

The Cross-Centered Life: Faith & Repentance

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Preacher: Aaron Hoak

[0:00] Well, as believers, there are many things that are true for us. Things that are real. Some of those realities are that we are participants in the divine nature.

! We're born again. We're new creations. We have a new heart. We have been crucified with Christ and He lives in us. We're a temple of the Holy Spirit.

And as we just noted in our memory verse, we have everything that we need for life and for godliness. And that's awesome. Those are heavy truths, but they're blessed ones.

If you're a Christian today, all of those things I just said are true of you. That is the reality in your life. You are no longer what you once were. And so given those facts, then we should be set.

We should be good to go as Christians in this world. We shouldn't need a book like this one, how people change. Because we should have already made so much progress in our sanctification and becoming like Christ.

[1:01] If it's true that we have everything we need, then we should be living the way we ought. If we're new creations in Christ, we should be living like new creations.

Well on our way to likeness to Christ. But the other reality is that we're not nearly as far along in our sanctification as these things might indicate we should be.

Our authors say the reality of this great new life bumps up against the present reality where sin is all around us. And the remnants of sin remain in us as well. And you know that struggle.

I'm a new creature, then why do I still do the things that the old man once did? Why do I still fight against that? You know how those two realities clash. The great truths that we've noted and the reality that we still fight with sin.

How can we deal with those two competing realities in our lives? We've been considering a couple weeks ago how we're dead. I've been crucified with Christ.

[2:05] And I no longer live. But Christ lives in me. And the life I live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved Him and gave Himself for me. We consider that reality that we're dead to what we once were.

Christ is now living in us. And we want to think about that today with respect to faith and repentance. Or repentance and faith. Whichever word you like them in.

But we must have both. Faith fixes our eyes on the truth. Who we are in Christ. What He has done for us. We are new creations. Repentance acknowledges that we still struggle with sin.

That we still have that fight going on. And so you have to have both repentance and faith throughout your life if you want to be growing in grace and becoming like Christ. And so we want to focus today on a cross-centered life.

A life of repentance and faith. We'll talk first about why we need it. And we talk about a cross-centered life. We're not just talking about the death of Christ, but really everything that He has done and is doing.

[3:04] His incarnation, His life, His suffering, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His intercession for us, His coming again. When we say cross-centered life, that's shorthand for everything that Christ has done for us.

Our life must be centered on His. And we summarize that by saying cross-centered. You remember where we are in the big picture. There's heat. There's pressure in our lives that causes us to struggle.

And then the thorns. A thorny heart and thorny behavior is our typical response out of the old sinful nature that remains when we face the heat. But to correct that, we need the cross.

And that's where we are today. We're trying to be cross-centered so that when the heat comes, instead of producing thorns, we produce fruit. And fruit will be the last thing that we consider.

And as we talk about being cross-centered, we want to begin by talking about the Holy Spirit today. The Holy Spirit is the one that does the work of focusing on Christ.

[4:03] And we want to talk about His importance just for a moment so that we don't slight the third person of the Trinity as we focus on Christ. Christ dwells in us and He does so by His Spirit.

And our authors say the Holy Spirit enables us to see Jesus in all that we have and are in Him. It's the Spirit that enables us to remain focused on Christ. He opens our eyes to understand the Word of God.

And what is this Word about? Well, it's about Christ. And so it's the Spirit that enables us to see Christ here. Christ dwelling in us by His Spirit. A couple of verses to remind us of that.

You don't need to turn there, but 1 Corinthians 2, we read that no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

For who has known the mind of the Lord that He may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ. You see, the Spirit reveals to us the very mind of Christ showing us the wisdom of God revealed in a person.

[5:09] Jesus is the wisdom of God. The Spirit reveals that to Him. And so we're dependent upon the Holy Spirit if we're to live a life that's centered on Christ. He makes us to know the mind of Christ.

Or Jesus Himself, on the last night He was with His disciples before He was betrayed, as He's talking with them in the upper room, He tells them about the Spirit who's going to come and help them.

And He says in John 16, 13, but when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own. He will speak only what He hears.

And He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is Mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is Mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is Mine and make it known to you.

