

# The Pastor and the Lost

*Sovereign Grace Churches Pastors Conference 2022*

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November 3, 2022 - Session 4

There is no shame in a gummy bear.

[laughter]

When I started on the leadership team, Erin contacted me to find out what snacks I like. My recommendation was if you just factor in the average eight-year-old's birthday party and get me those, I will be a happy pastor.

For all those concerned that I might die very shortly.

Although, I have two grandparents still alive. One is 101, one is 99, they taught me to eat this way. I think we're going to be okay.

[laughter]

It is a privilege in how kind of the Lord to have us gather together to celebrate our 40-year anniversary, isn't it? To see what the Lord has done in our family of churches. I was six years old when Sovereign Grace Churches started, and to consider what the Lord has done in 40 years of our history, we now have the privilege in serving in 45 countries outside the United States. In the next two years, we anticipate that we'll be planting 16 churches outside of the states and adopting 61 churches outside of the States, just in the next two years. The reason why that is happening is because God is faithful. It's because of His kindness and His mercy.

The Lord is on the move. Aslan is on the move, and he gives us the privilege of being a part of his story, of giving out these invites. How kind of the Lord that we get to gather together in this way to celebrate. I just wanted to take a moment to add my voice to thank the founding generation. Now, I was once told by an older, wiser pastor than I that he wanted to give his life away to building something that the next generation wouldn't have to tear down and change.

To the founding generation thank you and well done because as the bat is beginning to get passed on in different ways, we ain't seeing nothing we want to change. We want to do exactly the same thing and keep building on what you have founded but take it across different nations, different geographies, and into different languages, because there's a big world out there that needs this message but you founding pastors and your wives, thank you so much for giving your lives away for this. We are a happy next generation and we ain't planning on changing a thing, and that's because of the way you've built, so thank you.

It's a joy to be celebrating with you at this 40-year anniversary and how kind of the Lord to have us gather around his wood. Somebody said to me on the way in this morning, "I am so tired." That was slightly discouraging for the guy who's about to preach and I realize instantly I see what Mark has done. He's put the guy with the accent on, on Thursday morning and then he puts Jared, the loudest guy on the legend team on, on Thursday night to keep you awake but go ahead and turn in your Bibles please to 1st Corinthians Chapter 1. This is a familiar text to all of us, but oh my, what a happy and joyful text this is.

This word is alive, is it not? It is dynamite in our hands. The Lord does incredible things. It is preached. We read the word, but in so many ways, it reads us. God wants to speak to us today. Let's read this. We're going to read 1st Corinthians Chapter 1 from verse 18 to the end of the verse 31.

This is the word of the Lord:

**18** *For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19* *For it is written,*

*"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."*

**20** *Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21* *For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. 22* *For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23* *but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24* *but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25* *For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

*26 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. 30 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.*

Let's ask the Lord for his help. Lord, I do come to you, Lord, for all of us in the room in this moment. I pray that you would do what no preacher can ever do. Would you open eyes and open hearts to the truth of your word today? Lord, I thank you that your word is alive. It does run after us. I pray it would run after every individual in the room in this moment. Lord, as we sit once again under the audience of one, would you have your way? In Jesus' precious name, amen.

What do you do when you find yourself stuck down a mine, some 245 feet down below ground level, and you discover you are completely and utterly trapped? That's what happened to Randy Fogel back in 2002, and this is his story. July the 24th, 2002, Randy Fogel went to work at the Quecreek Mine in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, expecting an ordinary day at the office just like everyone else. Never mind that his office is a dank subterranean labyrinth, 245 feet below ground, where the only light comes from flickering helmet, lamps, and a mistake can cost you your life.

Randy had been a coal miner for 20 years, and he took such challenges in his stride. He had a reputation for toughness. Little did Randy know his toughness was about to be tested to the limit. His ordinary day's work was interrupted at about nine o'clock in the evening by a frantic voice crackling over his radio, we hit water. We hit water, get out. Randy's fellow miners had accidentally drilled through an adjacent flooded mine.

The miners scrambled to escape, doubled over as they ran to avoid the low ceilings. As millions of gallons of water came swirling and gushing about their ankles. One team escaped, but Randy's team did not. Cut off from their only exits by flooded corridors, the nine men found themselves trapped in a chamber only 4 feet deep and 18 feet wide filled nearly to the top with freezing water. These men had no shortage of strength and courage. They were fighters and survivors hard men who faced danger on a daily basis.

