

Profession or Possession?

Text: Romans 2:17-24

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OPENING PRAYER:

Our gracious God and Heavenly Father, we praise you for the wonder of your presence among your people. For the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. For the way in which Christ makes his people sing throughout the ages. We bless you for a faith that gives us joy, and for the Word of God that gives us light, and hope. And we pray that by the power of your Holy Spirit, as we bow our minds to its truth, and our hearts to its grace, and our wills to your purposes, that you would again out of your holy mouth, speak to us from your Word, and that by your Spirit, you would subdue our hearts, humble us under your mighty hand, and fill us with the joy of pardon, and forgiveness, and grace and power, and the expectation of glory to come. And all we pray, in this room, in these moments, and for your glory. And we pray this in Jesus Christ, our Savior's, name, Amen. Please be seated.

SCRIPTURE READING:

Now we're turning again in Paul's great letter to the Romans, to Romans chapter two this evening, Romans chapter two and verses 17 through 24. If you don't have your own Bible with you this evening, you'll find a Bible in the back of the pew in front of you. And the passage is in that Bible on page 940, page 940.

Thus far in Paul's letter to the Romans, he has introduced us to the great theme of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in which the righteousness of God is revealed. And salvation is given to all who believe, whether Jew or Gentile. And he has been in the process since chapter one, verse 18, of demonstrating to us why it is that both Gentile and Jew need this righteousness of God -- this salvation that comes only through Jesus Christ. And, much of the teaching thus far has been teaching unmasking sin, on the one hand, and speaking about the condemnation, and the judgment of God, on the other hand. And Paul has been speaking in the first section of Romans chapter two, about the validity, authenticity and rightness of God's judgment. Gentiles, he says in verse 14, who don't have the law of Moses, yet their lives indicate a law of consciousness, we might say, and yet they fail to live up to the light that they

have had. Jews have had the law, and yet have failed to keep the law. And so as he closes the previous section, he's spoken about how Gentile show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, verse 15. And as he looks forward to the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Christ Jesus, verse 16, he anticipates that those Gentiles who have not come to faith will still be arguing about their own righteousness. And so even on that day, he says, "Their conflicting thoughts will accuse or even excuse them." And we're reminded that where he is going in this lengthy argument, is, as he says, in verse 19, "So that every mouth may be shut, and the whole world held guilty before God." And now he turns very explicitly to the Jewish community, verse 17...

But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God and know His will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law: and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth -- you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, dishonor God by breaking the law. For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

SERMON:

I think I was 12 years old when my family first got a television set -- a black and white television set. We did of course have hot and cold running water. I don't think that my mother had a washing machine. She certainly didn't have a tumble dryer. And iPods had not yet been invented. But my aunt and uncle had a television set. And so every two weeks on Saturday night, we would make the trip across the city in which we lived from one end of the town, to the other end of the town, to have an evening watching television. Actually, there was only one program I was really interested in, and it began at eight o'clock. And so until eight o'clock in the evening, my older brother and I had to spend about an hour or an hour and a half, trying to amuse ourselves with our two cousins -- two girls of approximately the same age. At 12 years old, I wasn't really into girls. And I don't think I was really into cousins either. And so this was something of an endurance test for me. Until five minutes to eight, the parents would come through, and the magic words would be pronounced: Perry Mason is about to begin. Perry Mason is about to begin. And almost all I know about the American legal system, I learned as a 12 year old watching Perry Mason. And that strangely named Hamilton Burger, the DA, arguing the case out until at five minutes to nine, Paul Drake would appear, as he always seemed to do at five minutes to nine, at the back of the courthouse, give Perry Mason the wink. And soon I knew the case would be dismissed.

There were several legal phrases used in those programs and I take still use today in the American law courts that intrigued me. One was this I had no idea as a 12 year old boy, what it meant. One of the lawyers would raise an objection. "Objection! Leading the witness." And the judge would either say "objection sustained", or "objection denied. Please continue. Mr. Mason." And Perry would continue. It was of course much later on that I read rule 611 bracket C of the Federal Rules of Evidence of the United States of America that reads as follows, "leading questions", that is questions that entice the witness into the trap that the lawyer is setting, "Leading questions should not be used on the direct examination of a witness, except as may be necessary to develop the witness's testimony. Ordinarily leading questions should be permitted on cross examination when a party calls a hostile witness an adverse party or a witness identified with an adverse party interrogation may be by leading question."