And so if we're to live a life focused on Christ, we must have the work of the Spirit in us to make Him known to us. And this quote is on your handout.

[6:09] It is so important to understand the Spirit's ongoing work. He connects our hearts and minds to Jesus and all He has done for us. The Holy Spirit comes to help us to live cross-centered lives.

And so we must pray for the ongoing, increasing influence of the Spirit in our lives. You can't live a cross-centered life unless you're indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Unless you have His daily help to point you to the cross, to point you again and again to Jesus. So we just want to lay that foundation before we dig deeper into thinking about a cross-centered life that you can't have that unless you have that third person of the Trinity dwelling in you.

Let's talk for a moment about our identity. How do you know if you're living a cross-centered life? You can learn a lot by the way you answer the question that people might often ask you.

Who are you? There's different ways to answer the question who are you? And if you're living in dependence upon the Spirit to point you to Christ, it'll show up in who you think you are.

[7:13] So who are you? How do you answer that question? Or how do people commonly answer the question who are you? Okay, a sinner saved by grace. You've got your identity straight.

That's good. That's the answer it should be. I'm a Christian, a follower of Christ. That's a cross-centered life. What are some other responses that don't reflect that cross-centeredness always?

Who are you? What do you do, Billy? Okay, excellent. You define yourself that way. Right, I'm Ryan's dad. I'm the father of four crazy children actually. But yeah, we think in those terms.

Good. How else do you answer that question? Who are you? Okay. By your nationality, your statehood, where you're from. Okay.

Good. How else? Dare. Okay. Your occupation. I'm a mom. Or any of the things you said. Or any other occupation. Good. Anything else? Jason.

[8:09] They define themselves by their circumstances and what has happened to them. I was abused as a child. And that's their identity. That's who they are. That's all they have to hold on to.

I'm a recovering alcoholic. Others respond based on their present struggles. I'm a person who struggles with depression. I have OCD. That's their identity.

That's who they are. And we can't ignore or minimize the reality of any of those responses. Those things all very well may be true. But there's something more foundational that Lou hit on right away. A sinner saved by grace. How do you find your identity? When you look at your life what does it revolve around? What do you think of first when you think of who you are? Do you think first and foremost I'm a Christian?

I'm a follower of Christ. A sinner saved by grace. Or do you think of all these other things and oh in addition to that I'm a Christian too. That fits in somewhere in here. Instead we should be those who are new creatures in Christ who also happen to be a teacher or a mother or a recovering alcoholic or a person who struggles with depression and so on.

[9:18] First and foremost we are Christians. That's our identity. So just ask yourself how do you think about yourself? How do you think about who you are? And part of the problem is what we've been saying all along in this book and I think it bears repeating that there's a gap in the way that we apply the gospel to our lives as Christians.

We're very good at applying it at the beginning. I need forgiveness for sins. I need to get started on this Christian life and Jesus is good for that. At the beginning we recognize our need of the Savior. And we need Him to get to heaven but for the present life and a life that's pleasing to God and a life that's centered on Christ we don't do that. We don't often center our lives on Christ and think about Him and how His work applies to the right now.

Our lives should not be Christ saved me and now I have to get myself through this life. Now there's a part for us to play we have to work hard at our sanctification. That's true.

It requires great effort. We wouldn't be studying this book if we didn't think we had some work to do in sanctification. But notice the quote on your handout there under the problem the gospel gap.

[10:31] You are never to minimize your continuing need for the mercy and power of Christ in the process of becoming like Him. And to make the point I want you to listen to an example of someone who's made this error.

They began well trusting in Christ but then they turned and focused on themselves instead of on Christ. And it's an extended example from the book but it's a story and I think it will be easy to follow along and see if you don't see yourself here.

Or at least something of yourself here. This is how many Christians live the Christian life. Consider Andy who became a Christian five years ago. For the first three years Andy woke up early every morning to pray and read his Bible for an hour.

He faithfully sought out fellowship with other Christians and shared his new faith regularly. But for the past two years Andy has struggled with guilt. He's grown distant from his Christian friends and lost his incentive to talk to others about Christ.

