



A Clear Conscience – Part 2

Managing Misunderstandings

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Well, sadly, we are all going to have conflicts with people in our lives and it would be good to help us think about those in two categories. The first category of conflict you're going to have with people is a lot like the game that people are going to watch this afternoon. There are two opposing teams and there are two clearly defined end zones and there are lines that are clearly defined and everyone can see clearly that there are two opposing views here, two opposing teams and only the person with a really bad seat in the stadium can't perceive that. Now there's the second category and I would suggest that probably most of the problems and conflicts we have with people aren't like that first category. This category is where people think they know where the end zones are. The lines, you know, they're very blurry if there's even a claim that there are lines at all and there's obviously a conflict but the conflict is not really based on clarity about the facts. There are a lot of people saying this is the fact and that's the fact but actually it's just a lot of claims that aren't factual. That's the kind of misunderstandings that we often deal with.

Now let me suggest that there are five reasons at least that we have these kinds of misunderstandings. Number one, human beings, we have a penchant for power struggles, have you noticed that? People like to know who's in charge, they like to know where they are in the pecking order, they have a lot of conflicts with people because someone they think is in a position they don't deserve to be in and so people start throwing accusations around and they may not be factual but a lot of people rally around those claims and we get a lot of interpersonal conflict and it's really not founded in truth or in objective truth, it's just what people feel about each other and it causes struggles and we get involved in those one way or another and it's all based on really pride. People are concerned about power struggles.

There's another reason that I think we have a lot of problems that really are based on misunderstandings and that is that people are prone to gossip. Have you noticed that one? They like to be hyper-critical about other people and sadly this one's also rooted in pride because we like to tear other people down. It makes us feel better about ourselves or we like to tear other people down to people that we'd like them to see us as better than the people who were tearing down but nevertheless, there are a lot of things said about other people and they aren't true or at least they're blown out of proportion and people don't quite understand that the things that I'm saying if I happen to be saying them are not actually true, but they're just a magnification of maybe something that's not even seen accurately, but we have a lot of teams being drawn up based on non-factual accusations that are rooted in a hyper-critical spirit, the gossip.

Thirdly, there's a lot of this today, there are a lot of misunderstandings in our relationships because people say they don't like to be disrespected. Have you heard that one? You're not respecting me. And there's kind of a hypersensitivity to the fact that you're not treating me the way I think I deserve to be treated. We like to kind of have this sensitivity to you should treat me the way I think I ought to be treated and that frankly is rooted in pride as well because I



don't even really objectively think I'm as great as I'd like people to think I am. So we want them to treat us in a particular way. When they don't, if they don't meet our expectations we get really angry and we start saying things in response to that and there are all kinds of misunderstandings and teams being drawn up when it comes to those kinds of dustups in our relationships.

Fourthly we live in a world that is filled with unanticipated circumstances. Things happen in life and we don't know that they were going to happen and because our world is at least from our perspective unpredictable we plan things or say things and circumstances change or situations that are unavoidable make what we said impossible and so people get mad at us because we don't meet their expectations and they can point at what we said and they start casting aspersions at us because, you know, we said we would and then we didn't. That kind of misunderstanding can create all kinds of character accusations that cause a lot of trouble and a lot of teams get formed there not based on truth but based on hurt feelings.

Lastly, and I wrote a book on this not long ago, there are a lot of problems in relationships based on something called envy. That all comes down to the fact the world just isn't objectively fair and really you can look at God in that regard because he's not dishing out brains or beauty or skills or brawn, he doesn't do that equally. So people look around and they go well that person's better off than I am or they have more stuff than I do or they're smarter than I am. Whatever it might be and all of this resentment builds up and we start saying things about people and sometimes it leads to, you know, a power struggle, but oftentimes it's just resentment and all of that creates a lot of teams and factions where people are mad at each other. In the end it really isn't based on something factual. It's not they're a bad person because they're better off than I am. It's just a lot of people getting bent out of shape over things that aren't necessarily true.

The misunderstandings based on the kinds of things that I've just described and I know we could probably sit around and come up with 10 more but at least those five were all evident in Paul's life as he was writing this letter to the Corinthians and in Second Corinthians we started the study not too long ago, we've seen Paul already start to have to defend himself to these people. Now he's defending himself to the people not just because they had doubts about Paul's integrity but because other people were accusing Paul in their hearing and there were a lot of power struggles going on there. There was a lot of envy that fueled a lot of this and there were circumstances even that had changed situations as Paul said one thing and then seemed to do another and people then cast dispersions at the Apostle Paul. He had a lot of these relational problems with the Corinthians and it creates for us a book that's very unique. Paul seems to be so defensive in this book. He even says at some points this is crazy that I'm saying things like I'm saying them and I hate to have to do this.

But here's what I'm saying and he does defend that he is as we saw last week in Chapter 1 verse 12, he has a clear conscience before God. We took that first verse and we kind of analyzed that verse and said okay, that'd be a good place for us to start as he goes through all of these movements in his response to why he didn't come to Corinth when he said he was going to come to Corinth. And all the people then that drew up teams against the Apostle Paul



and he was taking a beating for this in the court of public opinion and all of this struggle and frustration in life was being caused. I'm going to posit it here as a misunderstanding and we watch Paul starting here in verses 13 and 14 now start to manage this misunderstanding and we learn some things right out of the gate in these first two verses. So I'm going to look at these and learn if you and I can deal with our misunderstandings because I'm sure you've got some going on right now and if not you will and I want to be able to manage them as gracefully and biblically and as godly as the Apostle Paul does.

So take your Bibles if you haven't already and turn to Second Corinthians Chapter 1. We're going to look at verses 13 and 14 and if you're groaning that I'm barely moving through this book can I point out to you that it's twice as many verses as last week? (audience laughing) It's a hundred percent more data that we're covering and I promise you we will speed up. But I want you to look at just two verses this morning as we look at the beginning here of his discussion which follows this great statement about him boasting that his conscience is clear, that he knows he's behaved objectively in a godly way supremely so he says by God's grace toward them.