And Paul in Romans 1:18 through Romans 3:20 is an interrogator. Indeed, he is a relentless interrogator. Indeed, we might almost say that by the grace of God, a little like the Holy Spirit himself when he begins to work in our consciences, the apostle Paul consumed with the grace of God and the gospel is a ruthless interrogator. And in this passage, he is really bringing as it were into the court, the Jewish person who has been standing listening to Paul's interrogation of the sinful Gentile, leading that sinful Gentile to condemnation under the judgment of God and agreeing with everything that the apostle Paul has been saying. And now that Jew finds himself as it were to be Paul's second witness. And Paul understands that as he begins to probe into this Jew, whom he imagines as it were sitting in the congregation to which he is preaching, he realizes that it will not be very long before this individual turns out to be a very hostile witness. And so for the sake of the gospel, and for the sake of the salvation of his own people, the apostle Paul becomes a relentless prosecutor of this individual. This individual who in verse 17, he says, calls himself a Jew.

And of course, the whole point of this is that as the Jew has listened to Paul's demolition of Gentile arrogance, the Jew has been saying, the great thing that distinguishes me from those Gentile dogs is that God has given me his word. God has given me Torah. God has given me the way to live. And so I can rejoice in this. When I point the finger of accusation at the sins of the Gentile, I can say to myself, thank God, God has given me his word. We have the law. Not just the Decalogue, of course. We have the Torah, the whole counsel of God. We are God's special people. And we therefore are in a special category, because of what God in His grace has given to us.

But the Apostle Paul is a skilled enough reader of the scriptures to realize that that is no defense, against God's interrogation of sinners. And indeed, it never was. Paul is conscious, you remember of the occasion when Jeremiah met with God's people, and they were saying something rather similar. They were, they were saying, but we are the people who have the temple of God. We have the revelation of God. Jeremiah, the prophet desolates them by displaying to them their sinfulness, and eventually their need of a new covenant in God's grace. And perhaps, Paul knew of the incident in the ministry of Jesus, when Jesus faced something very similar to this. When those to whom he spoke, whose consciences he was beginning to touch, said to him, but wait a minute, Jesus, "We have Abraham as our father."

So that both in the Old Testament scriptures and in the New Testament scriptures, appeals to privilege are scrutinized as to whether there is a reality in life that responds to the privilege. And I suppose Paul, in this section is particularly passionate, because he knew intimately somebody who had been in this position. He knew how to speak to such a person, because he'd been such a person. Indeed to the Philippians in Philippians chapter three, he had given, you remember, that great catalogue of the privileges that he was given by nature, and by race, and by family, and by attainment. And yet, he had come to understand that none of these things could bear the judgment of God upon his life were he without faith in Jesus Christ.

And I suppose it was partly because he understood, in a sense, how ruthless God had needed to be to him. What severe mercy God had needed to show to him. That he wants to display similar severe mercy to his fellow countrymen. I suppose that must have crossed the Apostle Paul's mind 1000 or perhaps 100,000 times in the course of his life, that the instrument that God had chiefly used to bring him to himself had been a man beside whose murdered, he had stood, when Stephen was stoned to death.

And I suppose one of the burdens that God puts into a man who has experienced that kind of thing is it prepares him to go to any lengths no matter what anybody thinks, no matter what hostility may be raised in their hearts. And sure enough, Saul of Tarsus had plenty hostility raised in his heart when he saw Stephen dying as a Christian.

If there was any way, in God's grace, he could be the instrument of opening the eyes of one of his fellow countrymen, and pointing them to faith in Jesus Christ. And clearly, of course, in verse 17, the person he is addressing is a Jew. But as we read through these verses, I would be amazed if we didn't understand that the way in which Paul deals with the Jew speaks deeply to our hearts, as those who are ourselves, religious people. Christian people. Even conservative, evangelical Christian people. Because Paul's great concern here is that privilege calls forth response. And where that response is lacking none of our privileges, none of the words that we say, can be any conceivable defense against the scrutiny of God's final judgment of our lives. And that's why in this particular section, Paul is not simply expounding truth. Actually, he had done that in the previous section in verse 12, through verse 16. He had expounded truth, but now he's taking truth, and he's aiming for the conscience. "We appeal to everyone's conscience", he says, "in the sight of God", to bring us to the place where we bow before him and confess that we are in need of salvation.

