



No Greater Love-Part 3
Christ's Unfaithful Friends
Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, what might you imagine the following people have in common. The Queen of England, George W. Bush, Emilio Estevez, Perez Hilton, a cadre of Buddhist monks. One more, Britney Spears. Fun with taxonomy this morning. Trying to figure out how those are categorized. How could that be possible? What do they have in common? Well, they're all human beings. Yes that's true. Here's something they have in common, they've all been personally sued. OK well, a lot of people have been sued. No, these people have all been sued, that variety of people, by the same person. The same person, yeah. A guy in Kentucky has sued them all and you can add to that list about 4,000 other people who he has specifically, in independent lawsuits, sued. That was such a unique thing that when the Guinness Book of World Records heard about it, they actually inducted him into the world record book as the most litigious man in the world.

How do you think that went for the Guinness Book of World Records? He sued them. Yes, it's true. True story. He did, he sued them. He said the information wasn't right, the number wasn't right, they misrepresented him, he sued them. So he sues everybody. This guy is good at suing everybody. He's gone after a million people. If you picture a guy that even if he's batting, you know, .100, that he's probably doing quite well on the awards through these lawsuits. I mean, you're thinking, "Oh, you must be doing all right." Don't imagine that. He has actually himself been pursued by the law. He was convicted of wire fraud at the federal level and he was sentenced to prison, federal prison, in Lexington, Kentucky. And you can imagine how his trial went. Right? Here's a guy who knows the law, a lot about the law, at least enough to file a lot of lawsuits. The vigorous defense that he put on to say, you know, I am not guilty when he makes it his career, basically, to sue as many people as he possibly can, saying that they are guilty.

When I read about this guy and the interesting story about all of that, I thought well that's a good, apt illustration of a problem that I think we all have, that the Bible says we all have, and that is that intuitively we are good at finding the faults in other people. But when it comes to someone accusing us with a fault, we're really good at defending ourselves. Right? We see the moral failures in others, we see the transgressions in others, we just don't like to see those in us. That is a biblical concern and in Romans Chapter 2 there's an entire paragraph there, a section of God's Word all about the problem that we are blind hypocritically to the problems in ourselves, the very same problem, oftentimes, that we see in other people.

That is a good sermon and it should be preached, because this is an essential thing for us to realize and discern and understand. But that's not the sermon we need to hear this morning as it relates to our passage in Luke 22. As a matter of fact, this almost seems completely opposite of that, at least in the way that it's distinct in recognizing the difference between sin, the sin of one person, versus the sin of the other person. If you look at the case study in our passage in Luke 22, we have two people and one is a sin in a context that we would say is incredibly catastrophic. It is spiritually fatal. And then there's another sin over here that we would want to characterize differently, as a matter of fact, it is characterized differently, and yet it's a grievous sin, a serious sin and yet it has a different result, and a different consequence and there's a different way for us to indicatively understand what's going on there. Of course, if you know where we've been, in Luke 22, we've just been in the Garden where Judas walks up and betrays Christ and we look at Judas as this sinner in this passage and of course he is. For 30 pieces of silver, he's going to identify Christ so the Roman officials and the Jewish leadership can put him through this kangaroo court in the middle of the night on this Thursday night of Passion Week.



Now, that's bad but introduced this morning is another sinner, and his name is Peter. You have Peter denying Christ three times. You have Judas and he sins, he betrays Christ, you have Peter, he sins, he denies Christ three times over and you say, "Well yeah, betraying Christ a lot worse than denying Christ." Is it really? Think about what Jesus said in Matthew 10:33. He said, "If you deny me before men I will deny you before my Father in heaven." I mean, that's a serious way to talk about the very word that's used here. Denial. He denies him. I mean, for Judas to sell Jesus' location out and identify him in a garden for 30 pieces of silver, yeah, that's one thing, but then to be the number one guy, always ranked first in terms of the list of the number one insider in the inner circle of Christ, and to have that person, when the heat is on, say, "No, I don't know this guy," and deny him three times. I'm just saying these are both big sins.

But one, just because you know the Bible, you're going to say, this is a really bad sin, that's a catastrophic sin. This guy, I mean, he's an apostate. And then over here you're going to look at Peter and you go, "Well, yeah that's bad. And he stumbled and it wasn't good. But, you know, he got back in the game and he ends up being the preacher in Acts Chapter 2 and Acts Chapter 3 and 4, and, you know, thousands of people come to Christ and he becomes this great spokesperson for the Gospel.

The need for us to see the difference between those two, and I hope for you to recognize, as you're driving home from church today, that the sin that I recognize in myself, because I'm past the lesson of Romans 2, I see that I'm a sinner, they're a sinner and I see sometimes their sins looks a lot like my sin, but I'm categorizing my sin differently, I hope you see yourself in the second category. That I'm a "Peter sinner" and not a "Judas sinner" and that's a distinction that needs to be made. And not all sins are the same nor should they be classified the same. It's not because one is worse than the other, but there's something about the circumstances that are relating to Peter's failure versus Judas' that we're going to say, two different things. And I want to make sure I'm in that second category. I would rather, knowing that I'm a sinner, and I'm not going to deny it, I'm not going to be blind as a hypocrite and say everyone else a sinner, I'm not. We're all sinners. My non-Christian neighbor's a sinner. My non-Christian co-worker - sinner. I though, as a Christian, I'm a sinner too, but my sin is different. It's a different situation. Well, what is that different situation?

Well for one we might even call it, as I at least for the sake of our discussion today, I'm not saying these are hard terms throughout the New Testament in terms of distinction, but I will talk about Peter as a stumbling saint. He's a Christian, a stumbling saint. I will then speak of the sin of Judas as someone revealing his heart, revealing that he is really not with Christ at all. That distinction of a kind of betrayal that we would say theologically is apostasy, a defection, a spiritual defection, versus a guy who stumbles and gets back in the game, those are two different things and yet the sins are both grievous, they're big. And there's sin going on in the lives of people you know that is spiritually catastrophic. And I would hope that, as you leave, because, "Yeah, I'm a sinner, I admit it, but my sin is not like that." And it's not just because my sin is not as bad as his sin. No, it's bad. It's just, that you're Peter and not Judas. I hope that's the case. And I'll state it that way as we identify, and if you're a Christian, I hope even as I read the text right now, you can't help but identify.

