some warnings about... *"Don't let anyone pass judgment on you with questions of food or drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ."* Then he also talks about asceticism and the worship of angels, etcetera. What he is addressing is the people who brought in this false Gospel who said, "You say you come to salvation by faith, but it's not complete until you do these other things. You have to do these rituals, you have to observe these ceremonies, you have to not eat this and do eat this and do eat this and don't drink this and drink this..." People were judging each other in a condemning way, saying, "You're not in Christ because you're doing these different activities or because you're not doing certain activities." And Paul is saying, "Listen, if you're in Christ, you're in Christ. You're sealed in Christ. You've got the fullness of Christ. All of His righteousness and all the salvation you're going to get, you've got, if you're in Christ by faith." So he said, "Don't let people pass judgment on you as if you have to perform or work or earn your salvation, or... yes, Jesus gave you salvation, but now you have to live righteously to pay him back." No... you don't. That's not why you live righteously. Yes... God has called us to righteous living; yes... God has called us to obedience but not as a means of paying back or earning our salvation. That would be performing or working for our salvation. Christ worked for our salvation. He took care of the sin debt. He took the penalty we deserve, and then gave us the life that we don't deserve. The mercy and the grace of Jesus Christ: taking the punishment we deserve and giving us the life we don't. That's what is in Christ. So he says, "Don't let people judge you and condemn you because of actions or because of things that they've placed on themselves as qualifiers or prerequisites to earn salvation." That's nonsense. That's anti-Gospel. That's anti-Christ... to work for salvation like that. We've been freed from performance in that way.

These things... they come from a good motive, usually. You don't want to be consumed with materialism. You don't want to be so caught up in money or possessions or all of these different things or gluttony, that kind of stuff. But then he kind of says, "There's a group of people..." That word "asceticism"... that's a way of living that denies the self from physical pleasures... whether that's dressing in sackcloth or fasting in

an unhealthy way. So it's self-denial and then, even beyond that, to the extreme. He talks about severity to the body. You've heard of people, back then, who would whip themselves and harm themselves. So this self-abuse, self-denial, self-harm... because what happens is people don't think that grace is real because it's too good to be true. "Wait a second... You say I have this gift of salvation in Christ, but I know how bad of a person I am. I deserve some kind of punishment." Not connecting the dots that Christ took the punishment for them, and so they turn it into, "What do I need to do to perform and earn this salvation that I've been given?" So it may start out as moral living and obedience and righteousness for the wrong reason. But then you start to realize, if you're looking at the account from the worldly perspective... "I'm still a sinner; there's still sin in me. Man, I deserve more punishment than this." So we start to harm ourselves in some way, thinking that's going to make up for it.

But what he goes on to say, and again this is one of those tongue-twisters: he says that in denying the flesh, you have not succeeded in denying the flesh... because what is this self-abuse, this self-harm? It's a worldly solution to a spiritual problem. These spiritual things may not make sense to us, so we create ways... "Okay... how can it make sense to me? I've got to do bad things to myself so that I can receive the grace and the gift of mercy and things... because if God's not going to punish me then I need to punish myself to receive this gift." That's a worldly perspective... a worldly way of looking at it. But when Christ comes and God presents the Gospel to us, in Christ... and He says, "Jesus is Better..." because this way it doesn't make sense. "Come to Christ by faith and He takes the penalty and then gives me this abundant life that I haven't earned? He takes the penalty I did earn and gives me the abundant life I haven't?" It makes no sense. That's why Jesus, in His fullness, is better than the way of the world. ...Because, left to ourselves, what do we do? Fast-forward two thousand years... what do we struggle with today still? Moralism... right? Trying to be good to earn or look righteous in front of others or in front of God. "I need to maybe give more" "I need to get in church more" "I need to stop cussing and bite my tongue and turn the other cheek" and "I need to stay sober..." These are good things, but we're doing them because we think, "If I just do that... if I fix my behavior, then I'll be made righteous." But Scripture tells us "No." Spiritually you are made righteous by faith. And then, as an act of obedience in faith, your behavior changes, because the character and fullness of Christ starts to come out of you and reflect off of you as you walk by faith and in Him. I'm not trying to discount those things. If your life has been transformed and you've been able to put aside those ways of the world and those things that are sinful and disobedient... that's good; you should turn away from them. But if you're doing them as a means of trying to earn God's salvation, you haven't done anything to deny the flesh, you're just appeasing your flesh... he says I need to be better and I'm not.