Randy had played football at high school. His brother recollected how one time they'd been deer hunting and Randy had opted not to wear gloves even though it was five below zero. That's the man he was. If anyone could find a way out of this mess, it was surely Randy and his fellow miners. It didn't take long, however, for the terrible truth to become clear, Randy was helpless. As the minutes turned to hours and the hours turned to days, the water was receding. By day three, hypothermia and despair were setting in, and of their own strength, there was nothing they could do. Resourcefulness and toughness weren't going to be enough to save them.

All they could do was hope and wait. Within hours, Randy's story made front page headlines and gripped the nation. A rescue effort began immediately. Rescue workers, fellow miners, families, and friends worked and prayed day and night to save the lives of these brave men. It was slow, tiring, and difficult to work, but nothing could shake their determination. They began by running a pipe into the subterranean chamber, pumping in hot air, a move that kept Randy and his friends alive.

When the miners banged on the pipe, it gave their rescues the first affirmation that they were still alive and fueled their determination. Eventually, after 77 hours of huddling in the frigid darkness, surviving, and thinking about his loved ones, Randy Fogel was finally raised to the surface in a yellow rescue cage with his eight fellow companions falling shortly after for all had survived with strong spirits and only minor injuries, and thanks the devoted work of the rescues, they had stared death in the face and yet come back to tell a story. I'll never forget the first time I heard that story, because the first time I heard it, I was so affected. I was affected for two different reasons. I was affected first and foremost for the story itself.

When I don't like the idea of small spaces, particularly when they are underground in the dark.

How frightening would it have been? Would've been the most frightening, alarming moment of their lives to realize they are stuck down a mind in the dark and they are completely helpless and trapped. It affects me as I think of that, but I was also affected in a increased way, in a more acute way, as I couldn't help but be reminded of the horrible and frightening situation that mankind is in prior to salvation.

See, prior to salvation, we are told in God's word that we were once all alienated from God. We were all hostile in mind. We all were going about our lives doing evil deeds. We were all down the mine and we were helpless. In

and of ourselves, we were in the dark and in of ourselves, there was nothing we could do. The Apostle Paul says, by very nature, we were children of wrath.

Maybe most frightening of all, we were dead in our trespasses and sins. We were down the mine, uninterested in God, and we were helpless and totally blind to it. Our situation prior to salvation could not have been more alarming. My friends, there are thousands and millions of people around the world that in a spiritual sense are still down the mine. God in His grace and kindness has called and commissioned us to go to them, hasn't He? He's called us to do that.

In [Matthew 28](#), as you well know, we read, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Every pastor, every individual in the room knows that to be true. We know and understand I am called to go make disciples of all nations. I'm called to brandish this gospel and go tell people about it and yet however much we know we are called, I would argue that this is probably the hardest thing that we do. Is it not?

This is the thing that we feel most guilty about because we find it difficult and we find it difficult because this is an area of our lives, so most of us, certainly myself, that we can lack confidence in. We can let courage in. We can let hope in. The more we stare at this dark world that is being rallied around and led by people that are down the mine, the fearful we can become. See, this world really is a broken-down house, isn't it? And it is rallied and informed by people who are down to the mine and as such, it has become an increasingly hostile place for Christians to live. Is it not?

In some of the countries that Sovereign Grace serve in, there are Christians literally risking their lives for the sake of the gospel. In places like Northern India and Pakistan and Somalia, you have men and women along with their children literally risking their lives to tell people about Jesus and other countries that we get to serve in, we have Christians who are risking imprisonment.

In Nepal, it's totally illegal to tell people about Jesus. They still do it. Last year they baptized 100 people in our church there, but it is totally illegal. Half the time the pastor spends caring for people, the other half he spends trying to get people out of prison because they're getting arrested for the sake of the gospel, as Jeff prayed, we have a pastor's wife in Belarus whose only crime was holding a poster of a Bible verse up at a protest.

She wasn't protesting. She's holding a Bible verse to try and win the people that are protesting to Jesus. The police take a photo, they break into their home, they leave the husband, but they take the wife. She is awaiting to go to prison for two years because she held up a Bible verse. They're our people. People in countries that we serve in and in other countries like ours and yours here in the West, we also face dangers.

They're not dangers that are life and threatening or imprisonment, but if I'm not mistaken, we are facing the growing groundswell of worldview and cancel hostility, are we not? People that want to cancel you? People that want to ideally get you fired for what you believe in, people that want to shun you. Although we might not be risking imprisonment or our life. It can certainly still invoke fears in our hearts, can it not? We all live in cultures, particularly if you are Western, where the overarching theme of our society is you just need to be true to yourself.