In verse 13, he says, "For we," speaking about himself obviously but Timothy is included here, "are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand." Now, this is a negated way to say it and it's a little awkward I suppose but think about what he's saying. He's in essence saying what I grew up hearing and what I hope you grew up hearing as well and that is you should say what you mean and you should mean what you say and he said that's how it's been. We're not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand. We know that what we're saying is sincere. He's made that boast in verse 12, now in verse 13. He's going that's it. I'm being forthright with you. "And I hope that you will fully understand," verse 14, "just as you did partially understand us." Well, there's the problem. They understood something but they didn't understand him fully.

Now here's the real punch line of what we're going to deal with today, "That on the day of our Lord Jesus, you will boast of us as we will boast of you." Now he's already introduced this concept of boasting. He's boasting about the fact not in a prideful way, but he's glad, he's happy that his conscience is clear and he knows objectively by God's standards he's done what's right and in his doing what's right, even though he's taking it on the chin with everyone accusing him of wrong and all kinds of relational problems have ensued in his life with the Corinthians over this, he's saying you know what? I hope that when all the dust settles he says I hope at the day of our Lord, which is not in his day, it's not while he's living, it doesn't come till the end, until he stands before God. But he says when you guys are dead and when I'm dead and living here spiritually before God, I hope that each of us can high-five each other and you can say I'm happy with how you acted toward me and your motives toward me and everything was right. You disappointed me maybe in your travel schedule, but I hope you'll boast of me and I hope now even I can get you to understand and that I'll be able to boast of you. That's what I want.

So in the end, this is his goal and I want to start with the goal as you look at your outline here we'll start at the bottom of verse 14 and we'll just set that up as the primary concern that Paul



had and the one that I would beg you to have as it relates to everyone that you deal with. And because this has to be viewed from you thinking about the future we necessarily have to think about the end of our lives when we will stand before God, but we want at the end of our lives just like Paul had hoped to hear from Christ, "Well done," right? We want God to say yes, you did the right thing. Number one, if you're taking notes, we need to "Maintain Praiseworthy Motives." He's already said that the conscience is clear. He knows he did the right things. He's acted appropriately toward the Corinthians, but he says here I want you when everything is revealed as he said in First Corinthians all the motives and the secrets of men's hearts will be revealed. I want you to look and say in my evaluation, you know what? I'm proud of you and I want to be able to look at you and say I'm proud of you. We want us both to get through this with praiseworthy words from the master and we would sure like Christ to say about my motive, it was good.

So we need to think about all the conflicts we have and in the middle of it all stop and say, okay, let's think what is my motive? Is God going to say your motive was good? Well to say that I need to know what Paul's thinking. So turn over to Chapter 5 because he gets to this as he thinks about the day of standing before the Lord and he speaks of it in the fifth Chapter of Second Corinthians, but here's what he says here starting in verse 9 and you can see the first eight verses of this. We're dealing with this analogy of a tent being our earthly body and a building being our resurrected body and he says, I'm here in my tent and then I'll be with Christ and one day get my permanent body and he says yes, verse 8, "We're of good courage and we'd rather be away from the body and at home of the Lord." But here's the deal, "Whether we're at home or away," or anywhere it doesn't matter the circumstance, "we make it our aim," here's the intention, here's the motive, "to please him." And why is that important? Well, because one day God's going to be able to look at our lives and not only see the actions, but he's going to look at the motive. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he's done in the body, whether good or evil."

Now, there's no condemnation for those in Christ, but you as a Christian are going to stand before what we call here the raised platform, the judgment seat, the Greek word is Bema. That's why Christians call it the Bema Seat of Christ, the judgment seat of Christ, where he is now going to evaluate your lives. He'd already talked to the Corinthians about this in First Corinthians Chapter 3 that our lives are going to be evaluated and he's going to look at things in your life that he's going to consider valuable and praiseworthy, gold, silver, precious stones, and things that were just a waste. Now are you going to hell for that? No. Purgatory for that? No, but all of it's going to be like wood, hay and straw. It's going to be burned up. And you can suffer loss over that. That's not the suffering of the torment of hell or some fire of purgatory, but that's you saying, man, I blew it and you're going to have to give an account for that. You're going to stand before God and he's going to reveal all this. And so he says I want to make it my aim to please him. Now, I want my attitudes, my actions to please but I want to make sure my intent is right. I want to please God.

So when you think about people and you think okay, I got some problems in my life. Some of them are based on facts that, you know, I get it. You've got your conviction about something



that's I know objectively false. I have my conviction about something that I know is objectively true. We're on different teams, goal lines are clear and that's easier. At least we know that there are enemies of the truth and I'm a proponent of the truth and I get all that. But especially within the church, a lot of factions, a lot of factionalism, a lot of groups fighting each other, a lot of people with misunderstandings and relationships aren't good because there's this misunderstanding, people casting aspersions for all the wrong reasons and I need to ask myself the question in the middle of that kind of storm, I need to say well are my motives right in treating these people? Do I intend to please God with how I treat those people?

Now if I said how am I going to please God? The Bible is clear, the whole commendation of God comes from me keeping his commandments. Now last week you might remember we were dealing with our last text there in verse 12, we looked to at the end at least in Hebrews Chapters 9 and 10 which could all be one chapter, but we said there we know there's a lot of rules including bringing your animal to church having it sacrificed. If you're doing the Daily Bible Reading with us in Leviticus right now, I mean this is a lot, right? A lot of bloody verses we're dealing with and all of this reminds us that the ceremonial laws we quoted last week from Hebrews 10 verse 1, are all looking forward to the reality of Christ. It doesn't mean the rules go away. It means the ceremonial rules go away. We don't have to bring an animal to church. We don't have to slaughter that animal. We don't have shewbread. We don't have candelabras. We don't have the altar. We don't have a priest with all of his garb on. We don't have all of that. We don't even have the dietary restrictions or the day of the week defined for us. All of that is gone.

But all the moral law of God is still there and God says here's what I stand for, here's who I am, and if you want to please me you should be holy as I'm holy. You should be different than everyone else just like I'm different from everything else. I set the standard. And if I would say, great, now here's the catalog. I will give you the long list of all the things that God says you got to do. Well that would take a long time and make the sermon a lot longer. So for the sake of brevity, let me turn you to Matthew 22 real quick. Here's a good way for us to think about making sure our motive is pleasing to God. Matthew Chapter 22, dropped down almost to the bottom of this section of Scripture, almost to the bottom of this chapter and it says, "When the Pharisees heard that he," that's Christ, Matthew 22:34, "had silenced the Sadducees..."