So let's try and think about this together. There are three things I think for us to notice. You think there are always three things. That's not exactly true. But there are usually three things to notice. The first is this: the self image of this Jewish individual. And simply in parenthesis, if it needs to be said, let's be very clear that the apostle Paul is not being anti semitic here. He is himself a Semite. He is himself a Jew. He's talking about the self he used to know. This is not a nationalistic prejudice he has, indeed, eventually we will get to that place in Romans, where he says, I would myself be accursed, if that would mean the salvation of my fellow countrymen. This is the very reverse of anti-semitism. But he cannot be honest with God's Word and God's gospel without delineating the self image that this Jewish person has. And you'd noticed as we read the chapter together, that he simply rattles off a whole series of privileges. And this isn't the only place in the letter where he does this.

And they seem to boil down essentially to two things. The Jewish person, we might say, the religious person, possesses superior knowledge -- verses 17 and 18. Particularly the last statement in verse 18. "Because you are instructed in the law." You have the law of God. And therefore, he says, you notice at the beginning of verse 17, he says, you have a tendency to rely upon it. You have a tendency to rely upon it. That is God has given you something special. He has given you special revelation, he has given to no other community. And you deduce from that special revelation of God's grace, that you are therefore in a special position with respect to God. You rely on it, it is your security.

Not only so, he says you boast in God. Now boasting in our world is usually bad. Boasting in the New Testament is frequently good. Indeed, the Scriptures tell us that we are to boast. You remember Jeremiah 9:23 and 24 to which Paul may actually be alluding here. "Let not the the wise man boast in his wisdom or the strong man in his strength or the rich man in his riches. But let him who boast, boast in this, that he knows me that I am the Lord. And in a couple of chapters, Paul will speak about boasting in God Himself -- in Romans five, verse 11. So boasting in the Bible is not necessarily a bad thing. But you see, in this context, what it means is that this person is saying, I have the revelation of God. And I'm able to boast in the special privileges that God has given to me. Not only so, he says, "You know, God's will." You know God's will. And because you know God's will, you're in the specially privileged

position. That because you have God's will revealed to you, you're able to tell the difference between the bad and the good, and the good, and the better, and the better, and the best. And you can see how he's leading me on. Here I am a Jew, and the apostle is saying to me, you have all of these privileges, you enjoy superior knowledge.

Not only so but in verses 19 and 20 you enjoy superior position. You have in the law, says, Paul, you notice his words "You have in the law, an embodiment of knowledge and truth." What a privilege that is, at the end of verse 20, "having in the law, the embodiment of knowledge and truth." You ever paused to think about the privileges that you have because you've got a Bible. I find myself having to say more frequently than ever today, people in our modern world assume that just as long as we can get rid of the gospel in Christianity, we can get back to a kind of normal, neutral, decent society. And by saying that they show they know absolutely nothing about the history of the western world. Because what was there in the western world before the gospel was paganism. Which is why when the gospel disappears, what people turn to is paganism. And so to have the knowledge of the gospel -- if we could only begin to calculate the benefits that there have been to the Western world, because we've got the knowledge of the gospel. And how some of those fruits have now been transported to other countries that have never had the gospel, and still don't have the gospel, and yet they enjoy the fruits of the gospel. So to have the embodiment of knowledge and truth is an amazing privilege to have been given.

And with that, you see a certain confidence. You share this confidence, do you? We have the knowledge of God's word, we have these privileges. And so there are certain things that we are able to do. And you find people speaking this way very generally speaking this way. I'm not sure that I saw it. But our queen, I mean of South Carolina, our beauty queen -- was it last year? Did she not urge us to send maps to Africa or something like that? Because we have knowledge. And so he says, How does this work out? Well, he says, "You are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind." You find that? Some of you men travel, you sit beside somebody on an airplane. I'm sure most of you don't go by Greyhound bus these days. And you fall into conversation. And somehow or another it comes out that you're a you're a Christian believer. And if your experience is anything like mine, you are then in for an hour lecture from somebody who has the knowledge to guide the blind. That's a very common thing. And you're sure you're a light to the darkness. I mean, don't you find it amazing the assumption that is pervasive in our country, that because the gospel came to this country, we know far better than all the other countries in the world, or most of them, how to run a nation. Interesting, isn't it? And you just move -- you know -- the British have certainly thought that for years when the Empire was collapsing into the sea. We were still singing Rule Britannia. We still sing Rule Britannia. Absolutely amazing! Children taught to sing Rule Britannia. Why? Because the privileges were ours. And so we assume that we are a light to the darkness. And an instructor of the foolish. And there's one thing we sure know what to do we know how to teach children don't we? We know how to teach children.