Everyone says that from Oprah to Beyonce, to Ellen DeGeneres, to Steph Curry, to every student body president in the West. The whole premise is you've just got to be true to yourself. You've got to be real to you. You've got to do you, and everybody's allowed to do you unless you're a Christian because if you are a Christian, you have values that might offend me or hurt me or upset me. We're going to be okay to do you as long as doing you doesn't affect me. It's a different rule for Christians.

We face that, do we not? As we stand for truth, we are aware this is hostile and this is difficult, and I'm in danger of getting canceled. How do I build into this? That's why we live in the world. The things are pretty broken. Increasingly in the West, the concept of celibacy seems to be at best outdated and at worst oppressive. Marriage is no longer just between a man and a woman.

Gender is something that you can now just choose for yourself. Choose your own adventure. You can be whatever you want. Apparently, there's hundreds of genders, and anybody that doesn't believe that is crazy. Increasingly in the West, teachers in schools can wear rainbow bracelets. They can have rainbow flags. They can identify themselves with any pronouns they want, but if a Christian teacher wears a cross and prays with a student and shares the gospel with somebody, that's totally unacceptable. This world is filled with people that are down the mine and they bring their worldview with them.

When it comes to sharing the gospel with people and telling them about Jesus, we can, if we're honest, find that hard, can't we? It can evoke fear in our hearts and lack of confidence and lack of hope. I believe that's where the Lord wants

to encourage us all today. I believe the one-- the Lord wants to encourage us from this text with this one most profound and important truth. That His great power and providence is in the mission to which we've been called. My friends, we are not alone. The king of kings, lord of lords is with us. He has risen again and his great power and providence is with us.

Make no mistake my friends. We have been called to this great commission. We have been called to go and take the gospel to the nations, but make no mistake immediately before.

Jesus's king of kings and lord of lords calling us to that great task. He tells us all authority and heaven and earth has now been given to me. [laughs] You talk about a powerful and important statement. Jesus wins that's what's happening. All power and all authority is now been given to him.

Listen, when Jesus declared on the cross, it is finished. That means something. It means it is finished. That's what it means. By the grace of God, the cup of God's wrath has been drunk to the full. The devil in that moment has become a defeated fall. All authority in heaven and earth has now been given to me. You and I are called on this great mission, but I want you to understand the battle has already been won. Jesus wins. Jesus lives. Satan has been defeated, and as we go, He is with us. Listen, the great plan of redemption, grace is leading the Church.

The risen Christ himself. Brothers and sisters, as we are called to go, we need to understand Jesus is totally and utterly in charge of this great plan of redemption. His great power and providence is in and throughout the mission to which we've been called. I have two points this morning and then some closing application, but really just one hope. I want our hearts to be stirred today with faith. I want us to be able to leave this room today with courage and hope and confidence because we can have that because His great power and providence is in the mission to which we've been called.

Two points and here's the first. Number one, the power of God. This power of God, Paul tells us, incredibly is included in a message. What he says verses 18 and 19, "For the word of the cross is falling to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God." For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the discernment of the discerning. I will thwart. As you know, the ancient world deployed various polarities to explain humanity in the way we live. There's Romans or barbarians, there's Jews and there's Gentiles, the slaves, and there's free. Right here, Paul sets forth the greatest and most important polarity, i.e., those who are perishing and those who are

being saved, and to those who are perishing, Paul tells us in verse 18, for those who are even now down the mine, the word of the cross is absolutely folly. It is stupid. It is moronic in every sense of the word.

It is crazy. How could anybody believe that and be sane? It is foolishness. I think sometimes as Christians, we're surprised when people don't understand it. Paul isn't. It is folly. It is madness to them. As Paul is particularly talking in this letter, as he's thinking about the crowd in current, he's thinking particularly about the Greeks and the Jews. To the Greeks as he tells us in verse 22, the Greeks seek wisdom.

See, to the Greeks, they viewed wisdom and philosophy as the highest of human attainments, and therefore they built their whole society around those values. There were, as you know, at least four dozen distinct philosophical systems that all competed with each other for influence and acceptance. They were often built on religion in nature, although it was very wide form, obviously, all of these different philosophies sought to explain human origin and morality and relationships and destiny in terms of a pantheon of different pagan gods. In turn, then these philosophies formed the very basis of social and political, and economical worldview.