Verses 54 through 62. I'm going to read for you, open your Bible, look at this passage, get it in front of you. Let's walk through this. Just read it. A very familiar story beginning in verse 54. Remember the scene - Garden, they just showed up with cudgels and torches and swords and they're ready to arrest Christ. Judas leans in to kiss him, to identify him, the ancient near Eastern sign of affection and knowledge of one another, they're friends, and then it says in verse 54, "Then they," the crowd, the mob, "seized him," that is Christ, "and led him," Christ, "away bringing him into the high priest's house." And down the Kidron Valley from where they're at, might be a 20-minute walk to



get to the place, historically, that we consider to be where Caiaphas', the high priest of Israel, house is.

"And Peter was following at a distance. And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard," we're in the courtyard of Caiaphas' high priestly house, a nice house, "they sat down together, Peter sat down among them. Then a servant girl," verse 56, "seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man was also with him." With who? With Christ, that guy over there in the crowd and the mob and all the interest and torches and everyone seeing him and now he's in this place, in this palace, and everyone's looking at him and they want to crucify him and they think he's a blasphemer, he's making himself out to be equal with God. Everyone has turned into the Romans. The Sanhedrin, the Jewish leaders, the temple officers, the elders of the city, everyone is bearing down, "Hey, you, you. I see in the light of the fire here, YOU were with him."

"But he," that big word here, here's our word, "denied." You just denied Christ. You denied Christ. How did you do it? Here are the words you said, you said very emphatically, "Women, I don't know him." I don't know him. You don't know him? You just pledged your loyalty to him earlier in this chapter. "Everyone else can fall away. I will never fall away. You want to talk about the flakiness of these other disciples? Yeah, Thomas, I understand. You have Nathaniel, sure I get it. But me? I will never. I'll never fall away." Denied it. If you look in a lexicon, the antithesis of words, linguistically, "to confess," here's the antonym, "to deny." Nothing could be further than what God was asking him to do for the rest of his life. "You confess me before men," you say, "I know you, I'm your guy. I'm with you. I ally with you." Instead, "I don't know him." A little later someone else saw him, verse 58, said, "You also are one of them. You were in the crowd. I recognize you." But Peter said, "Man, I am not. I'm not one of them. No, I'm not one of them."

After an interval of about an hour, verse 59. You think that's plenty of time for us to process in our own minds as we're watching here. "Got my, kind of, my hoodie on over in the fire and I got my cloak around me and I don't want anyone to recognize me, but I'm watching because I want to keep my eye on Christ and he's over there and I'm trying to hear as much as I can hear, warming myself by the fire." An hour has gone by in this kangaroo court.

And still another said, "Certainly," hey guys, I recognize this guy, "this man right here, he was with him, for he too is a Galilean." Now in the parallel Gospel accounts, we know it's because of what he said, not by how he looked. He spoke, he's talking with him, he's chatting with them, talking about this guy. I can see him talking in the third person about this guy. This man, this Rabbi, this teacher. And they said, "We recognize that accent, you're a northerner. Are you from Galilee? Wait a minute, Galilee, that's where Jesus is from, that's where all of his big miracles in his ministry was for over a year. Yep, you were with him." Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you're talking about." Oh really? Peter you don't know what he's talking about, as you walked into villages preaching, "Here comes Jesus. Jesus the Messiah," as you watched him do miracles, you don't know who he is? You saw him break bread and feed 5,000 men and their families. "You don't know what you're talking about." "Really? We don't know we're talking about."

Oh, in the right circles you're there saying, "Yeah, I was there. I saw Jesus feed the 5,000. You know, I actually took a step out of the boat, walked on water when Jesus was walking on the water. I remember the day when Christ came, I followed Christ," all that testimony, out the window now. "Man, I don't what you're talking about. Not me."

And immediately, verse 60, bottom of the verse, while he was still speaking, that was just coming out of his mouth. Maybe in the cold of that Spring morning, before dawn, as the light on the crest of



the horizon was starting just to discolor the sky. And they'd been there during the night. Maybe a little breath still lingering there that you could see coming out of his mouth. The rooster crowed.

And you want a dramatic scene in the Gospels? "And the Lord turned and looked at Peter." How far was it? Here to the parking lot? Here to the lobby? Peter's hiding in the shadows, trying not to be recognized again. Now he's got to be careful how he talks because he's giving himself away as a Galilean and he's watching all of this, trying to listen, hoping the sound will bounce off the stone walls of Caiaphas' court. "What are they saying now? What are they doing? They just hit him, did you see that? What is happening?" And as soon as he tells, "What? I don't even know what you're talking about." And as soon as the breath is still coming out, he hears the rooster. And then Jesus turns his head and looks at him from across the courtyard. Wow! "And Peter remembered," when those brown eyes of Mary's son, the Son of God looked at him, he remembered, "the saying of the Lord, how he had said, 'Before the rooster crows today you will deny me three times.'" And that was it. He stood up. "He went out, and he wept bitterly."

Judas shed some tears too, no doubt. He marched back probably with tears going down his cheeks off of his beard, to throw money back at the Jewish folks who had paid him to deny Christ. He had a lot of pain too on his way to go out and hang himself. I'll bet Peter felt like hanging himself. I mean think of the pain of that.

I don't think you have to think very long about it because I'll bet you've had conviction in your Christian life. I'm speaking now as though you're Peter. You know what it is to fail. You know what it is to say, I want to serve Christ and never want to do that sinful thing again. I want to stand with Christ. I'm going to do what he says. I want to be his spokesman. I'm going to be his ambassador in this crooked and perverse generation. I'm going to stand up and stand with Christ, and then when the pressure was on you didn't do it.

It could have been a teenage girl who said, "Are you a Bible-believing Christian. You don't believe that stuff about homosexuality? I mean, you don't believe that do you? I mean, you're not against equality are you? You're not into the cisgender, binary only, male and female thing. You're not into that are you? You really don't believe a woman has a right to her own reproductive decisions? You're not one of those are you? Don't start... Are you a Bible believer? One of those kinds of fundamentalist Christians?" Maybe there's been a time like that, "Yeah, I walked away. I denied Christ. I said I don't stand with him. I distanced myself."

We'd like to say we're the friends of Christ. You've noticed my subtitle. The sad thing is Christ has a lot of unfaithful friends, doesn't he? And if you felt that pain, if you want to make sure that you are a Peter and not a Judas it's not because one sins and the other doesn't. It's because there's something different. We need to understand how this happens. If I'm a Christian how is it that I continue to sin. And more specifically, what's that driving fact, how do we get to that place?