In addition Andy has begun to struggle with overeating. Occasionally he will visit internet shopping sites and buy needless items online. He says it picks him up when he is down. In other words Andy has slipped back into habits that dominated him before he became a Christian.

[11:41] Andy's friends say that his problems started about the same time he missed his first quiet time. Excuse me. Therefore Andy has redoubled his efforts to read his Bible and pray but it just doesn't seem the same.

The Bible seems dull and his mind wanders when he prays. What has gone wrong? Most would conclude like Andy's friends that he has grown lazy and that he's not using the things God has provided to help him grow.

The Bible, prayer, fellowship, ministry and service and it's true these are factors that have contributed to Andy's slow downward spiral. But Andy's problem is much deeper than that.

In fact his problem started long before he missed his first quiet time. What happened is that Andy lost sight of his need for the cross of Christ almost as soon as he became a Christian. If you had known Andy during the first three years of his Christian life when he was faithfully engaging in the basic Christian disciplines you would have met a confident and impatient man who rebuked others for struggling with their personal devotions or witnessing.

Although Andy had come to Christ for salvation acknowledging that he was lost and without hope except for the mercy of Christ he quickly began to live as if progress in the Christian life was all up to him.

[12:54] Jesus got me in and I have to do the rest was Andy's functional identity. It's all up to me. For the first three years he was proud because he was working hard to grow. He saw very little need for the cross of Christ because he had already been forgiven.

His sense of acceptance before God had quickly shifted from what Christ had done for him to what he was doing for Christ. Because he was successful he tended to be self-righteous, judgmental towards those less disciplined and defensive when criticized.

In the last two years the external behaviors have changed but the problem is the same. Instead of being proud of his righteous efforts Andy is ashamed, guilty, depressed at times, easily attracted by old temptations.

He feels like a failure because he can no longer keep up the routine. What is Andy's real problem? In both phases of his Christian life the work of Christ on the cross was radically minimized by Andy's own efforts.

The first three years evidenced a Christless activism that produced pride and self-sufficiency. While this may not appear that bad on the outside it is as dangerous as Andy's recent behavior of Christless passivity which has produced guilt, depression, and a host of bad habits.

[14 : 06] The sad fact is that Andy is typical of many believers who begin the Christian life with a clear understanding of their need for Christ but quickly lose sight of how central Christ must be throughout it.

If Andy had kept the cross central in those first three years it would have reminded them that anything good was the result of the grace of Christ working in him. He could have also handled his failures over the past two years because the cross would have reminded him that Christ had given him a new identity and a safe place to honestly deal with his sin.

Do you know anybody like that? Do you know yourself to be like that? The extent of your Christian life is checking off a certain number of things and saying, well, I read my Bible today, I prayed today, and so I'm a good Christian.

We encourage you often around here to read your Bible and to pray. But we don't do it so that you can say that you've checked it off your list of things to do and to be able to say, oh, I'm a good Christian because I did those things.

We do that because, again, the subject of this book is Christ. And without Christ, you can't get through your day. You can't honor God. You can't live a life of holiness and faithfulness, a life of resisting temptation.

[15 : 16] That's why we point you to this book because it's the resource that points you to Christ. You need the Spirit, as we said, dwelling in you to help you understand this Word. Your prayers, your lifeline to God where you make your requests known to Him.

It's not your self-righteousness that earned you favor with God. It's you expressing your dependence upon Him. And so, do you depend on your holiness, your devotions, your obedience to find you favor with God?

You depend on those things as a source of your comfort rather than on Christ. Many people miss by focusing on their own efforts or their own shortcomings. They're not doing all the things like he was in the second two years of his life.

And all you can see are all the failures. And you say, well, I'm not being a very good Christian. And you're not going back to the cross to find forgiveness and grace to live as we ought. And so, we need Christ right now.

Not just at the beginning. Not just at the end. But every day. And so, instead of living a cross-less life, we need to live a cross-centered life. How do we do that?

[16 : 22] How do we lead that life? Number two on your outline, the quote there, how do you avoid leading a cross-less life? The answer is found in moment by moment faith and repentance.

Faith keeps us laying hold of the grace and mercy of Christ and thereby avoiding despair.