The Greeks, by very nature, then they loved human wisdom. To walk around Corinth would be to walk around a city where there are high elite-sounding discourses where there are ponderings of the intellectuals. Everybody's talking about worldview and culture and stuff. That's how they're scored each other. Wisdom was by very nature power. You are talking to me about the cross? This dude, this king, that then died. That doesn't seem very powerful to me. No thank you. It seems crazy to them. It seems like madness. Just like there's many people in our world that it seems madness to. The DA Carson, in his book, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*, says this about the cross.

He says, "Apart from the emperor's explicit sanction, no Roman citizen could ever be put to death by the means of crucifixion. Crucifixion was reserved for slaves, aliens, and barbarians. Many thought it was not something to even be talked about in polite company. Because quite apart from the wretched torture inflicted on those who were executed by hanging from a cross, the cultural associations conjured up images of evil, corruption, and abysmal rejection.

To the Greeks and you're telling me about a suffering savior. You're kidding me. If he's really the king, that ain't looking too powerful to me. Thanks for playing. I'm not interested. It was foolishness to them, like was the Jews. The Jews, as Paul tells us in verse 22, the Jews, well they demand signs. The Jews

demanded that God would meet their requirements in tangible and irrefutable proof to which they could then base their convictions, and they are working understanding as a people, was when the Messiah comes, He will surely come with striking manifestations of power and might and majesty all pointing to the coming of the Messianic age.

Yet all I see with Jesus is these signs and miracles that are somewhat unimpressive. They're good, but they're not quite what we're looking for because they're often done quietly and they're often done not to show off yourself, but they're done to try and serve people in meekness and suffering. They're even done on the Sabbath. I don't know what that's about. Then when Jesus gets arrested and tried and ultimately then crucified, the whole narrative becomes foolishness to them.

Because a crucified messiah was to them a total contradiction, in turn. As [Deuteronomy 21](#) tells us “cursed is the man who hangs on a tree”. How could the all promised all-powerful Messiah end His days hanging on a tree? That's madness. It is foolishness to the Greeks. It is foolishness to the Jews. Add to that the Romans and the Gentiles. Listen, though the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. Oh my friends, is that not amazing? How true it is that to those who are being saved, it is the power of God. Why? Because for those who are being saved, the word of the cross is the sweetest, most life-defining words of our entire lives. Is it not?

When we read in [Galatians 4:4](#), but when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son. Oh, what happy pastors we are, are we not? That was the beginning of the greatest rescue mission ever told. When that moment, when the fullness of time had come and God the Father sent forth his son on the greatest rescue mission ever told, his son then comes to the birth canal of a Virgin Mary.

He lives a perfect life. He dies a substitutionary death. He rises three days later and now through faith in Him, we can be forgiven of our sin and redeemed and adopted into the family of God, the Holy Spirit. A deposit guaranteeing our inheritance that heaven will be our home. For when the fullness of time has come, God sent forth His son. To the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it's the power of God. It's the greatest delight of our life. How does that transition happen?

How does it go from folly to something that's so delightful to us? Let me tell you why. Let me tell you how it happened for each and every one of us in the

room. It happened because, at some point in our lives, someone has come to us and got over the pain line and shared the gospel with us. Somebody at some point in your life failed to-- they no longer lacked courage. They brandished the gospel and believed in the sovereignty of God and came towards you.

Then God in his grace and mercy, through his profound kindness like a bomb going off in your lives, opened your eyes to the truths that it was contained with that and that message and effectively called you, and boom, you went from darkness to life, from deafness to hearing, from blindness to sight. All because somebody in their grace shared the gospel with you and God used that to effectively call you to Himself. Listen, each and every salvation in the room is a miracle of His grace. Everybody is a miracle of His grace. It is all the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in their eyes. Make no mistake, it is all him.

Also, make no mistake, the gospel really is a powerful and potent weapon, is it not? For those who are being saved, it is the power of God, and no one knows that better, I think, than the Apostle Paul himself. Prior to salvation, Paul was the church's most determined opponent. He hated Christ, and he hated Christians with a passion. He wanted to give his life to destroying our faith. When we first encounter the apostle Paul in [Acts 7](#), we see him holding people's coats at Stephen's martyrdom in hearty agreement with all that is taking place.

We read in the book of Acts that at that moment he was ravaging the church like a wild beast. He wanted to destroy us. He wanted to take us out. That's why he asked for permission, as you know, to go to Damascus because he wanted to find these Christians and bring them back and have them killed. Yet, on the road to Damascus, in Acts chapter 9, he encounters the power of the risen Christ. In a very moment, boom, his life goes from persecutor to proclaimer in a very moment.