Number one on your outline, let's just consider verses 54 through 60. You know the story. We don't even need to really refer to it again. I mean you, know the story. It goes into the pressure of someone saying, "You're with him," and denies Christ three times. You need and I need to "Know How We Stumble" like that. How does that happen? How does it happen that one day I can sit there going out of church, going I want to live for Christ this week and by Tuesday afternoon I am not acting like a Christian? I am not willing to stand with Christ. Here's why, one word. Ready? Fear. That's why, fear. That's the number one reason you and I do not stand with Christ in a hostile generation that frankly, let me be as clear as I can, they hate Christ, they hate Christ, they hate the Christ who is the Christ of the Bible. You want a plastic Christ, you want some kind of figment of your imagination? Great, you can create a false Christ, but the real Christ, they hate him. They hate



him. Because he does believe in everything that they think makes us bigoted, narrow-minded Christians. We get that from Christ.

If Christ said I have to wear, you know, a pencil in my ear as I go to work, that's what we have to do. Whatever he says, we do it. And he says things like he created a male and female. He says things like this, in Luke Chapter 1, that John, before he was born, he is a person with full rights and full dignity, he is a human being, he's made in the image of God. You'd better protect the sanctity of life. Just simple things that, right now, I'm just picking hot buttons in our culture right now. And people look and say, "If you believe that stuff, we hate you." Unless you've had your head in the sand, just look around in the last couple of years. This has been a crazy culture that we've been living in. And if you don't stand with Christ, I know what's driving this - fear. Fear.

Now is there a distinction between the kind of thing that's happening here and the kind of thing that happens with you? Absolutely, and we would say this: there's defection that takes place that is spiritual defection where people do not bounce back. Peter bounces back. Here's how Jesus put it when he was telling the parables of the soil, and he talked about the seed that went into the rocky ground and as it grew up, he said, even though it received the Word with joy, that person represented by that soil, he received the Word with joy, but soon as persecution arose because of the Word, he immediately fell away. That is a defection that comes because there is fear of persecution.

Well, wait a minute, that's exactly what you're saying happened to Peter. He's afraid. Look at it, verse 54, he follows at a distance. Why are you following at a distance? Because you are afraid. But there is a difference. And to put it in the words of the Old Testament, Proverbs 24:16, "The righteous, they can stumble, they can trip seven times, but they rise again." Here's the problem though, "the wicked, they stumble, they fall in times of calamity," and it's over, they're done. The getting up certainly is a good sign. And that is what was predicted.

Luke Chapter 22, look back up to verse 31. "Simon, Simon, Satan has demanded to have y'all," all of you, plural, second person pronoun, "that he might sift you like wheat." Like Satan before Job. I want this guy. Let me at him. "But I prayed for you," singular, Peter. I just want to talk to you right now about what I'm doing. "I'm praying to the Father for you, that your faith," there's something that's different. Real faith. Judas didn't have that. "Your faith may not fail." Oh, it'll be buffeted, it'll be sifted, it will be attacked. "And when you have turned again," not if you turn again. Real faith always turns again. Real faith always turns back again. Then he says you get to work at, "strengthening your brothers."

Real Christians stumble and we hate it. But you and I sin and when we sin, I just want to focus in on why it happens. It happens for the same reason that Peter is not willing to say, "Yeah, I stand with Christ. I'm one of his," take off your hoodie off your cloak, "Of course I do," and march over there and lock arms with Christ and say, "Anything you want to say to him you can say to me, because I am a follower of Christ." Peter didn't do that. Why? He's afraid. Afraid of what? Four words. Let me have you write them down. Four words. Nothing fancy, nothing insightful here other than the fact that Jesus named all four of these. Luke 6:22 and I'll read the end of the verse first. These things happen on account of your relationship, on account of the Son of Man. You ally yourself with Christ in a sinful, crooked, perverse generation. Welcome to that, we live in one just like they did in the first century. Here's what he said. People will "hate you," there's one word, hate. They will "exclude you," there's another word. They will "revile you," third word. And they "spurn your name as evil." That's a categorical, "You guys are bad. All of you guys are bad." They will hate you. I don't like that.

What is fear? Fear is my uneasy feeling that if I keep walking down this path I'm going to encounter



some unpleasant things. What's the unpleasant thing? I don't like people hating me. I don't want that. I'd like them to like me. Hatred. You ally yourself with the Son of Man? Hatred.

What's the next thing? Exclusion. I'd like to be able to be, you know, like I'm one of the guys, I'll be part of the group, I don't want to be excluded. Excluded. "We're not going to invite you, we're not interested in having you in our group. You're not one of us." I would like to be part of the group. "Nope." To revile you. Now we're going to talk about you, sometimes to your face, sometimes behind your back, but we are going to revile you. And fourthly, we're going to spurn your name as evil. "We're going to say you're one of those."

"And Peter," because he didn't want that and he feared that, here it comes, "followed at a distance." There are some people here that will high-five Christ so to speak on a Sunday morning. But when it gets to Tuesday afternoon, Thursday morning, we want to be followers of Christ but can we please just follow in the shadows.

You've seen the circus in the media this week about what's going on in D.C. Which by the way, if you don't know that this is all about people's preference to want to be able to kill unborn children then you don't understand anything about what's happening. This is not about the accusations, the claims, the counter-claims. Nothing to do with that. You could clear all that up tomorrow and no one is going to change their mind about this Supreme Court justice. You understand that. This is all about their desire to be able to kill unborn children. That's what this is about. OK? You need to understand that.

But once you understand that and you recognize that all this vitriol and hatred toward this man is something that someone had a choice, it's his wife, to either stand with him or not stand with him. She knows she's going to get reviled. She knows she's going to be attacked because she's standing with someone who is going to be attacked. As he walks down the halls to the Senate chamber, the picture that stopped me in my tracks as I saw it in the electronic news page, the news feed, was a shot coming up from the ground with her holding his hand walking into that place. And I thought there is a picture of someone who knows she's going to be ridiculed for standing by your man as he's attacked in that. OK?

Now again, you could be on the other side of this. If you want to be, you can be. OK. Great. Because you think, "Well maybe, maybe, maybe." Listen. OK. When it comes to Christ, there's no maybe about it. Christ is innocent and holy. Not only holy, he's already the judge of all the universe, and you're called to walk hand-in-hand with him, but you're walking into a workplace, into an extended family, into a neighborhood, into an American culture, that hates him, and they're going to attack him. And you can follow from a distance or you can grab his hand and say, "I'm walking with you." And that's painful. Because it's not your message, it's not your thing, it's not your character, it's not your life, it's not your resume, it's not your background. And it's none of that for us. It's all about Christ. I'm going to stand with him and whatever he says, I'm with him. And you've got a decision to make.