When I read about severity to the body and I think of self-harm today... it's the same thinking, right? "I'm not good enough; I deserve worse and so I harm myself." But in the fullness of Christ, he is saying, "Jesus is better." Whatever penalty you think you deserve... listen... the one you deserved was paid for on the cross of Christ. The punishment has been doled out. We're freed from the penalty of our sin. We're freed from performing to earn our salvation. We find ourselves sometimes in this endless cycle, trying to do good, trying to do better... but not for Jesus. When we don't do it in faith, again, if it's just our flesh...

It reminds me of the Greek myth about Sisyphus. If you've heard of Sisyphus... I don't know if you have or not. I'm going to try to stop saying it because it... I don't know. (Laughter) This king was punished, as the myth goes, to roll or carry this boulder up this mountain or hill. It was really hard to do; it took a lot of effort, a lot of strain, a lot of toil, a lot of frustration... probably some bruises and setbacks... two steps backwards for every step forward. But then eventually he would get it to the top. But what would happen? It

would just roll back down. He was doomed, day after day for eternity, to roll this boulder to the top of the hill, only for it to roll back down. That's the cycle we find ourselves in. Whether you are in Christ or not in Christ, this is an easy temptation to fall into, to say, "I've got to work for this salvation. I've got to work for righteousness." We take some steps forward; we see some little victories. But then, because we have that flesh or that sinful nature... if you're apart from Christ... we sin... we mess up and it all comes crashing down. We get burnt out, we get fed up, we get frustrated, and we think, "I don't understand how this works. I don't feel like a Christian. This can't be the life that God has called me to." It's not... It's not.

If you'll see every day as, "I am a sinner; but if I'm in Christ, my sin is forgiven. I'm going to mess up, but even those future sins... paid for... covered by the blood of Jesus." It's been taken care of. But as Paul wrote in Romans 6: "So should we just sin all the more so that grace can be poured out more? No... by no means." He says if it's spiritually true for you, walk like it's true, act like it's true, because it **is** true. If you're alive in Christ, set free from the power of sin, do you know what you're set free to do now that you couldn't before... is please God. So all of our good works, apart from Christ, they don't bless the Lord; they are not pleasing to God. Scripture says that *"...without faith, it's impossible to please God."*

So when you come to Christ by faith, not only is your sin payment done away with and the performance done away with... but when you now obey God... that's what good works come from, and you couldn't do that apart from Christ. We lose sight of that all the time. You can't obey God apart from Christ. Did you know that? You cannot please God apart from faith in Christ. So when we do good works by faith, now we are doing something that we couldn't do apart from Christ. So again, the life that we earn for ourselves, the bad part... Christ took on Himself and did away with. Then the good life, the abundant life that He came to give when we receive in Christ, when we come to Christ for salvation... given to us freely. It's both ends of the spectrum. It's whether I think I deserve more pain or whether I think I need to seek out more pleasure, Christ in His fullness has answered both of those and said, "I've taken the worst punishment that you could ever deserve, and I offer you the most fulfilling life that you could ever find." Quit trying to approach those from a worldly, earthly, sinful, natural perspective, but see what Christ has done and walk in the truth of what Christ has done. Let's pray. (Clapping)

"God, thank you for the truth of Your Word. Again, I thank You for a place to gather in Your Name, freely... to open Your Word of truth, to read the words that You have breathed out. God, as we proclaim these truths, I pray that it's not just soundwaves echoing off these walls, but God I pray that by the power of Your Spirit that You are working in the hearts and minds of the people in this room, to transform, to change, to spiritually solve these spiritual problems. God, we want to leave our natural, worldly approaches behind. We want to walk by faith. We want to walk in truth. We want to walk in grace... not that we can sin all the more, God. If that's our approach, then we don't get it. But God, in Your grace and by faith, we are now able to please You with good works of obedience. God, thank you for freedom from the penalty of sin, and thank you for freedom from performance... burn out, frustration, and toil, and trying to earned something that we could never earn, trying to pay back something we could never pay back. God, help us to see that our problem is our sin, but our solution is not our works... it's Christ. God, may we receive Christ by faith, if we haven't. May we walk in Christ by faith if we have."