Well, you see, they had all of these privileges. The Old Testaments full of this kind of thing. This language is actually drawn straight out of the Old Testament scriptures. These were amazing privileges to have had. Amazing privileges to have had. And you notice that Paul doesn't deny that they were privileges. In chapter three, verse one, he makes it very clear they were privileges. And chapter nine, verses four and five, he makes it clear they were privileges. But you see, he is concerned to make clear that there is all the difference in the world, between the profession of privileges and the possession of saving grace. All the difference in the world between the profession of privileges, and the possession of saving grace.

And he's saying, do you notice, to these Jews, he's saying you have all of these privileges but you're not trusting the Lord. You have all of these privileges, and you're using them as so many defense mechanisms against the penetrating light of God entering into your life and bringing you to bow before him and come and see your need and trust in Christ as the Messiah. Indeed he doesn't use the word here that Jesus so frequently uses when he speaks to people like this. But he says your problem is that you are rotten hypocrites. Rotten hypocrites! You boast in your profession but it makes precious little difference to the way you live. And Jesus says, that's what I call hypocrisy. And, of course, it's always the danger of the religious person. I can see the faults of others, but I can't see the faults of myself. I have all the privileges of grace. And with those privileges of grace, I seek to defend myself against a mighty incursions of a God who wants to take me and shake me and transform me and make me like Jesus Christ. Instead of them leading me to the feet of Jesus Christ I use them to say to myself, "Well, I'm one of those people who doesn't really need that salvation."

And you see what he's saying? He's saying everything that you boast in has something that distinguishes you from Gentile sinners. Everything that you boast in is going to rebound upon your head and crush you in judgment. Because, as he says here, you have such an image of yourself that you at least are somebody who does not need the mighty saving power of God in your life because you have all of the privileges. Paul is saying, have all of these privileges without salvation and those privileges will rise as so many witnesses for the prosecution in the last day and say guilty, guilty, guilty, guilty, guilty! Because the moment I think that my privileges excuse me from turning to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith, that moment, I am lost from grace.

So, he speaks about the self image that the Jewish person has and it surely is the self image to which we ourselves are prone. In so many ways, don't you feel this? We are not liberals in this church. We are conservatives. We believe in having the privilege of the Word of God. We believe in prayer. We believe in the sanctity of life. We believe in the instruction of God. And so you can understand how there is a, there is a penetration in this ruthless cross examination of the Apostle Paul. And he's actually only just begun.

And so having dealt with their self image he, he goes on to speak about their sin. And it's interesting, you can see, I think, even in the English translation, the sense of nervousness, the tension in Paul's writing. Do you notice how he puts it "if you call yourself a Jew". And 19, "if you're sure. And if you're an instructor, if you teach children". And we are expecting him to say, then these things should follow. But there is no then that follows there's just this outburst of cross examination and interrogation in which he is unmasking the sin of these Jewish people. And what does it amount to? It amounts to this, that in one way or another, in one dimension or another, in secret or in public, they commit the very sins that they condemn. And this was where Paul had begun in chapter two, verse one. Therefore he says, "You have no excuse, oh, man, every one of you who judges and condemns for in passing judgment on another, you condemn yourself, because you the judge, practice the very same things." And so here they are. "You teach others, but have you really taught yourself?" Now, of course, teaching was, was one of the great hallmarks of the Jewish way of life. It was one of the great hallmarks of the Jewish home. You taught your children, the word of God, the law of God. I wonder if any of you who are parents, as you've sought to teach your children have found yourself exposed to this question. I've found myself as a father exposed to this question, am I teaching my children a level of integrity, and indeed a level of sanctification that I've been unwilling to strive for in my own life? And the answer is, in many cases, as parents, it's "Yes", isn't it? It's amazing how "double standard" we can be -- even with our own children. And that can be in the most zealous, sometimes it is in the most zealous Christian

parents, we demand a level of sanctification in our 11 year old children that we've compromised most of our own life. And that's the kind of thing that Paul has pointed to when he says, "You who teach others. You're not teaching yourself. You who, who speak out against stealing", and it goes down through some of the 10 commandments. "You who preach against stealing, you steal." Steal? Well, it may be one of the most common breaches of God's law, in our in our lives. We've lost that sense of being scrupulous about what is ours and what is not ours. And for that matter, being scrupulous about what is God's.