Now the Sadducees are kind of like Democrats and Republicans, we had, you know, the more liberal branch, we had the conservative branch. I don't mean to get political but I'm just saying that's what it was like and here the conservatives said well, he just took care of it, he just whooped up on the liberals so they go we need to see if we can get him on our side. "They gathered together and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him, 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?' And Jesus said he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it.'" It's also great, right? "'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depends all of the Law and the Prophets.'" All the moral laws that are found in the mosaic law and all the moral laws found throughout the prophets you can hang it on this: if "You love God with all



your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," and "You love your neighbor as much as you love yourself," all of sudden now you have the summation of all the rules.

So as I'm dealing with other people, if I'm going to say I want to make sure my motive is praiseworthy, how is God going to look at me and pat me on the head for doing the right thing with you? He's going to say did you seek to please me and I'm going to say I sought to please you, then he's going to say then I know that your goal was to love them, right? That has to be the goal. And here's the problem, it's hard for us to love when all the sudden now people are trying to form groups and they're saying things about me or there's confusion or there's conflict or there's misunderstanding it's hard, but we have to keep this anchored as the purpose of my whole life as I relate to other people. I want to love you.

Now love is not going to be defined on the 70s channel on your XM radio. You don't define love by watching your romcoms or watching the Hallmark Channel. That's not how love is defined. Love is defined by the first verse you ever learned as a kid at church. "For God so love the world that he," now here's a verb that's a little bit cleaned up here, sanitized, "he gave his only Son." Now, you know what that means. It means that he was just eventually strung up naked on a cross bleeding, being whipped, having spikes through his hands and his feet, with a crown of thorns that they were mocking him over, a crown as though he's some king, dying like a criminal between two criminals. That was how he "gave" his Son as a human sacrifice. That's not what you're learning about love in pop music or in movies. Those are not good feelings. That is, to sum it up well, let me just quote from Philippians Chapter 2 verse 5, that's the second person of the Godhead who exists "in the form of God," all the equality and the divine attributes of God, he has it all and he's willing to lay that aside. It doesn't mean he stops being God but the independent actions within the Godhead, the attributes are now subjected to the Father and he says now I'm not going to independently exercise my divine attributes. I'm going to be found like a human being, like an ant so to speak as we say to the kids in Sunday school, and he becomes a human. And not only a human he becomes one of the most detested humans as it was predicted in Isaiah and he would be "one from whom men hide their faces." And he would become the person that all the angst of the Sadducees and the Pharisees and the scribes and all the Roman officials would eventually string him up on a cross. "He became obedient even to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Okay, now it would be much better for him to stay, you know, in the living room of heaven watching, you know, Netflix or whatever, right? Think about this. All the angels adoring him, all the attributes fully here intact exercisable independently as the second person of the Godhead in unity with the rest of the members of the Godhead. You could see this as much more comfortable than walking around and being mocked and accused and eventually murdered and yet he lays that aside. Why? To redeem us. So he goes to great lengths to redeem us and all of this in Chapter 2 of Philippians, which is a great Christological passage is nothing more than a theological motivation to do what he says in verse 4 in Philippians Chapter 2 verse 4. He says, you know, you ought to be not looking out for your own interests only, you should be looking out for the interest of others. You should do nothing from selfishness or vain conceit. You ought to be willing to put other's interests before your own.



Do you want you want a good definition of love? John 3:16, right? "He gave his Son." What does that mean? Like Jesus said, "No greater love has anyone than this, that you'd lay down your life for your friends." I become a willing sacrifice. I will go through pain so that you can be advantaged. I'll put your needs before my own. I'll put your interest above my own.

Now, the only way we can think rightly about my motive to love you is to make sure I get the first commandment above the second. I've got to love God with all my heart, soul and mind. I've got to be able to say everything about loving you has got to be defined by what it means to love him. In other words, God gets to define what it is to love you and that means your interests need to be responded to in a way that God is going to be pleased with. That's why it's praiseworthy, not by people, your motive needs to be praiseworthy to God. So I want you to love people so that all the people in your small group, all your neighbors you have problems with, all the people at the office that you struggle with, whatever is going on, all the office drama that you would say my job is to love these people, whether they're Christians or non-Christians, but particularly within the church. That's the context of our passage. There's always this going on in the church because these are our closest relationships or at least they should be. And there's going to be conflict. And what we should say is God, I want you to look at my motive to know that I, out of love for you and loving them, and my love for them means I'm not just nice to them when I feel good, it's that I'm putting their interest first, that I care about their well-being, that I want to do what is good for them in light of all that God says is good. He's got to define the good, but I'm going to be good to them. Okay, that is the superior motive that the world does not have. It's hard for us even to naturally have it. We don't naturally have it unless there are feelings involved and that's called romantic love and that's different. But this kind of love is even better. This is hard to do but it's the best motive. It's the motive God will one day praise you for.

Let me give you a passage that will set us up for the next point, the middle of our text, but it will also help us remember that you've got to keep first things first. First Thessalonians Chapter 2. Go there with me real quick before we leave this point. First Thessalonians Chapter 2 Paul is going to talk about the fact that not only do I need to govern what it means to love you by what it means to be faithful to God, my loyalty to him. But sometimes it is my loyalty to God that causes problems with people. It's one of the reasons sometimes there are issues and misunderstandings because I'm doing what I know God would want me to do in this relationship, that I said the things I know God would have me say because it's the right thing to say. So we need to recognize this as Paul would put it just in short he would say this in Galatians 1:10. How could I be called a servant of Christ if I'm just out to try to please people? Let's put it well here in a more expanded way in First Thessalonians Chapter 2. Let's start in verse 2, "But though we had already suffered," First Thessalonians 2:2, "and been shamefully treated at Philippi," right? Why? Because Paul was trying to cause trouble? No, he was doing what was right. "As you know, we had the boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict."

