

Living Upon the Truth
I Corinthians 1:17-31 and others
Covenant of Peace Church
October 6, 2018

[1 Corinthians 1:17-31 NASB] 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void. 18 For the word of the cross is foolishness 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 CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE." (Isaiah 29:14) 20 Where is the wise man? 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 through its wisdom did not [come to] know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no man may boast before God.

30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD." (Jeremiah 9:23)

Introduction:

I desire to warn each soul this morning regarding the danger of two obstacles that hinder our effort to live upon the Truth and make obedience to the commands of Christ impossible. Not only do I desire to warn, but to exhort each of us to examine our lives by GOD's Word to see what measure of this poison is affecting our souls. I pray the LORD will grant repentance where necessary, that each of us – that you and I may see the LORD GOD as He is revealed in His Word and not as our culture portrays Him with its constant promotion of low views of Him. These obstacles are idolatry and pragmatism. We will deal mainly with pragmatism, but I must mention idolatry. Where pragmatism exists, there will be idolatry for pragmatism appeals to our idolatrous nature. Often when we think of idolatry our minds are taken back to what we see in the OT – where man by his superstition would set up or carve a vain image for the purpose of worship and we think, "I would never do that". So why would I desire to warn us this morning about idolatry? We are surrounded in our day by idolatry, not by physically fashioning a golden calf, but even worse, by embracing or accepting an inadequate view of GOD.

A distinguishing trait of a congregation that is desperately trying to be biblical is that we apply the doctrine of GOD relentlessly to all other doctrines. Therefore, the doctrine of GOD is the guiding rule which influences all other doctrine in theology. (doctrine is the Truth as the Scripture teaches) Let me explain – confessing Christians are willing to affirm the sovereignty of GOD. His sovereignty has been confessed universally throughout history. However, if you press the doctrine of the LORD GOD's sovereignty into other realms with most professing Christians in our day, most of the time you will find a softening of the truth or a destroying of the truth all together. You will most likely hear a statement like this: "GOD's sovereignty is limited by human freedom". In such a comment the sovereignty of GOD is not absolute and is limited by man and is

a very foolish notion. A high view of man is held to and a low view of GOD is the result. Idolatry and pragmatism are at the center of such statements and beliefs. You see, the Scripture does indeed declare the Creator has given man a measure of freedom, but that freedom is not absolute and man is not autonomous or self-ruling. The LORD GOD is absolutely sovereign and free and man's freedom is always and everywhere limited by His sovereignty. Man's will is not "free" because it is in bondage to and governed by his nature from birth. So how we understand His sovereignty has immense implications toward our understanding of all other doctrine.

Now is a good time to consider a statement by A.W. Tozer, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." and expand it to include the most important thing we communicate to the world around us is what we think of GOD. Think of it this way – what we think of GOD will be glaringly obvious to the world around us by our response to circumstances that arise in every-day life. The question "am I walking in the Spirit or the flesh" will be answered many times a day by what we do. Does what we say we believe align with our responses? Our pragmatism is seen in our wrong responses, in our discontentedness when we complain and murmur about events in our lives meant to conform us to Christ and His likeness. This should cause us to examine our thoughts of Him. Our behavior expresses and reflects our underlying attitudes. What we think of Christ is shown in every response. I am not stating these things that we may be critical of those around us, but that we examine our own lives and cast to the ground any idols or false hopes that we may be clinging to - that we would live upon the truth of who GOD is and preach the Gospel to ourselves, our families, and our neighbors - to all the LORD has placed us around. As believers we have been given the liberty and blessed ministry of reconciliation. **[2 Corinthians 5:18-19 NASB] 18 Now all [these] things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.**

Just as an example of pragmatism showing itself in our wrong thinking that truth is to use for selfish gain: The phrase in the passage we just read "all this is from GOD",

(Paul states many things but, being a new creature is the summary of “all this is from GOD”) will be understood by what we presuppose about GOD’s sovereignty or how we understand the doctrine of GOD. If we hold to a low view of GOD the Scripture will revolve around me and what I can gain. We will wrongly see ourselves as the cornerstone and in all actuality in this condition will be doing what the Scripture declares of those that oppose the Truth. We are rejecting the Cornerstone and Foundation, the One chosen before the foundation of the world to redeem His people by the shedding of His precious blood – the perfect Lamb of GOD without spot or blemish. The essence of idolatry is to think of GOD as He is not by our vain imagination. Here is another word of caution against the greatest form of idolatry in our culture – a refashioning of GOD to look a little more like us.