Repentance keeps us facing our ongoing struggle with sin and thereby avoiding pride.

There's these two realities we talked about at the beginning. We look by faith to Christ and what He has done and is doing and will do for us. We're new creatures. We keep looking to Him. That's the faith part and repentance.

We deal with the ongoing struggle with sin in our lives. Something we try to emphasize when we interview new members here in our membership class that repentance and faith aren't a one-time deal. They don't just get you into the kingdom of heaven and then you're done with that for the rest of your life.

Oh, I repented. Oh, I believed. Back at the beginning, that's when I became a Christian. That's true, but you need to repent and believe right now. You need to repent and believe every day of your life if you're going to stay focused on Christ and His cross.

[17:29] And here we see why. These things focus our attention on Christ and they point away from us. Repentance says, I don't have anything good to bring to God.

Faith says, Christ has everything that I need. And so, first of all, faith. Seeing who we are in Christ. Looking at ourselves and our sin can be discouraging.

It can be depressing. Which is why we have to remember what Christ has done. Turn with me to 1 John. 1 John. We'll look at chapter 2 to begin with. 1 John is a letter, a book of the Bible that's known for helping Christians to examine themselves.

It's the fruit leg of the three-legged stool of assurance. When we're looking to know whether or not we're a Christian and to be confident of it, one of the things that we should be looking for is, is there fruit in my life?

And 1 John helps you to do that. If you love me, you'll keep my commandments. And it shows us what that should look like in our lives. But 1 John is more than that.

[18:32] In this little letter that's known for self-examination are found the truths that make the self-examination possible. I can look for sin in my life without fear because of the prospect of taking it back to the cross, because of who we are in Christ.

And John tells us about that too. He doesn't just say look for the sin in your life. He tells us why we can do it. Look at the things that are true of us in 1 John 2. The first few verses.

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense. Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. And not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world. So John says, you need to examine yourself. You need to see if there's fruit. You need to be living a holy life.

But if you do sin, he understands that you're still going to struggle with sin. If and when you do sin, you're not hopeless. It's not, try really harder. It says, we have one who speaks to the Father.

[19:36] We have an advocate. We have Christ Himself who is crucified. You see, John doesn't just make us look at ourselves. He has us look at Christ. Christ. So that when we look at ourselves, we're not filled with shame and despair and guilt.

We're filled with hope because of what we have in Christ. He pleads for us before God. He says, I've already suffered the punishment for that sin. It would be unjust to punish Him again for it.

And so he's our advocate before God. John also shows us what else Christ has done for us in allowing us to be adopted in 1 John 3 or making it possible for us to be adopted.

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.

Dear friends, now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.

[20:38] Everyone who has this hope in himself purifies himself just as He is pure. You see, we're right with God. We have this advocate, Jesus, before the Father. But God doesn't leave it in the courtroom.

He brings us right into the family room. And through the work of Christ makes us to be His very own children. We share in the inheritance. It's a remarkable privilege that's been purchased for us by Christ.

And faith fixes our eyes on this unchanging truth. And with that foundational truth, then we do. We want to be like our elder brother, Jesus. And so we do purify ourselves.

And so we're pursuing likeness to Christ, but it's because we have faith in Him. Because of what He's done for us. Notice the quote there. The order is essential. I am a new creation, accepted, adopted, and free.

Therefore, I want to please God. We do not say, I will try to please God so that I may become a new creation, make myself acceptable, and hope that God adopts me and sets me free. The order is vital there.

[21:40] The work of God always comes first. And if it's true of us, then we will purify ourselves. It's another reminder that, too, that we're children of God here, that the change that's taking place is a community project.

You're not the only child of God. We've got brothers and sisters all around you to help you on that road to holiness. Each of us children of God. And so when we keep these truths before us, we can deal honestly and boldly with our sin as we discover it in our lives.

Looking to see where we're not like Christ. We see our sin, but we can repent of it knowing that Christ is there. God there to forgive us through the work of Christ.

So, faith fixes our eyes on these things that are true. Now turn over with me to Luke, the Gospel of Luke in chapter 15. I want to talk for a few moments about repentance.