Now Paul would have been better just to sell his tents and pass out his promotional key chains and tell people, you know, tell your friends about my tent-building business. But that's not what he was doing. He went there to share the gospel which is to rebuke and exhort and



be able to say to people if you're going the wrong way turn and put your trust in the only way to be saved. So he's sharing the gospel, that's causing conflict. It caused conflict in Philippi. It even caused conflict as he came to Thessalonica. "For our appeal," he says, "doesn't spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel so we speak, not to please man, but to please God." And again, you're never going to get this point if you don't look over the fence of this life and that is God will test my motives when I see him in the day of the Lord Jesus. That's when I want to make sure that you're going to boast in my motives and my life and I'm going to be able to boast in you. It's all going to be clarified then. He says, "God who tests our hearts." And we'll know the test of that, First Corinthians 3, Second Corinthians 5, when we see him and he evaluates us. For he says, verse 5, "We never came with words of flattery," we weren't there to flatter you, "as you know, nor with a pretext for greed." We weren't trying to say the right things so you'd put more in the offering plate. That's not what we did. "God is our witness." God knows my conscience is clear. Right? "Nor did we seek glory from people," verse 6, "whether from you or from others."

I love that and it's very helpful because if I give you this point: have a praiseworthy motive, and you don't define that by knowing that praiseworthy means praise from God not from the recipient. But your motive toward other people who have problems with you or misunderstandings about you or people who are believing the wrong things about you, I just need you to say stop and think. Okay, I want to do and react and speak and respond out of love, which means it's a kind of love that may even create problems. It may even promote conflict. It's not my goal because I'm not here to flatter. I'm not here to just make people feel good, but I want to love them and sometimes we say things that are hard to receive. Sometimes there are things like Paul has done here that have created the conflict that he can say with a clear conscience, my motives are right. You're going to boast of me, I hope, when you see the Lord because you're going to be there realizing I did what I did out of godly sincerity and I'm telling you it was right. It was good. There are going to be conflicts, but I want your priorities to be clear. The ultimate concern is what God thinks of how I'm treating people and that you know is love and love isn't always responding in a certain way when I feel a certain way. It's always looking out for the good and the interests that others have within the boundaries of God's revelation.

All right now back to our passage, enough said on that, but let me recognize that Paul is saying this. I'm trying here to get to the place where you're going to be proud of us, I'll be proud of you. But as I summarized here in verse 13, we're saying what we mean and we mean what we say. We're not writing you anything other than what you read and understand. We have no hidden agenda. We're talking to you honestly, right? We're sincere. He's already given us that sense in verse 12. We're not gaming you in any way and we saw that in First Thessalonians Chapter 2, right? This isn't about anything but giving you the truth. Okay, so number two, if I want to make sure that all the misunderstandings I have, all the conflicts that I'm going to encounter between now and the time I die, I just want to make sure that my life, my words, my plans, my actions are all, I put it this way, number two, that I "Speak Honestly and Sincerely." I want to be sincere when I mean what I say and I want to be honest. I want to



be honest about the truth. I want to be honest about what needs to be said. Honesty and sincerity. Those two things are key.

All right, that's harder than you think and it's going to start in the air-conditioned room that we're sitting in on padded seats when you're sitting there and you're not in the middle of the conflict right now. You may be thinking of people you have conflict with, that's fine, but I need you to do what Paul did just two chapters later, three chapters later in Second Corinthians Chapter 4 verse 2, he makes this resolute decision actually before he ever got there. He says, "We've renounced," are you with me now? Second Corinthians 4:2, "We've renounced disgraceful and underhanded ways." Sounds a lot like First Thessalonians 2. "We refuse to practice cunning," we're not trying to trick you and we're not "tampering with God's word," I love God first and foremost, all my heart, soul and mind, "but by the open statement of truth, we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God." This harkens back to the statement that we're studying and that we want you to boast of us. We want your conscience to end up at the end of time to be able to say yes, we know your motive was right. We know your actions were godly. That's what he wants. He's appealing to them by saying I'm telling you the truth. I'm being faithful to God here. That's what we want an open, I love just the way it's put, an open statement of the truth.

That kind of open honesty is not as easy as you think. Let me give you three reasons that we struggle with not saying things honestly and sincerely. We often have a secondary agenda that adjusts what we say and that's problematic. Here's one we got to watch out for, Jesus hammered on it a lot in his ministry. Let's just have you jot this down. You don't need to turn there because I know you know the passage, Matthew Chapter 6 verses 4 and 5. Matthew 6:4 and 5. He's now about to lay into the Pharisees because they go out and pray and they extend their prayers and they stand there in their long robes and they stand on the street corners where everyone can hear and then they start talking to God. And Jesus says don't be like that. Don't be like that. They do it all Sunday school grads, why? "To be seen by men." They just want to be seen by men. And that's really not the fullness of their goal because it's inferred what they want from men. They want this, clapping. They want people to say you're amazing. You're so godly.

Okay, here's one of the reasons it's hard for you to always deal with people honestly and sincerely because you and I, like the Pharisees, we care about what people think of us. That's a problem, right? Paul, as I already quoted that summary of his whole resolve in Galatians 1:10 is, you know, I couldn't be a servant of Christ if I thought too much about what you think of me, right? I can't just try to seek your approval. And that's what the Pharisees want. I want your approval. And Jesus' little terse response to that is, well, they have the reward in full. What's that? You got people to applaud, but I'm not going to applaud. You got people to think you're godly but God in heaven is thinking you're not godly because you're doing it to be seen. You're a hypocrite. And the way he drives that home is with the next verse. There in Matthew 6 he says this: when it's time for you to pray guys, he says, "go into your inner room" where there are no windows. Does that mean that Daniel was wrong to pray in the window there in Babylon? No. He says and go and pray in private. Well, does that mean every time Jesus prays in public in the book of Matthew it was sinful? No, that's not the point. The point



is a contrast to what he just said. He says, "Go in there and pray to your Father in secret who hears in secret and he will reward you."

And the point is this: you better be praying in public the way you would pray in private. You better be the same godly person in the closet that you are on the platform. You ought to have that consistency. That's the word we introduced in our third point last week. It's called integrity. It's the same, there's no distance. The distance of the hypocrite, which I've already said many times, is that great compound word, "Hypokrites," hypocrite, we transliterate it, underneath the surface of what I'm trying to get you to see there is something very different. That's why in Matthew 23 when he really unloads on the Pharisees he said you're like those whitewashed tombs. You've got grossness inside, but you're always trying to present the best. Now, that's the motive that starts to change the way we deal with people and the way we speak to people and the plans that we make. Some of you agree to stuff and you change those plans because you said those things only to get the approval of people. Sometimes you say certain things that you don't mean, you're not honest and you're not sincere because you really care about them responding rightly to the words you just said.