[Psalm 50:21 NASB] 21 "These things you have done and I kept silence; You thought that I was just like you; I will reprove you and state [the case] in order before your eyes.

But the Truth our minds and hearts must be conformed to by GOD’s mercy and grace is this:

[Isaiah 55:8-9] 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Dr. John Snyder, in his study “Behold Your God” offers a simple yet pointed definition of these dangers:

Idolatry: beholding a lesser god and then presenting that lesser god to people through our words and choices (our deeds and actions)

Pragmatism: choosing what appears to work over obedience because we doubt the sufficiency of GOD

I wish to turn our attention to pragmatism and spend the rest of our time dealing with the truth that Christ is our only Hope dealing with this malady as He is our only Hope.

Pragmatism is grounded in Darwinism and secular humanism. It rejects the notion of absolute right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error. Pragmatism ultimately defines truth as that which is useful, meaningful, or helpful. Ideas that don't seem workable or relevant are rejected as false. So, if you strip away all the jargon and set forth plainly the essence of pragmatism, it is this - truth is to use. Whatever is useful is true for the user, though for someone else it may not be useful, so not true. The truth of any idea is its ability to produce desirable results.

Pragmatism is an American anomaly which was developed as a philosophical tradition in the United States around 1870. This philosophy was developed by Charles Sanders Pierce and popularized by others such as William James and John Dewey. These men were all influential in education and William James was the first to offer a course in psychology in the United States. Even though history credits mostly these men with this evil, pragmatism is as old as man. Pragmatism and idolatry are dreadful sins that show man's rebellion toward GOD. However, these sins as others are an outward expression of underlying root sins. That which lies at the heart of any sin is pride, unbelief, and selfishness. Pride is the lie that we are the most significant beings in the universe and that all things exist for us and our desires. Unbelief is the lie that wrongly informs our minds and hearts that which GOD has told us about Himself and our obligations to Him are doubtful. Unbelief will produce within us the inability to see the maligning power of sin and most importantly the power of the Gospel. Selfishness causes us to believe the lie that we can't be happy apart from getting the things we want; things that the flesh desires.

Therefore, from pride, unbelief, and selfishness flow all other sins. This can be seen in the Fall. Eve engaged in conversation with the serpent instead of fleeing. Adam and Eve then listened to a lie that was contrary to the command and counsel of the LORD GOD which led to Adam's disobedience and to man's demise. Adam's neglect is also seen in that he did not protect his wife. In this account we see pragmatism in practice – we see doing what we deem as right above the Word of GOD. The schemes of the enemy have not changed. He appeals to man's fallen nature – the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life. **[Genesis 3:6] 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she**

took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Our reasoning that does not consider the Word of GOD, will produce the results of unbelief. We will live as if there is no truth in the fact that our enemy is a murderer from the beginning and there is no truth in him, that he is a thief that comes to steal, kill, and destroy. What Adam and Eve thought of GOD was conveyed in their actions.

I must point out the goodness and mercy of GOD in the Fall. In this account of rebellion, GOD in His goodness and mercy shows us the Gospel. He gave the promise of Christ that would come to honor the Father, to rescue His people, and to destroy the works of the devil. Just as Adam and Eve's attempt in covering their own sin with fig leaves is further rebellion; we see the truth in the first three chapters of the Epistle to the Romans that man has no righteousness apart from Christ. The Father shed blood that Adam and Eve would be covered just as you and I must be covered by the perfect righteousness of Christ.

There is a legitimate measure of pragmatism in common sense. If a dripping faucet works fine after you replace the washers, it is reasonable to assume that bad washers were the problem. Such a simple pragmatic reality is self-evident. Our dilemma comes when pragmatism is used to make judgments about right and wrong. When it becomes a guiding philosophy of life and ministry, it inevitably clashes with Scripture. Spiritual and biblical truth is not determined by testing what works and what doesn't. We know from Scripture, for example, that the gospel often does not produce a positive response. Look with me again at verses 22 and 23 from our main text.

[1 Corinthians 1:22-23 NASB] 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,

On the other hand, Satanic lies and deception can be quite effective. Listen as I read from GOD's Word regarding this truth.

[2 Corinthians 4:3-4 NASB] 3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this

world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

And prosperity is no measure of truthfulness –

[Job 12:6 NASB] 6 "The tents of the destroyers prosper, And those who provoke God are secure, Whom God brings into their power.

In summary, pragmatism as a guiding philosophy is fundamentally flawed and as a test of truth is nothing short of satanic. The Word teaches us over and over to die to self, to put to death the flesh. If we are not living upon the truth of GOD's Word and by His grace putting to death the old nature, then we can be assured of being subjected to death by the old nature.