My dad had a lot of funny phrases I remember as a kid. One I used to hear all the time was, "I wouldn't touch that thing with a ten-foot pole." Remember that old line? I wondered as I grew up, "What in the world does that mean. Where'd that come from?" If you look it up you'll find no one's really sure where it came from. There are theories about it but the number one theory about it is a really weird burial practice that they had that it actually made it into Louisiana, it came from Spain, apparently, or some Spanish burial thing about the keeping a body from burial for a year in a temporary enclosure, and then having to move that body from one enclosure to the other, a putrefied 1-year-old dead body, and to take it with, the practice apparently was taking it with a long pole, like



a 10-foot pole, and to move that stinky and smelly and gross and putrid, and to move it. And to think that it could be, certainly, if that was your job, I mean, I wouldn't even want to do it with a pole. I don't want to get anywhere near it. It's disgusting and gross.

And you know the world thinks that of the genuine Christ, not the Christ of your imagination, not the Christ of the plastic, you know, best-selling books, I'm talking about the Christ who is found within the pages of the Bible. Not the Christ of your 15 favorite passages about Jesus, the real Jesus of Scripture. People hate him. And you're called to draw near to him, to stand with him.

Let me remind you of a prophecy given by Simeon, an old man who sat there on the Temple Mount the day that Jesus comes in. He didn't come in, he was carried in by Mary and Joseph and they were there to do all that the Law required on the eighth day, and he comes to the temple and Simeon sees him, he's been waiting for the redemption of Israel, the Messiah to come, and God shows him and makes it clear to him, this is the Messiah. He takes the baby into his arms, a weird and dramatic scene, and this old man has this baby Jesus, a week old, in his arms. And he prophecies to Mary. And he says this. Luke 2:34. "Behold, this child is appointed," in other words, God has already decided, he's decreed, "appointed this child for the fall and for the raising up of many in Israel." He is the touchstone, the polarizing feature, the catalyst for taking humanity and splitting it in half. You're either going down, Christ is the dividing line, or you're going up. And then he says, "and as a sign," he's appointed, decreed, "as a sign that is opposed."

Now, if you're looking for a nice literary balance in your prophecies Simeon, then I might recommend that if you're going to say, Christ is the distinction between those who are going down and are going to fall, and those who are going up and being favored, then I'm going to say, why don't you go back to nice parallelism here and say, and he's a sign appointed for the praise and the worship and the thanksgiving of many, and for the, you know, the dismissal and opposition and reviling of others.

He didn't even get to that. Of course he is. He's the object of our worship this morning. But Simeon wanted to make clear. He turns to Mary and says, "I'm going to pierce your heart like a sword." But you need to know Christ is a sign to be opposed. Like a sign, a billboard, something that people will take shots at in this culture. He'll divide. He's going to divide people in half. Christ has polarizing effects. The Christ of Scripture is going to put you in one camp or the other. You're either going to love him or hate him. And the point is, if you look at him himself, let's talk about not just what he does to people, dividing humanity in half, but he himself, he is the object of opposition. He's the target of opposition.

We go down to the pistol range. You've been there before, at least you've seen video of it. Those silhouettes, the guys shoot at the silhouettes down there. Right? If I give you a silhouette, we come in, everybody's loading up their .357s and their .44 mags and are getting ready to shoot. They've got their Glocks, putting their clips in and I say, "Would you go hold the silhouette down there, down range." No, I thought I've seen on video, you put them on this weird thing that zips it out there so no one has to go down there. No one wants to put a target out there.

See, everyone is shooting at Christ in our culture. Christ is the one who believes in the sanctity of life, not us, you realize. Christ is the one who believes in sexual ethics and morality and what works and what's right and what's honoring him, not us. He makes the rules, we don't. The Bible says that Christ is the one who said, "I'm the way, the truth, the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." We're not that, we're not narrow-minded. Christ is narrow-minded. You understand all that. We're just saying we stand with him. Well, if you really take the Christ of the Bible they're going to take shots at him. And all I'm saying is you've been asked to hold the target. "He is a sign



to be opposed." You know why you don't want to do that? Do you know why Wednesday when the conversation in your work lunch break room is about Christianity, whether it's about the hot buttons that I've already talked about in our culture, the reason you don't want to say, "Well, yeah, I'm with him. I'm one of those. I believe the Bible. Yeah, literally true? Absolutely." The reason you don't want to say that is because you're afraid because you know you going to get shot.

What are the words? They're going to hate you, they're going to exclude you, they are going to revile you, they're going to spurn you. That's what we're afraid of. Just understand that's the only reason Peter is hiding in the shadows and following from a distance.

Yeah, but Pastor Mike you said the difference is they get up. I'm so glad that Peter got up. So it's a real comeback story. It is a comeback story, I understand that. Let's look at Galatians real quick, just a couple of passages in Galatians. Galatians Chapter 6 verse 12. Actually, let's start in Chapter 2. Let's start there. We'll get to Galatians 6, because Galatians 6 verse 12 is an illustration, an example, a summation of Galatians 2:11. Look at Galatians 2:11. "But when Cephas..." Now again, I don't know if this was his intention but Cephas was his old name not his new name. What's his new name? Peter. Peter is his new name. That's the name Jesus gave him. We're not going to call him that. Here Paul calls him Cephas. That's his old name.

Galatians 2:11, "When Cephas came to Antioch," think about this, Paul said, "I opposed him to his face." Why? "Because he stood condemned," he was doing the wrong thing. "For," here's the example, "before certain men came from James," a little entourage from James, "he was eating with the Gentiles." What does that mean? Well, it was a good thing because it wasn't about the Jewish ceremonial law of the distinction of social intercourse being separated by your rules and your dietary restrictions and your laws. Now, with one new man, all the laws of the dietary restrictions gone, all the ceremonial laws were gone, all the circumcision laws don't matter anymore. No. He was sitting there being just fine saying, I'm a Christian, I'm a leader, I'm a preacher and I'm willing to eat with the Gentiles. It had nothing to do with him being bad people, it had everything to do with the fact that they don't follow the kosher laws of the Jews.