He is the most unlikely person ever to get saved. He is the Osama bin Laden of the day, okay? He hates everything we stand for, but he is no restrictor to the power of God. His sin is stubborn, but it is not as stubborn as the grace of God in his life. In a moment, he is saved. He goes from gospel persecutor to gospel proclaimer. No wonder then he tells us for I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. What he's telling us in that moment is, "Listen, I encountered the power of the risen Christ, it changed my life. That power of the risen Christ is now in the glories of the gospel.

As we share this gospel, it will be the vehicle and the conduit to which people will be saved. It's one of the most powerful and potent moments anywhere in the Bible. No wonder he is not ashamed of the gospel, because he is equating it to the very power of God. What a weapon. We may not be impressive messengers, but the message changes people lives. In a moment people's lives can be radically changed by the power of God. That was true 2000 years ago, and by His grace it is still true to this day.

Just a few weeks ago when I was in the Philippines, hanging out with Jeffrey Jo and Nilo and their teams. Jeff was telling me about the story of a girl called Lilly. Lilly came along to the church in 1995, in Manila. She came along because it was a bring-a-friend Sunday. Lilly was a practicing lesbian, so she came along with her partner. Somebody had taken the time to invite her. Jeff says, "I still remember seeing her. She had that short, spiky hair and she sat and listened." As Jeff shared the gospel, he noticed that for Lilly, there were tears coming down of face and that very morning she came to know Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior.

Well, what happened next is she needed to be discipled and cared for and in time she understood that, "Hey, my life has got to change as I really follow Jesus, as both my Savior and my Lord, the way I'm living needs to change and be different from that of the world." She tells her partner that I can no longer be with you and she moves out and her partner becomes very violent with her. Young Lilly is now being shipped to different homes of people in the church to keep her safe. Lilly decides that, "Listen, I would love to go back to the Mindanao Islands, which is about an hour and a half away. I'd love to go back home because my family don't know Jesus. I don't think they've ever heard of Jesus. I would like to go home."

As Jeff and the eldership, they send her back to the Mindanao Islands and she tells her family about the old, old story. She tells her family about the glories of the gospel and each and every family member becomes a Christian as she shares. They all respond in faith, so they all get together and they're like, "We have got to tell our extended family." For any of you that know Filipinos, this is hundreds.

They go on the move, they are now mobile for the gospel and they particularly go South to different islands down in the south and they start to tell their family members, and one by one, they all start getting saved. It's one time when they're with these family members down South that this young boy from the Manobo tribe comes in. You don't usually see the Manobo tribe, they are head hunters. They will kill you. They keep amongst themselves in the

mountains, they keep out the way, but this young boy had become disorientated and he came down into the village and he met Lilly.

Lilly started to care for him and asked him about his life and she told him about this guy that had changed her life, namely Jesus and this boy became a Christian. At which point he said, "Listen, I need you to come to my tribe and tell them about Jesus." That was a bit more of a challenge. Lilly decides, "I'm calling in reinforcements. I'm calling Pastor Jeff, I'm calling in the team." They rock up like the A-team. They're all coming over to the Mindanao Islands.

The only way they can get into this tribe is with this boy. If that boy ain't there, they're going to go in and get killed. This boy is their ticket in. They go into the tribe, they go through various rituals. You can ask Jeff about it. Monkey brain might be included. They arrive in this tribe, and Jeff and the team start to proclaim the glories of Jesus Christ. The tribal leader starts to have tears running down his face and there and then he puts his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the power of the gospel. Listen, in the Mindanao Islands, Sovereign Grace now has the joy of partnering with 12 churches. That all came from Lilly.

That is the power of the gospel. There is no particular great power in the messenger, but there is great power in the message when it is proclaimed and taught and preached, things take place. It's like a sticky bomb, you never know when it's going to go off, but in the will of God, it can go off. Sometimes, let's be honest, it takes time, doesn't it? How many times do we share the gospel with somebody and you think, "Well, I'm waiting for the power," and nothing seems to happen. Listen, you never know when this is going to go off. It's like sticky bombs. That's why we have to stick as many sticky bombs on unbelievers as we can. Some people are covered in the things, but you never know. You never know when it's going to go off. I remember when I was back in the UK, one of my friends there, he got saved in 1980. He was a teenager at the time, an older teen.