So it's easy for us to sit here all dressed nice on a Sunday morning and say, yeah, I want to speak honestly and sincerely. But just know one of the factors that's always working against us is our fleshly desire to have people think well of us. And that's just got to be a whole lot less. Even as the Herodians came to Jesus and said, we know you don't care about anybody's opinion. You teach the way of truth honestly. That's what I want. I want to somehow lower this sense of concern I have about what you think, right? And some of you say, well, I've heard your preaching, that's obvious. (audience laughing) You don't really care what we think. Of course, there's tact. There's grace. There's gentleness. There's all that and all of that is important. It's an act of love. But the reality is we want ultimately to be able to care about what God thinks. We should be able to pray the same in our closet as we do on the street corner.

Secondly, this was mentioned by name in First Thessalonians 2 as we read it. The word "flattery." Did that stick in your brain when we read it? He didn't come with flattery, flattery. That's a problem. And it's easier to do than you might think. Right? Flattery. Psalm 12:2 I think I quoted part of this psalm last time. "Everyone utters lies to his neighbor." Now, this is the guy who is really down. "Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak." Well, that's a great way to put it. I know it's poetic language in Scripture, but you don't speak flattery without a double heart. Right? The double heart is the flattery that really what I think about you is not what I'm saying about you because I'm not honest and sincere. I'm giving you words to flatter you. Now, this is one of the things he's going to point out about the false teachers who are trying to supplant the people's loyalty in Corinth to Paul. These people flatter for their own purposes. Just like he said to the Galatian churches. There are false teachers who want to flatter you. They make much of you so that you'll make much of them, so you'll make less of the apostle and that's going on all the time. In all of these things whether it's envy, whether it's a power play, whatever the reason is in these misunderstandings where we say all these things that end up creating teams and there are no



real facts here, it's often fueled by flattery. People are saying things to other people and they're not being honest and sincere.

Here's one thing that I think the Apostle Paul certainly lived by Proverbs 28:23. Proverbs 28:23, "Whoever rebukes a man will afterwards find more favor than the one who flatters with his tongue." "Whoever rebukes a man," means you're doing the wrong thing, you need to do the right thing, "afterwards will find more favor than he who flatters with the tongue." Now if in the lobby someone comes up and rebukes you and someone else says nice outfit, I guarantee you in the immediate moment you're going to think lowly of one and highly of the other. But afterwards if you as a wise person afterwards receive a rebuke and it's true and it's right and it was out of love because of God and their love for God, in the end, if not in this life, and I hope it happens within minutes. But if not hours or days certainly when you stand before the Bema Seat of Christ you're going to come high-five that guy and say I'm boasting about you to have the guts to tell me the truth. And the reality is we've got to be willing to be truthful and sincere with people around us and not falling to either I want you to think well of me or I'm going to pump you up for some motive, whatever that agenda is and there are several agendas that put the face of flattery on.

Thirdly, this one is based on a juxtaposition of a verse that we quote all the time, Colossians 3:11. We quote that verse all the time but I need you to catch the context. Here's the third reason it's hard for us to be honest and sincere because we often have hidden agendas, sometimes to make ourselves look good, sometimes to flatter others for some other agenda. Colossians Chapter 3 we always quote this, "There's no Greek, there's no Jew, there's no circumcised and uncircumcised, no barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and in all." Now we quote that all the time. And if you think about the church like Paul uses this kind of thinking over there in the book of Ephesians to try and show that the church is this one new thing that's happening. It's not the same distinctions we had between Jew and Gentile before that were made much of by the first century, less of in the Bible although clearly there was a distinction there and God had a certain plan for ethnic Israel and I'm pre-millennial and I believe all of that, but here's the thing: this is not the reason for enlisting this truth right here. The context is critical and I think it's helpful and as we get into that list, Greek and Jew and circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, it becomes clear.

Look at verse 9, here's the context, "Do not lie to one another." Now he's telling Christians in Colossus don't lie to each other. Well this is happening all the time. It's what creates the teams, it's what creates the misunderstandings, we say things that aren't true. Why would we lie to one another? Well we're going to get to that in verse 11 but he starts to say here's one reason why because you're not the old guy you were before and non-Christians lie to each other all the time. They lie for all kinds of reasons, sometimes they flatter, sometimes they want to make themselves look good, sometimes they want a sale whatever they're doing they're lying, often lying. Seeing that you put off the old self with its practices and there are a plethora of those, verse 10, and you're a Christian now, you put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge, which I hope it is by the way, you're studying God's word, you know his truth, the more you meditate on it, the more you memorize it, the more you think about it, the more you study it, it starts to build up this person that God has made in you. He's



given you a new heart, he's made you new as Second Corinthians 5 says. The new self, it's renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Now here's the thing about the creator, he shows no partiality. He doesn't treat people differently just because they're Nebuchadnezzar or Daniel, a teenager. No different, God is going to tell the truth, he's going to be honest and sincere. Now we have the list. There's no Greek, there's no Jew in your church, there's no circumcised, there's no un-circumcised. Stop thinking that way. Barbarian, Scythian nope, slave or free, stop thinking that way. "Christ is all, and in all." That's a great line. In other words you might speak differently to the Greek than you'd speak to the Jew in your small group. You might speak differently to the slave or the free. You might have different ways that you, you know, portray reality about what's going on. You don't treat everyone honestly and sincerely, you've got a sliding scale based on who they are. There's another reason that sometimes we have twisted agendas. You're constantly thinking well who is this? Well then these are the facts I want to give them. Be careful. It's easy to have all kinds of hidden agendas and twist our words so that they're not honest and sincere because there is much working against us in our flesh to try and twist the truth.