"But when they came he drew back." He says in effect, "Go on, you know I've got an appointment. We're not going to do that. Nope. Ah, I'm going to go here with James' entourage. I really shouldn't eat with you. I just don't want to be seen eating with you guys." Why did he separate himself? Here's the next word, underline it - "fearing the circumcision party." What does that mean? People said, "Yeah, we're Christian but you've got to be circumcised. You've got to keep the dietary laws, you've got to keep the ceremonial laws." He was afraid. I've just showed you in the courtyard of Caiaphas, he was compromising and he stumbled because he was afraid. Years later, years later, this probably like 10 to 15 years later, Paul writes this and says, "Same old Peter. Here he is again, stumbling." Why? Because he's afraid.

Now turn to Galatians Chapter 6 verse 12. Here's a summation of what's going on there. He's explained Cephas, Peter. Now, he says, not just Peter, but certainly this includes Peter, "It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh." Let's think about that now. Some double entendre there, but the idea is you want to look good to people. That's what you want. You want people to say you're a good guy. People who would force you to be circumcised, which is the issue on the table. But forget whatever the issue is, to agree with their views on "equality" or "reproductive rights" or whatever you want to call it in our day, "In order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ." That's the thing. They don't want to be prosecuted for that, because the cross of Christ changed all of that.

Paul's resolve? Oh, I love Paul's resolve. One of my favorite passages in the Galatians. Here it



comes. Verse 14, dropped down a verse. "But far be it for me to boast except in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ," and all of its implications, which means, hey, if Christ changed the dietary laws and made them passé then they don't play anymore, and you want to eat, you know, a BLT with me, we'll do that. And then he says that cross, it changed things. By that cross, it says, "The world has been crucified to me and I to the world." In other words, I used to care what the world thinks. I don't care anymore.

I married my wife, what 30..., I should know this before I start sentences like that, 33 years ago, maybe, 32 and a half years ago. I dated her for five years before I got married. I'll admit I dated a girl before I dated Carlynn. I did. She can't hold a candle to my wife. But I did. Ask me what I think about what my former girlfriend in high school thinks of me. Asked me what I think. "What do you think Pastor Mike?" I don't care. I don't care. And frankly, at a high school reunion, I found out what she thinks of me, which is not good. But I didn't go home and cry about that. Because there's only one person I care about. And what she thinks of me is, that's it, that's all that matters.

When I got married I died to my former girlfriend's opinion of me. I don't care. Would I like you to think I'm a decent guy. Sure. If you don't, I don't care. I'm riding home with this one. This is my wife. That's all I care about. Your opinion is dead to me. If only we could live this verse out right here, because I'd say in this room the fear that we have is simply because the world is not crucified to you. And you are not crucified to it. Paul says I don't care anymore. I died to wanting the world's approval anymore.

And if you think I'm reading too much into the text, you can go back to Chapter 1 if you'd like. Chapter 1 verse 10, Galatians 1:10. He says it as clearly as you can say it. "Am I seeking the approval of man or of God? Come on guys, you know what I'm seeking. Am I trying to please man? Hey, if I were still trying to please man I would not be a servant of Christ and I died to wanting to please men." You and I need to fear one person. One person I fear his approval. That's it. It doesn't matter anymore what the world thinks. You want to be called the narrow-minded, bigoted, fundamentalist, evangelical Christian. OK. You're going to hate me for it. Sorry. You take shots at me. I don't care. I stand with Christ. Sorry, I want to be nice, but I stand with Christ.

Paul said, "No soldier gets entangled in the world's pursuits." In other words, we don't really care what they think. "Civilian pursuits." "Because our aim is to please the one who enlisted us." It's so simple. Really, when it comes down to it, but you want to know why we stumble, how we stumble? We stumble because we follow at a distance simply because we fear. And we've got to fight that.

I often when I quote First Peter Chapter 3 and all that discussion about suffering, I remind people when they read that text that Nero is on the throne. Nero, the Roman emperor, had blamed the fire in Rome on the Christians, which wasn't true, false, trumped up charges against the Christians. He would then persecute them and kill them. He would take them, he would dip them in tar, he would stick skewers into their rear end and impale them on sticks, put them on stakes and light them on fire in his garden when he had all of his pagan friends over. And he would show off his little boyfriend who he had, as he married this young boy who was his, you know, pedophile desire. And as they sat around all doing this to Nero, Christians were wailing around the edge of his palace burning. That's the guy on the throne.

And in First Peter 3:13, Peter has the gumption to say, "Who is there to harm you if you are zealous for doing good?" You want to be a good Christian? Who's going to harm you? I always say when I read that, "Well, Nero, Roman soldiers, all the people who hate us, the barbarians in this culture." And he knows that. Next verse, "But even if you should suffer," of course many of you will, "if you suffer for righteousness sake I just want to remind you you're blessed." Blessed by who? Not the



culture. I quoted that passage from Luke Chapter 6, people are going to hate you, exclude you, revile you and spurn you. It started this way, "Blessed are you when people hate you, exclude you, revile you and spurn your name as evil on account of the Son of Man." Why? Because their fathers did the same thing to the true prophets of the Old Testament.

And then he flips it on its head. Three verses later he says, "But woe to you if all men speak well of you." If you ever get what you want - everyone sees you walk and claps and cheers, "There's our great moral Christian in the office." If you get what you want, here's Jesus saying, "Woe to you. Woe to you, when all men speak well of you." Why? "Because so they treated the false prophets." The only way for me to have the world like everything I teach is to only teach things that they like. And when it comes down to it, that's going to be a composite picture of a Christ who does not exist. I will be then a false prophet or an unfaithful ambassador of Christ.

If I should suffer for righteousness sake, I'm blessed. Next word: don't fear them, have no fear of them. Don't be troubled. Don't fear, that's the problem Christian, "But honor, sanctified, set apart, Christ as Lord in your heart and be ready to make a defense." With torches and cudgels? No. "With gentleness and respect to anyone who asked you to give a reason..." for this ridiculous, stupid, narrow-minded, other worldly, miraculous, "hope that you have. Have a good conscience, so that the things that they slander you about, they're going to revive your good behavior in Christ, do it so they can be put one day to shame."