He was hanging around with his friends in a court-- in a graveyard actually. Kind of a UK thing.

Just hanging out with his buddies and doing his thing. It started to rain. He got called, he was quite hungry. He was walking along the street with his friends and he walked past a church and they invited them in and they said, "Look, we got a bit of a thing on and if you want to come here, we'll give you some food and keep you warm and we're going to tell you about Jesus."

He's like, "I don't really want the Jesus thing, but the food sounds good." They all go in as young men into this room and he describes the scene where the guy gets-- he enjoys the food and the guy gets up to tell him about Jesus. He's not really very interested, but thanks for playing. Nothing happened straight away. Two days later as he's driving along in his car, he realizes: Jesus died for me. The bomb went off.

He pulled the car to the side, he kneeled by the side of the car and he gave his life to following the Lord Jesus Christ, because he realized he has saved me by His grace. You never know when the gospel was going to go off, but I can assure you it can go off. It can do great damage in every good way imaginable for the glories of salvation. There is no confidence in our messengers, but there is great confidence in the message. It can change people's lives in a moment. When we gather around this reality, it is encouraging, is it not? Because you look at the world and it just looks yes dark and yes bleak and we can lack confidence. When you realize the confidence isn't in the message, the power of the gospel that's alive and active.

As we declare it and preach it, great things can happen. That news alone should give us a happy place thought. It isn't alone because what Paul helps us see is as we're preaching the gospel, as we're sharing the gospel, as we're letting down the nets of the gospel, it is God then in his providence that brings those fish in. It's all his work. That's my second point, the providence of God. Look with me at verses 26-31, "For consider your calling brothers, not many of you were wise according to worldly standards. Not many were powerful. Not many were of noble birth, but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.

God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God, because of him you are in Christ Jesus who began to us wisdom from God, righteousness, and sanctification of redemption, so that as it is written, let the one who boast, boasts in the Lord. In other reality and truth of God's providential and sovereign grace that is yes evidently on display in those seven verses. It really should serve to make us the most humble and joyful people on the planet, do you not think?

When you realize your calling is all of grace, it should cause us to be amazed with joyful gratitude and humility before the Lord. We should be a happy people. Sovereign Grace is a happy people. Now again, we have people join our church and say, "I didn't know you were reformed." How do you not know? We're called Sovereign Grace Church. When you gather around the joyful

realities of Sovereign Grace, we should be a happy people. JA Packet says it this way. He says, "To know that from eternity, my maker for seeing my sin for loved me and resolved to save me, though it would be at the cost of calvary, to know that the divine son was appointed from eternity to be my savior. Then in love, He became man for me and died for me and now lives to intercede for me and will one day come in person to take me home.

To know that the Lord who loved me and gave himself up for me and who came and preached peace to me through His messages, has by His spirit, raised me from spiritual death to life, giving union and communion with Himself, and has promised to hold me fast and never let me go." Listen, this is knowledge that brings overwhelming gratitude and praise. Oh, how well said that is. Amen, this is knowledge that brings with it overwhelming gratitude and praise. Sovereign Grace, I think we should be the most humble people walking the earth. We should be those coming in on a Sunday morning leading the line, shaking our heads, amazed that we are here it all, we were down the mine, uninterested, hostile.

How did this happen? When you gather around the realities of his providential in Sovereign Grace, we should stand in amazement. You called my name. The greatest thing about us pastors is not that you're a pastor. The greatest thing about you is that He knows your name and He called your name, his pastors, and his wives we should as Christians, be the most grateful people.

You know what you contributed to your salvation, your sin, oh, but faith, that was a gift. It's all Him. Our salvations from start to finish are all of grace. When we gather around the word of God and we spend time in His providential and sovereign grace, we should be the happiest and most humble people around. Likewise, if we are wise, we should almost-- we should also be the most courageous and hope-filled when it comes to the great commission to which we've been called.

Why? Here's why, because consider your calling brothers. You were dead. You were so far down the mine and you had no idea. Once upon a time in your life, you were alienated from God. You were hostile in mind. You were doing evil deeds. You by very nature were a child of wrath. You were dead in your trespasses and sins and you didn't care less. You are blind to it all. Sovereign Grace was not your thing, doing your thing was your thing.

That's why we should never get super irritated with the way the world thinks and operates. We should be humble towards it. Why? Because as were you, you would've been joining him and doing exactly the same thing. Yet in His mercy

and grace, before there was even time, He chose you. Your name was on His mind, and then when the fullness of time had come, he sent forth His son on the greatest rescue mission ever told.