Nature of man:

Why is man so given to idolatrous thoughts of the One True GOD and pragmatism? It is our nature. If a person has been rescued from GOD's wrath and reconciled to Him through Christ, it is the old nature that we struggle against. If you are apart from Christ it is your only nature and there is no real struggle.

This truth, the doctrine of man, when presented biblically, presents a deep black canvas in which the glory, splendor, might, and holiness of Christ is more clearly seen. Man's depravity, his hopeless state apart from Christ, is that backdrop that illumines the preeminence of Christ for those who are being saved and is foolishness to those that are perishing as we just read from our text in I Corinthians verse 18 **[1 Corinthians 1:18 NASB] 18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**

Most of us are familiar with this truth of the doctrine of man. I have learned and am learning that just because we are familiar with a truth or know the truth does not mean that we do not need to be reminded often. This is the same principle of preaching the Gospel to ourselves daily. If we are not resting in the Truth of the Gospel our minds will be taken captive with concerns of the world and our hearts poisoned with bitterness.

Pragmatism is worldliness, worldliness in the church brings about disunity and disunity in the church is a result of forgetting the Gospel. This is why we must be constantly reminded of the good news. We must by our LORD's mercy and grace view and live all of life in accord with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

By GOD's design there are certainties in nature. Nature is insufficient to such a work as conversion and regeneration which shows that man may not idolize his own cleverness and ability. Men may dress themselves in momentary morality by their own strength, but a change to the contrary grace is supernatural. Regeneration or being born again is completely a work of GOD. As believers we are more like the butterfly than the chameleon. You see the butterfly is actually transformed, that is there are real changes. The unbeliever or the false believer is more like a chameleon. He or she can change colors temporarily to fit into their current environment.

Natural inclinations never change, but by some superior virtue. A magnet will not cease to draw iron. The wolf can never love the lamb nor the lamb the wolf. Water moistens and fire burns. So likewise, the corrupt nature of man being possessed with an enmity that is contrary to GOD will never allow him to submit to GOD. **[Romans 8:7 NASB] 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able [to do so,]**

A man by his own power cannot be contrary to his nature. Man's nature apart from Christ is set plainly before us in GOD's Word.

[Romans 3:10-18 NASB] 10 as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; 11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; 12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." 13 "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS"; 14 "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS"; 15

"THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, 16 DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, 17 AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN." 18 "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

The quandary of the sinner by nature is that he is unwilling and incapable of saving himself. He is dead in his trespasses and sins. Nothing in the world can raise itself to a higher rank of being than that which nature has placed it; a spark cannot make itself a star, nor a plant endue itself with sense, nor an animal adorn itself with reason; nor a man make himself an angel. A thorn bush cannot produce grapes, nor thistles produce figs because such fruits are above the nature of those plants. So, neither can our corrupt nature bring forth grace, which is a fruit above it. Grace being more excellent than nature means that it cannot be the fruit of nature.

The dilemma of pragmatism:

Look at the price that will be paid for pragmatism. **[Jeremiah 17:5-10 NASB]**
5 Thus says the LORD, "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, And whose heart turns away from the LORD. 6 "For he will be like a bush in the desert And will not see when prosperity comes, But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, A land of salt without inhabitant. 7 "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD And whose trust is the LORD. 8 "For he will be like a tree planted by the water, That extends its roots by a stream And will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, And it will not be anxious in a year of drought Nor cease to yield fruit. 9 "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? 10 "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds. Pragmatism as a result of pride, unbelief, and

selfishness will lead men away from the holiness that Christ demands of the believer. They will live in the parched places of the wilderness – that is apart from Christ.

Walk through the text I Corinthians 1:17-31

In the main text we read together this morning (I Corinthians 1:17-31) we can see the disparity of man's perceived wisdom compared with the wisdom of GOD. Paul is not being contrary to the Great Commission by his statement that he was not sent to baptize. He is saying that the Gospel and the right preaching of the Gospel is paramount. He is correcting the church at Corinth because of their division. They were separating themselves by who they followed or who baptized them. Here we see pragmatism at work. I stated this earlier, but it bears repeating. Pragmatism is worldliness, worldliness in the church brings about disunity and disunity in the church is a result of forgetting the Gospel.

The cross is foolish (worthy of indignance, hatred, and wrath) to men who are perishing because it is not of their making or design. The Gospel is disagreeable to carnal man. It is never well received by the man who is wise and learned according to worldly standards. On the other hand, the Gospel is the means that GOD has ordained for conversion and is a comfort to the distressed soul that is called to salvation.