Now I say all this and some of you may be cheering, "I love this point, honest and sincere, that's what I'm known for, I'm just blasting the truth in people's faces. I'm so forthright everyone knows they can get the truth out of me." Let me add a caveat to this for those of you who like this point way too much. Okay? Go back to Second Corinthians Chapter 1. I want to make this point even in the context of what's going on here. Paul is being blasted for not coming to Corinth when he said he was going to come to Corinth. And he's saying my motives were right, my change in plans was right, he's defending himself, okay? I want to show you why. Drop down to the bottom of this chapter, Second Corinthians Chapter 1, start in verse 23. This all ties together. He's concerned about his conscience and God knows, "I call God to witness against me." God knows the truth here. Why didn't I come? "It was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth." That's why. "Not that we lord it over your faith, but that we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith." Now "I made up my mind," verse 1 of Chapter 2, "not to make another painful visit to you."

Okay. Now we're going to unpack that later as we get through this whole section in this series. But here's what he's saying, the very opposite of what you see happening in other letters of the New Testament. Paul says to the Thessalonians I'd much rather be face-to-face with you. John said the same thing, I got a lot to say but I'm not going to say it with pen and ink, I'm going to say it to your face. But here Paul says I'm not going to say it to your face, I'm going to write to you instead. Now what's that about? Now it's much more information to have someone personally in front of you giving you information and a lot more words come out than they're going to put in their letter. And there's a lot that we read from what people are feeling and thinking. There's a lot of data that spilled out in a personal confrontation. Paul now is going to send a letter instead. Why? You're not ready for all that. I'm going to come but not yet. It would be too painful right now. So I want to tell you the truth but I'm not going to tell you as much as I would if I were in person. So he's getting them to move in the direction of being able to process and digest everything. But right now it's not full disclosure with a face-to-face confrontation.



Let me put it this way. Let's just put this caveat on the point of being honest and sincere. It does not mean that full disclosure is always helpful or always necessary. Full disclosure is not always helpful and not always necessary. You don't want everyone in that lobby today to tell you everything they think when they see your face. You don't want that and nor should it happen in the Church of God. Love sometimes as Paul is going to defend, I love you, you're going to boast about my motive, you're going to boast about what I'm doing here. You know and one of the things that meant is I'm not coming to you right now. I know I said I was but I'm not and I'm not because it's best for you that I not show up now. And all I'm telling you is that this is a practice of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Jot this reference down, Matthew Chapter 16 verse 20. "He strictly charged his disciples to tell no one that he is the Christ." What? Wait a minute. Was Jesus the Christ? Yes. He said to his disciples don't tell anybody that. Isn't the whole point of the gospels to say Jesus is the Christ? Isn't that the whole point of Matthew to tell people Jesus is the Christ? Yeah it is but right here in this particular situation in the narrative of Christ he says they're not ready for that right now. It's going to go wrong. Or to put it in different words when Jesus was in Canaan in John Chapter 2 verse 24, John says, "Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people." In other words I know, just like Paul knew what the Corinthians would do if he showed up it would be painful, this would not be good. So he doesn't unload.

You know truth and you need to be honest and sincere and just like with your children sometimes it doesn't mean you give them all the information, right? They're not ready for all the information, little kids. So we're giving them information, information that is appropriate and love is going to govern that spigot, that regulator. And so I just need to tell you full disclosure is not always necessary nor is it always helpful. Jesus often held back information even before Pilate, do you remember that? Silent. Pilate asked him questions he adjured him which is a strong word. "I adjure you," right? I demand by the jurisdiction that I have, I demand that you tell me and Jesus goes I'm not telling you. There are times for you not to say everything that you think and everything that is true, right? Now we give truth, we always give truth but we give truth as governed sometimes by love. Now this principle they've already tested in the lobby after the last two sermons, it can be misunderstood but you know what I'm saying here. Paul's not going to tell them lies. He's just even in his not coming which is really the core of his excuse for not coming and it was an excuse based on truth and it was based on love and it was based on the appropriateness of what they could handle at the particular time. Just like Jesus did and we see it throughout the New Testament.

All right middle of the passage, go back to Second Corinthians Chapter 1 verses 13 and 14. We started with the whole goal of one day when we see Christ we want all of our motives should be exposed as good, all of our actions to be exposed as good. Verse 13, we're saying what we mean and we mean what we say. We're forthright, we're honest, we're sincere. Now and "I hope you will fully understand." One of the reasons I writing is I want you to understand, "just as you did partially understand." You partially understood but I want you to fully understand. I want you to fully understand. That's a super important principle, that's the whole point of writing this section of Second Corinthians Chapter 1:12 through 25. All of this is about trying to explain this. So you didn't fully understand, now I want you to understand. You



might have heard some things that made you misunderstand but I want you to understand. Number three you need to "Work to Clarify Misunderstandings. It's very important that when there is a misunderstanding you try to fix it. Try to fix the misunderstanding particularly if it's starting to cause the factionalism that we see in the Church of Corinth, stop and say God help me to clarify this. And we clarify by sitting down and having conversations. And we say I just want you to know what's going on here. I want to clarify, I want to fix this.

Now it could be a legitimate wrong, let's just say that. But in Matthew when Jesus was preaching about the Sermon on the Mount and he said if you're there going to the worship center and you're about to walk up to the altar and you're next in line to bring your animal up there and you remember that someone has something against you. What does the Bible say? Leave your offering and go and be reconciled to your brother. Just think about that, right? If I say to you next week when you didn't show up at church and I say where were you last Sunday and you're like oh no, the pastor's calling me out and you say I went and played golf. I'd be like you should have been in church. And you deserve the rebuke because you should have been in church. But I dare not give you a rebuke if you say while I was walking into church and I saw a guy and I knew he had something against me so we sat in his car for an hour and we fixed it. I'm going to say you did something biblical. There was a misunderstanding and you fixed it. Whether it's a real sin which may be in view in Matthew Chapter 5 that you need to repent of and there needs to be confession there needs to be an apology there needs to be acceptance of the apology, great maybe that's it. But even if it's just a misunderstanding, Paul is spilling ink on a misunderstanding and he's saying you partly understood, I want to fully understand.