He came and lived a life you didn't live and died your substitutionary death and then rose again in your place. At the right time, He sent forth one of His messengers to preach the gospel to you. In a wonderful moment of mercy and grace and power, boom, He set that thing off in your life. Then He even gave you the gift of faith to respond to him, which makes the call so wonderfully effectual. My friends, the only thing you contribute to your salvation is your sin. Everything else is Jesus. Everything else is the Lord.

If we are wise, we will understand that that is still the way God works today outside this room. As we let down our nets, there will be many others that right now are down the mine but as we declare Christ and Him crucified, He will start bringing those fish up and bring him into those nets. It's not our doing, it's His. He is the one who is at the bottom of it. Oh, listen, what confidence and courage and hope this should bring us, don't you think? We have to declare, but everything else is Him.

Just in closing, how should we respond to this? What do we do with this? Or two things that I want to encourage you in. First of all, pastors, I want to encourage you. I want to encourage you to do all you can to keep preaching Christ and Him crucified. It's the most important thing we do brothers. We must keep preaching Christ and Him crucified. Verse 22, for Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified. A stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Listen, there will be some who God will bring it to your lives, who like Greeks will seek wisdom.

They will be eager then to monopolize your time to talk about culture and worldview and philosophy. They will claim, if we can just keep talking about these things, then maybe I'll be enlightened. Maybe I'll understand. Listen, they are never going to be understanding through that way. It ain't never going to happen. That's through human wisdom. We need to learn there. There'll be others that will come into your lives who like Jews will demand signs. They'll create barriers in their lives and targets and preconditions that God will have to meet if I'm going to believe. Well, God doesn't respond like that.

He's not a genie in a lamp. He is at the center of everything, not us. What we can do and what we must do is preach Christ and Him crucified because as we

preach Christ and Him crucified, this is the gospel that can save people in a moment. You don't need signs, you don't need wisdom, you need Jesus. You can have Jesus through the power of the glorious gospel. When we declare the gospel, it can change people's lives.

Sovereign Grace, we have been taught so well on this for the last 40 years. Have we not? In God's kindness, we have been taught wonderfully well on this very issue. I was around 21 years old when I heard the message, the main thing. This message about keeping the main thing. The main thing. I just remember that's what we got to do. got to keep the main thing. The main thing. I just remember this guy just partially preaching that we got to keep the main thing, the main thing.

I'm like, "What is the main thing?" I learned that night that the main thing is the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. I believed it in my heart. Why? Because the gospel is the main thing. The gospel is that which guards us against legalism and subjectivism and condemnation. The gospel is that which motivates us and causes us to go and unites us in a divided world. The gospel has the power to save. No wonder then our founding generation hit this nail again and again and again and rang the bell again and again and again. Listen, for the next generation heads up. We ain't changing nothing. We've got to keep the main thing, the main thing because the gospel saves people's lives.

The message which we proclaim that our founders taught us goes across all geography, all national boundaries, all cultures, and changes people's lives. We must never move on from the gospel. We must keep preaching it. Pastors, do all you can to keep preaching Christ and Him crucified. Never move on. Can be tempted to move on. Particularly when you see the worldview of those down the mine, never move on. I'm not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God and to salvation for all those who believe. Then secondarily, I want to encourage you pastors and wives, particularly pastors. Do all you can to do the work of an evangelist.

When CJ preached that message, the main thing, it came from 2 Timothy chapter 1. It's where learned about guarding the good deposit, treasuring it, not fumbling it, but keeping it. Then just four chapters on, in [2 Timothy 4:5](#), the apostle cause us to do the work of an evangelist. Passes us what we need to do. We must do the work of an evangelist. What that takes, I believe, is both example and equipping.

See, first off, by way of example, you will never be able to pass on to others something that you don't have yourself. You can't just point the figure and say,

"Hey, everybody else in the church, you need to be a friend of sinners, but I don't know anyone." The truth is, that was my story for many years as a pastor in the United Kingdom. I taught other people to go and tell people about Jesus, and yet I was not doing it myself and I didn't really know I wasn't doing it myself until as a pastoral team, we spent time looking at a book that was all about Jesus friend of sinners. Just by way of application, we just went round the room and it's like, "Hey, how many sinners do you know that don't know Jesus?"