The wisdom of the wise, man's own reason apart from Christ is pragmatism and the LORD GOD has destroyed that wisdom in the cross of Christ. Consider the account of Paul's presenting the Gospel to the Areopagus. His spirit was provoked by the city being full of idols. Paul could have been pragmatic in his dealing with the people in Athens. He could have reasoned that there was no need to preach Christ and Him crucified because they were so steeped in paganism and idolatry. Instead he preached Christ in the synagogue and in the marketplace every day. He had discussions and reasoned with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers that would listen to him. He was ridiculed and accused of babbling and being a preacher of false divinities. He was taken before the Areopagus which was a council made up of retired archons. An archon was one of the nine chief magistrates in ancient Athens. The Areopagus was a court that exercised the right of capital punishment. The Areopagus saw that the laws in force were observed and executed by the proper authorities. It could bring officials to trial for their acts while in office. The Areopagus also protected the worship of the false gods,

the sanctuaries and sacred festivals. It supervised the religious sentiments of the people, the moral conduct of the citizens, as well as the education of the youth. Without waiting for a formal accusation the Areopagus could summon any citizen to court, examine, convict and punish him. So understand, Paul was not simply speaking with a group of philosophers. He was before a court that could exercise authority and justice however it saw fit. Paul stood in the midst of this council and other citizens of Athens as an audience and proclaimed Christ. He made known to them GOD as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. He made known to them His sovereignty over all of creation and each one of them. He admonished them for their idolatry and proclaimed that they ought not to think of the One true GOD as being like gold, silver, stone, or any image formed by the art and imagination of men. He tells them that the time of GOD 's displeasure in them and of His overlooking them and leaving them to themselves was over. Paul gave them the command to repent – to turn from their idolatry, from their love of the creation and the world and to turn to Christ and place their whole trust in Him to be saved. He warned them of a day that has been appointed for all men to stand before Christ to be judged. He preached the resurrection as assurance that these things are certain. The word of the cross was seen as folly to some – to those that were perishing, but their wisdom was destroyed. The Gospel – the good news that Christ takes upon Himself the wrath the we deserve and imparts His righteousness earned by keeping the whole law of GOD, that we have no hope of keeping, to those whom He will save and is saving was received as the power and wisdom of GOD. For that day, that which only GOD can do was done. Some walked off Mars Hill believing. Praise GOD! If you are a believer the same thing has been done in you! Christ is our wisdom from GOD, our righteousness, our sanctification and our redemption.

Our need to examine our souls and live upon the Truth:

[Romans 12:1-2 NASB] 1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, [which is] your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

How do we test that we may discern what is the will of God and that which is good and acceptable and perfect? Do we look for measurable external results? Should we measure God's blessing to us by visible results such as growth in attendance, larger offerings, bigger buildings, more church activities, and the list could continue on. Is there anything inherently wrong with growing in number? Absolutely not! The question becomes "how are we growing"? Did we resort to methods that are unbiblical and appeal to the lost as entertainment or did the LORD GOD grow His church by His faithfulness as we by His grace stayed true to His Word and preached the Gospel? The greater result than numbers is to see the Word of GOD take root in the souls of His people and cause change. Change that honors Christ, that shows His strength and is evidenced by a new nature that He has given. This changed life will appeal to some and be a poke in the eye to others. It will be a sweet aroma to the brethren and the stench of death to the rebellious. This change will look like what we see in the first two verses of Romans chapter 12. This person will be more and more presented as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to GOD. There will be less and less of himself or herself; the world will be less and less appealing, and the appetite will be greater for Christ, for His Word, for His presence. This testing so that we may discern will be done by the truth of GOD's Word.

Flesh vs Spirit – We must be very careful to make sure that we are really walking in the Spirit. We must not evaluate our spiritual life only on the basis of our external performance. We should evaluate our spiritual life on the basis of our trust in the LORD as evidenced by how we handle the Word of GOD, our own personal prayer life, our desire to hear the preaching of His Word, our desire to be obedient to His Word, our desire to serve our LORD, one another, and the lost. If we are neglecting the Word of GOD and prayer, we are not in an active state of trusting GOD. If our appetite is not toward the means of grace GOD has given us to grow in Christ, there is a need of repentance. The self-sufficient man doesn't pray for he has no need to pray. He does not seek to do the will of GOD from the Word of GOD. He just does what he wants; even if it appears to be the right thing.