They'll be put to shame and they will, every single person who belittles you, every person who yells at you, every person second handedly, the stuff that you read, that puts Christianity in this corner and persecutes us, which I know is not like the underground church in China, we're not getting our heads chopped off in the Middle East. Right? I understand, our suffering right now is hatred, exclusion, it's spurning our name as evil. I get all that. It's of a different category. It still hurts and we're still afraid of it, but one day every single person who does that will have their forehead smashed to the ground, as it says in Philippians 2, and they will be confessing with that tongue that they used to belittle us, they will be using that tongue to say, "Jesus is Lord." Everybody will. Every single critic, every single person out there who is opposing everything that is good and righteous and related to the true Christ of history in the Bible, they're all going to say, with their knees on the ground and their forehead touching the ground, "Jesus is Lord." They will be put to shame, they'll regret it. You are on the right side of history. Don't let them steal that phrase from us.

That's how we stumble. That's part of the motive for our stumbling. But let me just talk about you ontologically. Number two, "Know Why We Stumble." If I asked you why did this happen, get more specific, verse 61, you'd say, "Well, because Jesus said he would." The Lord turned to Peter when he'd heard that rooster crow and he remembered the words, Jesus said it. Well, why did it happen? "Because God prophesied it." No, it's got to be deeper than that. Why did Christ prophesied this? Well, because Peter was sitting there saying it will never happen, it'll never happen. "Hey Thomas and Nathaniel, all of these guys, all these guys may say, you know, turn away. James and John, but not me."

It didn't happen that he stumbles that week because Jesus prophesied it. Of course, I mean, there was a correspondence and a corollary to that, I understand that. But the reality is it happened because Jesus knew that all your bluster about being this perfect Christian, it is not going to happen. It's not going to happen. I'm into dangerous territory right now, but let me tell you this. You want to know why we stumble? Well, I guess the means is and how it happens is our vulnerability to fear. But here's the thing, it happens because you are a weak, frail, unglorified Christian. You're in a flesh, this thing called the flesh, your fallen humanity, and it fights against the Spirit and you're entangled in it, you're enmeshed in it, you are in this body of death and because of that you're going



to sin. Not to mention you're in a whole battle, a cosmic battle and a Tempter is constantly going out to try and sift you like wheat. So you're going to fall. And Peter goes, "Ah, not me. I'm not going to fall." And Jesus said, "Yes you are. You're going to fall."

Not only you're going to fall before you become the pastor of the megachurch in Jerusalem, you're going to fall after and I'm going to have to use Paul to come in and condemn you to your face because you're being a hypocrite. Why? Because you're afraid again. You're gonna fall.

It's hard for me to say that in a sermon like this because a lot of people have already made that their mantra in the Christian life. "Christians aren't perfect, they're just forgiven." We're like one popular author like to put it and persuaded a whole millennial group of theologians to say the same, and that is "I'm OK with not being OK." I don't want you to be OK with not being OK. That's a ridiculous, anti-biblical views of sanctification. Dumb.

I just had to put this passage down because of the great word. It's a great Greek word and it's translated this way in Hebrews 12:14, "to strive." But that word, if you look at that word and use of the word, it's the word that is sometimes used "persecute," it means to run after, to hasten after, to attack. "Strive," for what, "for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." Your aggressive, zealous pursuit of holiness is fundamental, it's a fundamental sign of your Christianity. And you better pursue righteousness, "be holy as he's holy," that ought to be your passion.

But if you come into this auditorium feeling down and disgusted with yourself because you've fallen again this week, I'm here to encourage you with something that I don't want everybody in the room to hear if they're too comfortable and don't see their sin. But if you are afflicted with guilt over your sin, then I want to say to you, here's why you're sinning, because you're not redeemed yet. Oh, you're redeemed in your heart. You're not redeemed in your flesh. You're waiting for that redemption of the body. You're going to stumble. If you say you're without sin, you're lying. As James Chapter 4 said, "We all stumble in many ways." Welcome to the Christian life, you failure, we're going to fail. Just get used to that. "Oh, you want me to be comfortable?" I don't want to get comfortable with it. I just want you to know it's going to happen. I do not want you to be despondent over the fact that you walk into this auditorium as a sinning Christian. I don't want to be despondent over it. I want you to get serious about pursuing holiness, but I want you to know this is going to be something going to happen until the day you die. And when you die, it's going to stop. Because you're going to get a glorified body. It's going to be a whole different ballgame then.

It's like when someone asked me at the Men's Conference this week, it's a good question, asked in good faith, I understood the spirit of it. "Why does everyone feel bad after they hear your sermons?" That was the question. Ding. Well, I came back with a lot of answers that I think were legitimate. I mean, the word of God is sharp, it's active, it pierces conscience. It's hard. I look in the mirror of God's word, James 2, you see yourself, you realize you've got to change. But the bottom line is that I gave the adage that maybe you've heard before but let me say it again. Preaching, in summary fashion, is, and this is a good way to put it, it is really for us in preaching to "comfort the afflicted" but also to "afflict the comfortable."

And unfortunately I'm not preaching in the underground church in the Middle East somewhere. I'm not preaching to the Christians in China who know what it's like to suffer. I'm not preaching in a lot of places where they are paying dearly for their faithfulness to Christ. I'm preaching in a place where, largely, I think I can say in Western culture, in America at least, I mean at least for the past 50, 60, 70 years, that you may have experience on planet Earth, we've gotten pretty comfortable. Not many people are grieving over their sin or the fact that they've failed in their pursuit of holiness or I'm not conformed to Christ like I should be. If you are then this is for you: you need to know



you're frail, you're weak, you're human, you're going to fall. But so often I am here to help you see that you need to take your sanctification seriously.

Go to the gym and you see those trainers training those people and they're yelling at them and screaming at them, "More, another, another." You're like, what are you doing? You guys are paying for this. "You comfortable, fat, Cheez-it-eating, remote-control-TV-watching. Another one, do more, do more." You see that. They are afflicting the comfortable. But every now and then, I see the guy there making progress week by week, month by month and he's getting in shape, working hard, sweating. Every now and then I see the trainer handing him a towel. I've even seen them dry the other person's brow, hand them a nice ice cold bottle of water. And lately, I don't know what they're paying for this, but I've seen him massaging their shoulders. What are you doing? You're comforting the afflicted. Well, we live in a pretty spiritually lazy, fat, overweight, spiritual culture, where you may feel like most of my sermons are trying to say, "Hey guys, get off the couch, let's go."

But if you come in today with the guilt that you say, "I can't believe I've fallen again, I can't believe I compromised again, I can't believe that I didn't stand up again, I can't believe that I was afraid to share my faith, I can't believe that I didn't stand with Christ." If you're coming in beat up like that, I'm here to say, let me comfort the afflicted. This is part of what it is to be a human being and until we're glorified, this will be your experience.