You imagine the number of thefts you and I commit every single day in terms of stealing from God what belongs to him. Well what belongs to him? You belong to Him! You belong to Him! And here I am preaching against stealing. And I steal. And you condemn adultery. But you commit adultery. Now we say that's almost unbelievable. You only need to watch your television sets over the last 25 years to see it's very far from being unbelievable. "And you who hate idols rob temples." While the scholars are a little mystified at this because Jews were not characteristically going into temples and robbing them. Although there are some illustrations of it. And the illustrations kind of go like this. "Whoops, I'm in an idol temple and this, this idol temple is blasphemous. So perhaps I'll just take some of that money there." I wonder if you've ever done that. Excused disobedience to God on the grounds that the context in which you're being disobedient isn't a Christian context. It's all so very subtle. And it may also be very deeply spiritual. Don't you hate idolatry? But have you been robbing the temple of God?

That's not so far removed from my life. I come in to this temple of God. I don't mean the building. I mean, the people this temple that Jesus is building, with the living stones that he's bringing together and I withhold my love from another stone in the temple. I demean another stone in the temple. I give myself in a kind of half hearted way to worship but I still look as though I'm doing it with all my heart. Do I who condemns idolatry rob temples? Do I boast about having the word but don't live according to the word? That's really what it amounts to. And this is why, perhaps especially for us, it is so searching. This, is I think, why we can understand why this was so penetrating because in our church and our fellowship for our kind of Christians, having the word is of supreme importance. But you can see you can sit under the most orthodox ministry in the entire world, and say to others, you know, we have secured the Word of God in our church, not like you people. The Word of God isn't really secured in your heart because you take it and leave it, you play with it, you may ignore it. And so it's not difficult for us to get inside the soul of this individual that Paul is systematically driving into a corner, so that this man or this woman, will be brought to a place where they are saying, like the publican in the temple, God be merciful to me, the sinner.

And indeed, this is why Paul is so relentless. Because he must have seen often enough, he was there often enough. As Jesus was there often enough to say, let me tell you a story about two men who went into the temple. And one of them was the most publicly religious man you could imagine in Jerusalem. So much so that he fasted, and he tithed. He was serious about his religion. But you see, he'd used his religion to defend himself against the incursions of the grace of God. And when he left the temple, adjusting his well made suit, and buttoning up his coat and saying to himself, now, thank you, God, for, for all these privileges you've given to me and out the corner of his eye, he saw this publican coming out and scarcely able to lift up his face and tears in his eyes. And Jesus says, guess which of these two men was saved? And Paul had been the man who wasn't saved.

Well, that brings us to the third thing. The self image of the Jew. The sin of the Jew. The impact of the Jew. We might say, the self image of the religious person, the sin of the religious person, the impact of

the religious person and this is where you begin to weep, isn't it? He says, what's the impact of all this on the outside world? It's this, "Bunch of hypocrites." That's what it is. That's what they're saying. He says The name of God, he's citing Isaiah 52, "The name of God as blasphemed among the nations because of you." Very occasionally, very occasionally, we need to hear what other people say about ourselves, and about our church, don't we?

I wonder what they do see? I've actually very little idea. But I often wonder what do they say about us who are Christians in this year of grace 2008 in Colombia? What do they say about us? Is the name of God blasphemed among the Gentiles because of the community of supposed faith in Jesus Christ. Or to bring it down more pointedly to myself to yourself? What do they say about Christ because of you? How real is it? How life changing is it? How much does it make an impact on an ungodly world, even if they hate it, they can't but stand in awe of it because it's so real. And that's what Saul of Tarsus had seen, first of all, in the martyr, Stephen and then in his fellow Christian believers. And then in the Church of Jesus Christ. He had seen that the strictest religion that relied on the greatest privileges but did not have Christ was worthless. He realized that the path to hell is not only paved with good intentions, but it's sometimes paved with religion. And he had cried out, saying he was the chief of sinners, for God's mercy. And he just longed for people like himself, to find that mercy and Jesus Christ too.