[Matthew 5:1-12 NASB] 1 When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. 2 He opened His mouth and [began] to teach them, saying, 3 "Blessed are

the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. 7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. 8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. 9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. 10 "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when [people] insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. 12 "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Blessed – fortunate, happy, free from daily cares and worries, enjoying spiritual happiness and the favor of GOD.

Are you a living sacrifice or are the concerns of this world consuming you? Are you poor in spirit living with the realization of your own wretchedness and need for Christ? In this brokenness, do you take joy that you are a citizen in the kingdom of heaven? Do you mourn over sin and is Christ comforting you? Or are you running from Christ? Are you meek? That is soft, gentle, and not easily provoked? Are you yielding and given to forbearance under injury? Are you submissive to Christ and His law? Or is the opposite consistently true of you? Are you proud, self-serving, self-sufficient, and complaining? Do you thirst and hunger for Christ and His righteousness? Is He satisfying you? Are you showing and receiving mercy? Has Christ made and making you pure in heart? Do you consistently walk in the peace that has been made by the blood of Christ upon the cross? As one who has received this peace made by Christ; are you showing this fruit of the Spirit to those around you? Are you concerned to reconcile others by proclaiming the Gospel of Christ regardless of the cost?

Closing appeal to the Believer:

It is good for us to be wise regarding obstacles, hindrances, and our enemy, but how bleak a message that is apart from the Gospel, apart from the grace and strength of our Great High Priest. If we simply looked at the exalted demands of our LORD for His people without the intercession of Christ; we would be left battered and broken. I am not speaking against being broken hearted over sin or being poor in spirit. We may stay there for a time, but rest assured whatever the Savior does in our lives, it is best for His glory and our good. It is meant to change our hearts and minds to greater and greater Christ-likeness. When our duty to Christ is made known, and He is publicly proclaimed from the pulpit, when He is impressed upon our lives through the preaching of His Word earnestly and prayerfully there will be times of difficulty. Remember, we have not been called to a life of ease, but one of submission and faithfulness to Christ and His commands. We will not always feel good about ourselves. At times we will be brought low by the preaching of Christ and Him crucified. We will at times see ourselves as the least worthy sinner who ever crawled on the earth. We will be brought to the point of being broken and weeping over our sin. When we are pointed to Christ, we will not only hear of our privileges and blessings, but our responsibilities and obligations will be pressed upon our soul. We will be humbled as well as lifted up. We will often mourn before we rejoice. You will be called to walk in the steps of the crucified Jesus as a faithful servant and be brought back into the way when you stray. This is difficult – it goes against the flesh. However, I plead with you to see the blessing of such difficulty. I have often stated and I often pray that our LORD will cause us to run to Him and cast ourselves fully upon Him in all circumstances. Our first reflex upon being confronted with difficult truth is to flee. I know my own tendencies and it may be seen as repetitive to pray this way, but HE is our great need every moment. It is never enough to just know what our LORD has commanded. Our personal holiness, our sanctification, our being made into the image of Christ is not possible apart from abiding in Him. We often comfort one another with the fact that GOD is sovereign and we should definitely find His sovereignty comforting. But, do we fall short on making known that HE is loving, kind, that HE is good to infinite degrees that we can't comprehend.

[Ephesians 2:4-7 NASB] 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in

our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Oh, that we would see, understand, and live upon His rich mercy, this great love with which He loves us, that He has resurrected our dead souls to life in Him, that He has lavished His grace upon us in saving us, He has placed us with Him in the heavenly realm, and that we are that visible representation of His immeasurable grace and kindness. – that we would live upon Him! And remember this truth - **[1 Corinthians 4:2 NASB] 2 In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.** We are not to be concerned with success, but with faithfulness.

Closing appeal to the unbeliever:

If the LORD in his mercy has shown you that you are apart from Christ and that you remain in Adam, that is you remain with the wrath of GOD resting upon you, I plead with you to repent and believe the Gospel. I plead with you to trust Christ completely and fully for salvation. Run to Christ. I want to assure you that the elders, as well as the men and women of this congregation who will walk with you. This is a place that you will not be looked down upon and ridiculed. Don't neglect your own soul. There is not a man or woman in this building that can save you, but we can point you to Christ, pray for and with you, and walk with you. If you stay to yourself, you will be placing yourself where the enemy is most effective. When you are alone Satan is most effective with his lies. Know that GOD gives us moments to repent and that He will not contend with you forever. There is a time that GOD will no longer deal with you. If you close off and refuse this mercy, each time you do, it will become easier and your heart will be further hardened.

Let's pray.