And it's good for us to have understanding so much so, jot this down First Corinthians Chapter 1 verse 10. How big is it? Listen to the way he words this in First Corinthians Chapter 1 verse 10. He says, "I appeal to you brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." I mean that's heavy, in the name and the authority of the Lord, the boss, the king of the world, Jesus the Savior, Yeshua and Christ the Messiah. Well that's big, what are you going to say? "I appeal to you brothers by the name," the authority of the boss, the Savior, the Messiah. What's he saying? "That all of you agree, that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and have the same judgment." I want you to see things the same. Does that mean we're all supposed to like the same flavor of ice cream? No. Root for the same football team. No. It doesn't mean that, right? What he's concerned about is all the things he's about to address in First Corinthians, the truth, objective doctrinal truth. He says I need you guys to be on the same page. Well in Second Corinthians guess what it is. I don't want you to think wrong about my motives here, I don't want you to think I was doing something to hurt you, I don't want you to believe the critics, I want to fix this.

So I know this: truth is a great word by the way and what it means is, look it up, it is what it should mean, postmoderns don't think of it this way, but truth means things that correspond with reality, words and statements that correspond with things that are actually real, things that actually happened. Right? Abraham Lincoln got shot, you know, and assassinated. Okay that's a statement? Is it true? Well it depends. Is that a good characterization in a propositional statement about something that actually happened? Well that means it's a true



statement. To say well you know why that guy in our small group isn't coming anymore and here goes the chatter whether it's gossip, whether it's envy, whether it's strife, whether it's power moves whatever it is, the question is are we about the truth, I want you all to be united in mind and thought. Mind in the same judgment "same mind, same judgment." And that means that he cares not only about the objective doctrinal truths but he also cares, first exhibit, Second Corinthians that you know the reality about things like why Paul didn't show up, who Paul is, how you should view the Apostle Paul. Those are things he's trying to fix and there's a reason, it's not vain, it's not just about his reputation. There are some really important reasons that people have the same perspective.

I quoted Philippians Chapter 2 because it's so great talking about I got to have you put other people's interests before yourself and there are so many principles of Scripture that should fall right underneath that. Sometimes I want to put people's interest before mine. They may think the wrong thing like it says in First Corinthians Chapter 6 and they may have wronged me but I'd rather be wronged than to have a problem here, I'm just going to overlook it. Like the Old Testament says the "glory" of a man "to overlook an offense," great. And it could be just a misunderstanding but I want to fix it. And this great section of Philippians that leads us to that two chapters later and you can imagine them reading the scroll, maybe Epaphroditus is reading the scroll there and he's reading it in the service and after that it has had plenty of time to soak in and he's reading down the way he gets to a place in Chapter 4 and he starts quoting people's names. He says I appeal to you Euodia, I appeal to you Syntyche, which is weird. Let's just put it this way, hey Debbie and Brenda, you too, I need you to get along. Hey and Bill can you make sure they get along, these two women who worked side by side with me, to make sure these two women who both have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life, they need to get along. Can you imagine being called out not just in a letter by a pastor in front of a church. Imagine if I did that right now, some of you want my head on a platter. If I said, Susan, Brenda, you guys need to get along. This sermon I'm preaching about unity, you two guys need to work on that. You'd be mad. Right? The God-breathed Scriptures do that. Hey, get along. How important was it to the Bible, how important is it to God? "I appeal to you by the name," by the authority, "of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree." We need to get on the same page. We need to clarify misunderstandings.

One passage on this before we wrap it up. Ephesians Chapter 4, please turn there with me, Ephesians Chapter 4. In Ephesians Chapter 4 there's a great line in verse 3 that I think you'd say well we don't even need to turn there you've been preaching this all morning. Okay, great. Verse 3, "Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." That's what Paul is doing in Second Corinthians Chapter 1 verses 12 last week, and 13 and 14 this week. That's exactly what he's trying to do. Right? We want everyone to be on the same page. The unity of the Spirit. We're all Christians here. We all have our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life. We're all wearing the same uniform. We should all be at peace with each other. Great. The problem with that is the ingredients that make that possible. Start in verse 1, "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you've been called." In other words live in a way that matches your statement, your statement is that you are a Christian, your calling is that you're called heavenward, your names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, you're all followers, you're all wearing the same uniform. Okay?



Now how do you do that? Three words: "with all humility," you can just repeat this it's supplied in the logic and "all gentleness" and "with all patience, bearing with one another in love." Now you've already revealed the motive, love. I got to love my fellow Christians. I got to love even my coworkers and non-Christians. I got to love my neighbors that I have problems, I got to love them. Right? But here's what it's going to take to have that to bear with him and not have the problems of floating misunderstandings or gossiping or saying things that aren't true, I got to have humility, gentleness and patience. If you really want something to go home and work on and say God please develop three things in me that will help make the application of this sermon a lot easier, well here they are: humility, gentleness and patience. And here's one thing I started the sermon by saying people are prone to these things, well they're prone to all those things: gossip, power play, envy, but here's what people are not prone to, having all humility, all gentleness and all patience. That's hard, that's counterculture, that works against your flesh. I need to have you and I say this is the goal, humble, gentle, patient. If I'm that way with other people and my motive is love and I know who I'm supposed to please first, God, to love people, lay down my interest for the interest of others, I'm going to be honest, I'm going to be sincere in my planning, my words, my discussion. Maybe not all information right out of the gate. I'm not going to give them maybe 10 gallons of truth, maybe they just need a cup of it now, but I'm going to move forward in telling them the truth. I'm going to clarify misunderstandings. It's going to take humility, it's going to take gentleness, it's going to take patience.

If this point right here in this sermon is frustrating you because you think it's hard, it's not only hard it may be impossible with some people and I say that on the authority of Romans 12 verse 18. Romans 12:18 says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." I want us to have peace. But even within the church sometimes that is impossible and I say that on the authority of God using Jude and Peter and James to write some epistles of the general epistles and here's what they say about some people in the church. Are you ready? Peter says some are "irrational," they're like "creatures of instinct" and they're opposed to reason. Those are going to be hard for me to clarify misunderstandings with. Or what about Jude he says there are people in your churches who "are grumblers, malcontents, ... loud-mouthed boasters" and all they do is "show favoritism." It's hard for me to sit down and fix that. Or how about James, he says "bitter jealousy and selfishness ... boastful and false to the truth." That's all the "demonic" kind of wisdom that sometimes floats into the pews of the church. I just want you to know "as far as it depends on you," you're not going to have, you know, your Christian baseball card say you batted a thousand in making peace with all people. You just can't. But I need you to try to make peace so far as it depends on you whenever it is possible. And one of the reasons I want you to do this is because we, if we're real Christians, are all on the same team and what God did is moved us forward in relationship with him at great personal cost. I know it's hard for us to be humble and gentle and patient in trying to fix problems but you know what Jesus went a long way to fix problems. He did a lot to try and find harmony and what the Bible would call reconciliation with us.