I hope it's less and less. I hope it's on a different scale. I do think that Peter denying Jesus in a courtyard is a lot more egregious than what he did when it says, "Oh, I just can't have lunch this week with you. I don't want to eat my bacon this week because James and his guys are in town." I mean different level, same problem, and I hope our sins are not quite as egregious as they were in the early part of our Christian life. But you've got to understand the process. God is trying perhaps to humble you to recognize the fact, and there's many things that we could list, but throughout the book of First and Second Corinthians, Paul's saying a lot about the fact that the weakness that you feel and your moral frailty is to make a point.

One of the reasons Peter need to never say, "Oh I'd never fall, I'd never stumble," is because you need to recognize it's not about you. If you really were to have the sanctification process that you want to have, if you're a really aggressive Christian, if you were really all that, you would stand back and maybe think, "I know why Christ picked me." And when it comes down to it, he says this, "I've picked a lot of low and despised creatures in this world so that," it says, "no human being would boast in the presence of God." Next verse, it's because of God that you're in Christ. The last verse, he quotes Jeremiah 9, "Let anyone who both boast, boast in the Lord." God wants to remind you that your salvation is completely unearned. If you're sanctification was perfect, I think you might be tempted to think, "He loves me because I'm lovable. He got me on the team because he knew I'd be a great performer on this team." When you fall in your face you're reminded, it is all of grace.

Let me just say this by quoting Second Corinthians 4:7. Sometimes we fail and sometimes God in his providence allows us to fall flat on our face when we're trying to do right, and we end up being a sinner again this week, because he wants to remind us that all the good that is accomplished in your life and through your life is from God. Let me quote it for you. Second Corinthians 4:7, "We have this treasure in jars of clay," fragile jars, "so that the surpassing power can be seen and manifest that it comes from God and not from us." If anything good comes from your teaching a Sunday school class, leading a small group, taking someone through Partners, sharing the Gospel at work, when you see fruit, sometimes your memory of falling on your face is going to remind you, "This ain't because of me that this stuff happened."



Maybe it's just to remind you, we're in a war, First Peter 5. "Humble yourself." Why? Because you're in a war. "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion." Satan wants to sift you like wheat. The guy who sits there and goes, "I'd never fall," they don't know they're in a battle. Stay awake, pray. Here is a demonstration of you knowing you've got to rely on God: pray and watch, temptation, you've got to be ready. Satan wants to sift you. If you really believe that you're vulnerable, you're going to rely on God. A lot of people don't rely on God because they think, "Hey, I'm going to do all right. If God says do the right thing, then I'm going to do the right thing. Stay away from that, then I'll stay away from that. Don't do that, then I'm not going to do that. Stand with Christ in a perverse and crooked generation, of course I will." Sometimes you fall on your face for God to say, "Would you please pray and watch and rely. You got a lion out there who wants to take you down."

Summary of all these things and I could go on about all the things the Bible reminds us that sometimes our weakness, our moral failures, remind us and it drives us in the right direction theologically in this fallen state. Really to summarize it is: God doesn't want you believe a lie about yourself. He doesn't want you to believe a lie about yourself. You and I are nothing. God is everything. He is all glory, all honor, all power, all credit belongs to him. Satan was the first one to believe that he was all that, and it cost him everything, when he was cast out of heaven. God doesn't want you to fall to the archetypal sin of the universe to follow in the footsteps of the enemy. Oh, you're going to stumble. The righteous are going to stumble. "Seven times, but they're going to get up. Wicked, they stumble, they fall in times of calamity," but they don't get up. The goal is and you know this, you need to know how to keep getting up.

Verse 62 of our passage, "He went out and wept bitterly." That's the first step, weeping. Number three, we need to "Know How to Keep Getting Up." Get up, get up. You're going to fall. Get up. You're going to fall. Get up. You're going to fall again. Get up. Two years from now you're going to fall. Get up. The righteous are going to fall, but they keep getting up. Peter kept getting up, and it starts with weeping. Let me put it this way, you want to feel the pain of disloyalty. Now again, let me preach to the comfortable. Sometimes we don't feel the pain of disloyalty. In James 4, James was preaching to the comfortable. I mean, he calls them this: adulterers, you're adulterers, you're spiritual adulterers. That's trying to afflict the comfortable. And he said, "Don't you know friendship with the world," you're trying to care about what they think, "it's hostility toward God."

If I go to a dinner party with my wife, we sit there and all of a sudden, about 5, 6, 7, 8 people line up, we all sit around and sort of start talking and we're chatting about our day, "It's been great. What did you do this weekend, what did you do this week?" And all of a sudden they started insulting my wife. "Where'd you get that dress?" She says, "Well, I made it. I didn't have time to get ready." They say, "Look at your hair. What a joke?" "Now, you're kind of silly person..." or whatever. There it goes. Right? I don't want to sit here and come up things to insult my wife, but let's just say they're all insulting my wife. I know what my wife expects of me at that point. Not to follow from a distance. And if I were to fail in that moment and not defend my wife, not stand up for my wife, as a matter of fact, God forbid, I would start laughing at the jokes that were at the expense of my wife, the ride home ain't going to be all that great. Am I right? It's going to be a bad night for Pastor Mike. But what I need to do when I come home and recognize I blew it at that party, "They were attacking you unjustly and I didn't stand with you." I ought to feel the pain of disloyalty.

All I should care about is being loyal to one person in the room and that one person who I not only of fear but I love enough to be loyal to the end should be Christ. And when I'm not loyal, I should weep bitterly. That's what the passage goes on to say, James Chapter 4. It says, "Hey, you need to take your laughter and turn it to mourning. You need to you take all your joy and turn it to gloom.



You need to mourn and weep." I'm just saying, feel the pain of disloyalty to Christ. And then do what this pain is supposed to lead to.

There are two kinds of grief when someone dies. First Thessalonians 4 Paul said this, "You can grieve without hope or you can grieve with hope." One tempers the experience and it leads to a different kind of outlook. The other one? Done. Your lost loved one is not saved and nothing. I mean you cry, cry, it's all you can do, cry. To parallel that about the grief of someone who we love, if we know they're in Christ, we weep with a different kind of weeping. It's a hopeful weeping. And you know what, I want you to weep over your disloyalty to Christ. Not like Esau, not like Judas, not like the person in Second Corinthians 7 verse 10 who just feels bad and that's all it does. But that that bad feeling, that weeping, that grieving, leads us to repentance. If it leads you to repentance, you know what that means? You're getting back up, you're getting back up, you keep getting back up.