Here's this competing reality of sin in our lives. And the story of the lost or the prodigal son gives us a picture of repentance. It's not really the point of the story.

[22:47] The point of the story is the older son, the self-righteous older son, like the self-righteous Pharisees at the beginning and teachers of the law who thought they were better than everyone else. That's the point of the parable.

But in it, we get this picture of repentance. Beautiful picture of it. And we're not going to read it. You know the story of the prodigal son. But notice just three elements of genuine repentance that we see here.

And the first is waking up in awareness to our sin. Verse 17, you can see it. He's in the pig's thigh. You know, his money's at an end.

He doesn't have any friends anymore. And when he came to his senses, he said, how many of my father's hired men have food to spare and here I am starving to death. And in repentance, you need to come to your senses.

You need to wake up. It might involve the need to stop blaming other people or blaming your circumstances for your sin and seeing that the problem is you. It's your sinful heart.

[23:45] It's your sinful desires. It's your sinful behavior that's the problem. You need to see your need for God and to be known by Him and to know Him. And there may be some signs in your life that you're waking up to your sin.

When you begin to see how serious it is and you don't treat it as flippantly as you once did, maybe the light's coming on. You're becoming aware of your sin. And temporary pleasures begin to lose their attraction.

Don't just blow that off. Realize that God is opening your eyes to the seriousness of your sin. You become more aware of wasted time. When you pick up the Bible, it begins to make more sense and it becomes more relevant.

It already was relevant, but you begin to see its relevance. And you begin seeing how your desires and your heart are driving your behavior. That's God waking you up to your sin.

That's part of repentance. You've got to be aware of the problem. So you wake up and then you own up. Verse 18. I will set out and go back to my Father and say to Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against You.

[24:49] This owning up to your sin, you're confessing it to God. It involves godly, true sorrow. 2 Corinthians 7:10. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret.

But worldly sorrow brings death. And the quote on your handout there about worldly sorrow is only sorry that you were caught or that you failed to live up to your own standards and potential or that you're experiencing the consequences of your sin.

Worldly sorrow is self-centered while godly sorrow focuses on how God was offended and others were hurt. Worldly sorrow produces tears of self-pity but godly sorrow produces tears of true humility.

So we wake up, we see our sin, we're truly sorry for it and it sends us running to God in repentance, confessing our sin, owning it before Him. We begin to see the sin beneath the sin.

Seeing what's in the heart that's driving, that's the thorny heart behind the thorny behavior. You begin to see how you violated commands 1, 2, and 3 which led to breaking commands 4 through 10.

[26:00] You see that. You pray that God would give you new desires. You see where good created things have become more important to you than the Creator who gave you them. And you seek by grace to lay those things aside and return them to the proper place and worship only God.

And you repent not only of your sin, the things that you've done that are obvious breaking of God's law, the prodigal son had plenty of that, but you also repent of your supposed righteousness, the things that you were doing to try to earn favor with God.

Or you repent of the way you were doing them. This was harder in some respects. It's identifying what we do that shows that we're self-righteous and in love with ourselves rather than Christ.

This was Andy. The problem he had. His Bible reading, his prayer, and his evangelism, all good things to do, but we repent of self-righteously clinging to them as a way to maintain favor with God. And so we begin to see all of these things. It's not just the obvious outward sinful behavior, but the heart behind it. The good things that we do for the wrong reasons. We lay those things, we own those before God and seek His forgiveness.

[27 : 18] And then a shift of weight in receiving the Father's welcome. Look at verse 20. So he got up and he went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him.

And he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son opens his eyes and sees what the father has for him is way better than what he's been pursuing. There's this shift of focus. All his attention has been pursuing his sin, pursuing what he wants, what his desires say that he needs. And now his eyes are opened and he's confessed and he goes back and he wants more what the Father has to offer than what this world has to offer.

So there's this shift. And on the handout there, when you admit the depth of your sin and repent as the prodigal son did, the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit gets increasingly attractive.

The false identities and idols that were once so alluring lose their appeal. And so instead of running away from God, you run to Him. You cling to Him. You see your sin for the pigsty that it is.