If I said to you I read a headline and it said, "the preacher and the prostitute," what kind of article would you expect I'm going to read about, the preacher and the prostitute? That'd be a



scandalous headline, right? Well it is a scandalous headline but it's found in the Old Testament in the book of Hosea. Do you know the book of Hosea? The preacher and the prostitute. It is a scandal but it's a scandal God directed him to engage in. Hey, Hosea the prophet, the preacher. "Go and take," I love the English Standard Version, "Go and take a woman a wife of whoredom," just like the prostitute. Can you imagine telling your Jewish mother, right? Yeah I'm a preacher here's my new wife. Yeah, she's a prostitute. I mean this is rough. That's a scandal to his family, that's a scandal to the nation and take all of her illegitimate children, her "children of whoredom." That's how Chapter 1 starts. Well, they set up shop, start a family, have their home, their domestic life is beginning, a very rough, very weird for Hosea but he's got a wife who's a prostitute. Well she doesn't stop being a prostitute. By Chapter 3 she's still engaged in all of her ways and it says in Chapter 1 go and love a woman who is loved by another, right? Go get her, go woo her back, go speak tenderly to her, get her back. Can you imagine all this? And you Sunday school grads know why Hosea was told to marry a prostitute. Why? God was trying to illustrate his relationship with Israel. You know you guys are running around sniffing the air, you're chasing after whatever you want and I keep pursuing you. Why? Because I want us to be in relationship. I'm seeking my people. I want to reconcile you to myself.

And the book ends without the analogy, it ends with just straightforward words. I love Hosea Chapter 14 verse 2. He says you know what you need to "return to the Lord" and bring your words with you. Just a great line. I quote it often, bring your words with you and say, "Take away all of our iniquity." That's what Hosea needed to say here. And that's what God needs to hear from us. And hopefully you sit here today knowing what it takes for you to be reconciled to God. We started with the verse, John 3:16, "God gave his son." The sacrifice of him reconciling you to himself. Now you sit next to people in the row that you're seated in who are also reconciled to God. And the Bible says listen, think about it in Ephesians. There's one Lord, one faith, one God. This is we're all on the same team. If there are misunderstandings and conflicts then we need to solve them. Whether they're real, whether they're factually based or whether it's just a bunch of talk that's gotten out of control. Let's fix it. "So far as it depends on you let's make peace." If we're reconciled, and God has done a lot to reconcile us, we can lift a finger or two to reconcile with each other.

A good reminder for us as we'll end here with the Lord's Supper. I'm going to ask the ushers to come down and pass these elements. If you are not a Christian just hang on. We're almost over. Let the plate pass by. Don't take out the elements. Don't participate in this. But if you are a real Christian and you know what it is, you put your trust in Christ, you've repented of your sins, you're a follower of Christ even if you had not been a very good one this week, I want you to take these elements out. And I want you to talk to God, back to the basics that he sent his Son so that you would be reconciled. Okay. They're passing the elements. I want you to take the bread and the cup and I want you to hang on to them and we will take them together which is a great symbolic act of us being unified. We all are unified on the grounds of the sacrificial atonement of Christ, his imputed righteousness to you and our sins imputed to his cross. I want you to know what a great thing it is to be a child of God and then to think hey we all are wearing the same jersey here. Whatever conflicts that exist let's solve those. But right now, just make sure you and God are on good terms, which means if there's any unconfessed



sin, you spend time to examine yourself, confess your sins. "He's faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." It would be good if we did that horizontally and not just vertically. But let's start with vertically as we listen to the melody of a great hymn that reminds us of God's faithfulness.

The Corinthians had a lot of things wrong with their practice of the Lord's Supper. The one thing we don't give them credit enough for was at least they were working to try to make this a family-style meal. It turned into a potluck and it turned into them showing favoritism toward the rich and the high-ranking. And it became a mess and Paul had to correct all that. But it certainly reflected the fact that they were spiritual siblings. They were family. This feast that they would have that included these elements that reminded them of the bread and the cup of the body and blood of Christ, which is what it is, by the way, a reminder. "Do this in remembrance of me." Jesus was clear even after he engaged in this that this was still the fruit of the vine. He said he won't drink the fruit of the vine again until he drinks it anew with us in the kingdom. So nothing's turning into anything different than what it is. The chemistry of this is just precisely what it was when we bought it at the store. But it is to remind us of the foundation of our salvation that Christ suffered and died and incurred the spiritual anger of the Father that was appropriate and just, the indignation, the wrath of God as put in the Scripture. He absorbed all of that so that you and I wouldn't have to. But it's also something to remind us of our unity. And sadly, after germ theory and just the way in which we live here in the West, we're not drinking out of the same cup. But just remember that they were drinking at the Last Supper out of the same chalice, out of the same cup. We're tearing off pieces from one loaf, as it's put in First Corinthians. And all that reminded them that they're family, on the same team. I know the focus of the Lord's Supper is on the redemptive work of Christ but remember all of its implications in light of what we've studied here today. I trust that we are at peace with God and at peace with each other. If you're a genuine Christian trusting in Christ let us with confessed hearts, let's eat this bread and drink this cup.

Pray with me, please. God, with the taste of these elements in our mouth, we want to remember the great sacrifice as we ingest these elements that are supposed to remind us how associated we want to be, how close we want to be with that payment, as it says in Romans 6, that we were, in your mind, crucified with Christ, that all of our sin, every individual sin we've committed was rectified by that punishment and that we are now exonerated, that we are now clean, that "though our sins were as scarlet, they're now white as snow." God, it's an amazing transaction, one we don't deserve and one we should humbly respond to in repentance and faith. And of course, that humility, we want it to characterize our relationship with each other. We want to be humble. We want to be gentle. We want to be patient. We want to walk worthy of the calling with which we've been called. So, God, we're called your children. We're called siblings, brothers and sisters in Christ. And we pray we'd live up to that high calling today, all based on your faithfulness to reconcile us to yourself.

In Jesus name, Amen.