How many people would call you their friend, not just an acquaintance or a neighbor, but they would be a friend?" He got to me and I realized, I don't know any, the church to me was the dearest place on earth and it still is, but that's where the boundary line stopped. I was unaware of all the people out there that were down the mine and unaffected. I would realize in that moment that change needs to happen in my life.

I joined the local PTA, the Parent Teachers Association of the United Kingdom. How does a pastor get to know unbelievers? I became the treasurer. It was terrible, but it was a way of starting to interact with people who didn't know Jesus. It was great because they started to invite us over their homes and we started to have them into our homes.

Then, when I moved to Australia, I started to play soccer again. I started to play football because by very nature that meant I was going to be with 30 unbelievers all the time. Then Emma was coming out and spending time with their wives and their kids were all hanging with their kids every Saturday and every Tuesday night for training. It wasn't going to be possible to tell other people to do something that I wasn't doing myself, and for many years I didn't do that.

Maybe that's your story. Maybe if you're honest, you've found a wonderful haven in the dearest place on earth, but you've forgotten that there are people out there that are down the mine like you used to be. People that we've got to go to, and pastor, if that's your story, I want to encourage you, would grace-motivated change start for you this morning? Grace motivated? Because your salvation is not dependent on how good you are at evangelism.

It isn't that good news for everyone in the room, but it needs to be grace motivated because there are people down the mine and we need to go to them with a gospel that can change their lives in a moment. If we are going to be an example to our flocks, then that starts right here in our life and our model of being a friend of sinners and our model of telling people about Jesus.

Then secondarily, I think we need to also work hard to equip the saints, not just an example as we do the work of an evangelist, but as we equip the saints as well and my friends, it's so important that we do that, isn't it? We're called by God to equip the saints the works of ministry and evangelism is indeed one of those ministries. I'm so grateful, as was said earlier on for Jim Donahue.

So grateful for his example, and I would encourage each of you have Jim Donahue in your church. He can be slightly scary, but he's fine.

He will encourage you greatly. We need people like Jim Donahue, we need others in regions stepping up and realizing we need to be influenced by them. If you didn't hear the breakout session that Jim did yesterday, put it on your list of things you must do as a team to think through and pray through how we're going to apply this in our local churches. We need people like that helping us as local churches.

Then I want to encourage you pastor, at a local church level, you need somebody on point for evangelism. Because if we don't have anybody on point, it's the easiest thing to let it drop. Finding somebody that can be, whether they're full-time, a part-time, a lay, it doesn't matter, but somebody who has that gift towards mission that can influence and inform the team and help us, it's so very important.

For me in Sydney, I have Brandon Willis and he is a wonderful gift of God to me at Sovereign Grace Church of Sydney. He's a wonderful gift of grace because he is modeling this for our church, he is full of examples and equipping. Soon as we got on the plane the other day, I'd been on 30 seconds and Brandon was opposite me over in the far corner. Austin, one of our other guys says, "Oh there he is befriending somebody probably telling them about Jesus." They're like, "Yes, he probably is. He's been on 30 seconds, he's probably already communicating the gospel." That's Brandon for you. He also works hard in our local context to equip the saints to give hours per week to thinking how are we going to help our church mobilizing mission for the glory of God. Listen, you can't have Brandon Willis, because I got Brandon Willis, but you need to find your own Brandon Willis. Find somebody that can give five to eight hours a week, just time to thinking through how can we mobilize this church in evangelism, and together then I want to encourage you to equip the saints for works of ministry. Equip. Teach them what it means to go make disciples of all nations, teach them together the importance and priority of our call to be ambassadors for Christ, teach them to be all things to all men, so that by all means, we may win sermon. Teach them to be in the world but not of the world.

As you teach and equip our churches more than anything else, teach them about God's great power and providence in the mission to which we have been called. It's, as you do that you'll cultivate confidence and courage and hope to go even to people that are now down, down the mine and go, we must. My friends, there are people all around us like Randy Fogel, who are down the mind and yet we carry with us a message that can change their lives in a moment.

Let down your nets through the preaching of the gospel, let down your net, and then let's watch and see what the Lord does, let's pray. Lord, I do thank you for your word. Lord, I do thank you for the way you speak to us so gently and kindly, and yet you nonetheless call us to courage. The courage in which we move forward is all you.

Lord, it is impossible to do this task by ourselves, and yet when we stand firm in you, we can truly say, yet not I, but through Christ in me. May we know your nearness, may we know your grace. May you work in our hearts, and may we go and tell many people about you, and may it all be all for your glory, in Jesus' name amen.