Don't let your despondency over disloyalty to Christ not lead you to repentance. Real repentance is confession, it's apology. it's standing up and saying I'm getting back up, let's go back in the room, I'm going to stand with you this time. And the problem with Americans, a lot of us in our Western culture, "Nah, I don't want to commit to anything if I think I might fail." You're going to fail. I've already told you that. Make the resolve and get back in the game. Go to your work this week and stand up for Christ. Keep getting back up. Distinguish those two kinds of grief. The only distinction I would make in verse 62, the only problem that I see here, weeping is a good first step. The problem is it's a weeping a lot like Judas because Judas wept and went out and hung himself and, unfortunately, Peter's walking in the wrong direction. And he went out and wept bitterly.

Listen. Matter of fact, you want the right sinner here? Take your hood off, say, "You're darn right I'm with him," and walk over those 40, 50 yards and stand with Christ and say, "I'm with him. Yeah, I have a Galilean accent because he and I did ministry together, he's the Messiah, he's the Christ." Peter walked the wrong way. In that passage about calling us adulterers and calling us to weep and mourn, here's what it is: "Draw near to God," and here's the good news, you went halfway over there and walked toward Christ, "he'd draw near to you." Godly grief should lead us to repentance. Bringing us near to God.

Get up. Did you fall this week? Did you sin? Do you hate yourself for that? I understand that. Don't hate yourself because you didn't fulfill your perfect expectations of sanctification. Just feel the pain of disloyalty. Let it lead you to repentance, which involves confession and apology and a getting up and saying, "I'm back to it now. I'm going to live for Christ this week."

When I was in public school in sixth grade they sent us to science camp. Do they still do that or not, I don't know. Long Beach Unified School District, they sent us to a couple of camps. One was Highhill, which I think it's still up there. My camp, I think, is gone. I went to Owango. Anybody go to Owango Camp in the San Bernardino mountains? I went to Owango. It was the first camp as a sixth grader, I was 11-years-old, that I went to that was a secular camp. I had been a retreats with my ministries at church as a kid, I was a church kid, and I'd spent the night away from my parents before, but I'd never spent a whole week away from my parents in a, you know, like a non-Christian environment.

And I remember very clearly feeling for the first time and maybe since, I don't think I've ever felt what I felt as that 11-year-old, recognizing in a good solid Christian home, never hearing, you know, profanity in my home, never having that, of course I hear it at school. But now I'm living 24 hours a day and guys in our cabin are telling dirty jokes and I would turn over under my bunk and I'd see these nasty pictures and I was just like, this was awful and I hated it. And I remember rolling



over with my head against the wall and my back to the conversation and it was the first time I had felt it the way I felt it, a visceral homesickness. It was like I felt sick. And all I could do is imagine in my little mind what was going on down the mountain in Long Beach. My parents were sitting in their little den with their beanbag chairs and my brother was there and eating, you know, pot roast and watching Welcome Back Kotter or whatever. You know, I just I pictured it all and I thought that's where I want to be. I don't want to be here.

I was just a cultural Christian as a kid. I realized my heart was not converted yet but I knew I was out of place. I hated it. And you know what I hated about myself even as a non-Christian, I hated the fact that some of the jokes they were telling, I was actually laughing at, covering my mouth. Ahhh, I should not be encouraging this.

If you are a Christian, a real Christian, and you were striving for holiness and you fail, which of course I should say when you fail, you feel this feeling. It's a pattern, it's a cycle, we hate it. If it doesn't produce homesickness in you, then you're not even saved. Right? We as children of God long, just like it says, when it personifies creation, "creation itself is groaning within itself, waiting for the redemption of the sons of God, for this revealing of the sons of God and God bringing in the consummation of the ages." And then it says, "We too, ourselves with the Spirit within us as the first fruits, we groan within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of our bodies." We can't wait for this to be done. You better be homesick. Real Christians are.

We're going to beat ourselves up for the fact that we didn't live up to our own expectations but realize this, we're in a fallen body, in a fallen world, we're waiting and longing for our glorification. The Bible goes on to say in that passage, verse 24, "This is the hope in which we've been saved." That is the Christian life. We can't wait for it to be better, we long to be with Christ, which would be, as Paul said, far better. He says, "Now hope that is seen wouldn't be hope. Who hopes for what he already has, what he's seen. If we hope for what we don't have but we don't see, well, then we wait," there's a painful word, "we wait for it with patience."

And I'd say to you, hang in there. You want to overcome that besetting sin, let's overcome it. We'll lay off every encumbrance. Let's grow in our sanctification. Do you need accountability? Then get accountability. But we are on a pathway that the only answer to is redemption, when we go from being justified to being glorified. Let's long for home and recommit ourselves this morning, that though we are Peter, and I trust we're Peter and not Judas, we're going to get back up. We won't let fear control us. We're going to say with a kind of resolve, with God's help, relying on him, we're going to do a lot better this week than we did last week.

Let's pray. God, help us in a world that has become absolutely insane, regarding their vitriol, their anger toward us as Christians and what we stand for. Help us to be much more resolved. Knowing that we're weak, we're frail, we're going to stumble in many ways, as James 4 says, but we want to live for you without fear of this world. We'd like to say with the Apostle Paul that "the world has been crucified to me and I to it." Help us to care much more about your favor. Let us fear your approval in the way that we ought to, as a good son, a good daughter of God. Help us God to do our very best this week as reliant beings, creatures who need your grace to live for you in a way that is unashamed, unabashed, to be good ambassadors who speak up for the kingdom of heaven. God, thank you for your forgiveness. We could use a whole another sermon just on that word. When we do confess our sins and our grief about our disloyalty it leads us to repentance. That you're a good and faithful, just God who, because of Christ, can forgive our sins and cleanses from all unrighteousness. So send us out of this room cleaned up like a Peter who was told by Christ we just need to wash our feet. We don't need to become a Christian all over again. We just need to be cleansed, need to be washed up. And I know we're going get our feet dirty again and we're going to



have problems. Let us leave this building clean, ready to face another week of living for you in a world that, frankly is getting worse by the year, by the hour. It just is one in which we know that we're going to take heart because you've have overcome the world. Help us through this God with a kind of tenacity that is befitting the saints of Christ in the 21st century. Make this church strong, make us strong, make our families strong in standing with you.

We pray this please, in the name and the authority of Jesus Christ. Amen.