Remember the striking way in which the prophet Isaiah had a very, very similar experience, which may be one of the reasons why the Apostle Paul's whole way of talking about the gospel is more influenced by the prophecy of Isaiah than any other book in the scriptures. Now the prophet Isaiah had come with these cutting words against God's people and their hypocrisy. And then in chapter five, in a very striking way, in Isaiah chapter five, in verse after verse he had pronounced his woes. Isaiah chapter five, verse eight, "Woe to you." Isaiah chapter five and verse 18, "Woe to you." Verse 20, "Woe to you." Verse 21 "Woe to you." Verse 22, "Woe to you." And I suppose if you were a Jewish reader of Isaiah and reading this, and noting it was like the sounding of the hour by Big Ben: "Woe to you! Woe to you! Woe to you! Woe to you. Woe to you. Woe to you" You would almost instinctively have realized that there was still one more woe to come. Because Isaiah wouldn't leave it at six, if there were to be seven. And do you remember where the seventh woe falls? In Isaiah chapter six, when he goes into the temple, having pronounced his woes, woes, woes, against the ungodly, he finds himself in the temple and it's full of the glory of God and an overwhelming sense of the infinite, perfect holiness of God and he realizes he can't stand before God's judgment thrown himself. And so he covers his head and cries out, "Woe is me. Woe to me." And as he confesses his sin, he receives that burning coal, off the altar that cleanses him. And now he's ready to serve the Lord. Woe is me.

Dear friends, I wonder if it's true, as I suspect it is, that God is pleased to use for His glory those who first have pronounced a woe against themselves and their sin. Conscious of the judgment of God but run to Jesus Christ for mercy and protection.

Somebody sent to me the other Sunday. "Will there be more like this next week?" And I said, "Oh, not just next week, but for weeks to come." Perhaps almost to the point when somebody will come to me and say is there nothing else in the book of Romans, but judgment and condemnation, and an unveiling of sin. Oh there's much more. But the much more doesn't begin to taste sweet until I'm bowed down and put my head in my hands and said to God, oh God, I'm exposed. I've trusted in my religion. I've trusted in my privileges. I trusted in my good works, and I am undone and I bow before you. And I need your mercy. And it's almost as though Paul won't stop until, until we are there until until we're exposed.

And since some of us know a little of Paul's own experience, we understand why. Because he knew it was possible to be deeply religious and not saved. Not Christ's. And so by all means possible, he would save some.

And you'll see the whole point of this. Let's not lose sight of it. The whole point of this is to say to my soul, you need Christ more than ever you imagined. And Christ is able to save you from much more than you ever knew. And as you come to Him, He will. Because he has promised never to cast out those who come to him.

First few weeks after I was a Christian, I used to wonder every time I heard the gospel, why I felt I needed to be converted all over again. Do you know what the answer is? You and I need to be converted all over again every time we hear the Gospel. Regenerated once. Repenting and believing in Jesus Christ all the way to glory. That's why there is something blessed about the mask being ripped off my life and my sin being unveiled to me as I sit quietly and personally under the ministry of God's Word and he shatters my self delusion and shows me my sin because it's the only way to grace. And when you get to the grace of Jesus Christ it tastes so magnificent.

Maybe that's where you are tonight. You've been trusting in your privileges. Nobody else has known. Perhaps even you didn't know you were trusting in your privileges. All this time. You were trusting in your privileges. Just like Saul of Tarsus, and you were working hard at your Christian life and you were trusting in your privileges. And not really trusting in Christ and you're exposed now. What are you going to do? Where are you going to go? How you going to respond? Well, he's saying come to me. You're so tired of trying to do your best. You're so tired of trying to live a better Christian life? Come to me and you will find rest. Well, do you profess Christ? Or do you possess Christ? What a possession he is.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, your Holy Spirit searches us and knows us to see if there'll be any wicked way in us. Any sense of self assurance. Any confidence in anything less than Jesus Christ. And we pray as you search us and know us; as your word rips us apart, as we are condemned. But now as we trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior and our Lord, our mouths may be opened, and we may sing his praises, with a hither too unknown intensity as we live for His glory. And this we pray in his great name. Amen.