[28 : 24] And you go embrace your Father. Because of what the Son has done for us at the cross, focusing on being cross-centered here today, we can face our sin and take it to God. We can not be afraid when we examine ourselves and we find sin there.

We take it right back to the cross. We say, I want to be done with that, God. Anything you have is better than what I've been pursuing over here. And so we repent. I want to close with two examples. One, a self-centered life and the other, a cross-centered life in this world in which we live. And these are from the book and see which one you more closely relate to.

And the author is talking about how he loves comfort. And he's talked about this before, but I think it's a helpful way to look at the things we've talked about.

There's these realities. We're new creatures in Christ. We need to keep our faith focused upon Christ and what He's done. And yet, here's this indwelling sin. And we need to be repenting of that. Here's two scenarios.

[29 : 28] The first one is where he's focused on himself. I like comfort. No, I love comfort. After a hard day's work, I head from home looking forward to a nice, quiet time to rest and relax.

The heat of my life prompts me to want a time of respite from life's cares. Now, there is nothing wrong with comfort. God wove the blessing of rest and leisure into the fabric of His creation.

God Himself rested on the seventh day. But as I am marinating in the prospect of comfort, something happens. My heart begins to morph along the lines of Romans 1.25.

Something good becomes an object of worship, replacing the only true God in my heart. I don't just think about enjoying a good day, a good thing. I begin to feel entitled to it.

After all, haven't I worked hard all day? I deserve a break. I treasure it and meditate on it. By the time I pull into my driveway, I've already been seduced by comfort, and I willingly place myself in its arms.

[30 : 30] Comfort is no longer a good thing to be properly enjoyed, but something I want more than God. As I walk into our house, my idol of comfort is immediately threatened.

Two of my children come running to me. They don't greet me with hugs, but with complaints that the other is not sharing the computer. In the middle of their complaining, my other two children request help with their homework.

My wife completes the scene by saying that she is tired from working all day to it's up to me to sort things out. When comfort is reigning supreme in my heart, a scene like this turns me into a drill sergeant.

I turn to the first two children and say, you let your sister have it for 30 minutes and then you can use it for 30 minutes. I'm harsh and forceful. If they protest, I get louder. I may even threaten to turn the computer off.

As soon as these two comfort robbers are squashed, I turn to the other two children and bark out commands about their homework. If they protest, I can use the same strategies that seem to work so well with the first two kids.

[31:29] Now that all four children are acting decently and in order, I have time for a few choice words for my wife. How come you didn't handle this before I walked in the door? I don't deserve to come home and be barraged with this nonsense after working hard all day.

At this, my wife may have some provocative words of her own to share. What has happened? My heart has been entangled in sin and it is showing in my behavior.

My object of worship has been comfort instead of God and this vertical orientation quickly expresses itself in my horizontal relationships with my family. I use control to get what I want, sinning against my family and dishonoring God.

I break commandments four through ten because I have already broken commandments one through three on the way home. I have allowed something other than God to reign in my life. My worship needs to be radically reoriented so that I can love my family in ways that bless them and honor God.

This can only happen if I live a cross-centered life. So you can imagine that scene playing out in your lives. I can.

[32:43] Maybe for you it's not comfort. What is it that you so look forward to that when you don't get it it produces a response like that and you snap at everybody and everything around you? What is...

And I hope that our studies up to this point in considering the thorny heart have given you the opportunity to examine to see what it is that you worship. This is going to be different for different people.

I hope you've taken some time to see what's in your heart. To see what it is that gets that kind of response out of you. For this guy it's comfort. But what could that scenario have looked at?

Well he gives us that at the end of the chapter. Here's a cross-centered man. He says, after a long day at the office I begin to dream about some rest and relaxation at home.

But the Spirit... Remember the Spirit dwelling in us is how we keep our focus on Christ. But the Spirit helps me to remember that I am not entitled to comfort. I remember all too well how living for comfort can lead me to respond to my family in sinful ways.

[33:44] As I drive home I take a look at my heart. First I realize that my biggest problem is me. Not my circumstances. And that I have everything I need in Christ to live in ways that please Him.

Second, I notice that comfort is something I tend to worship above the Lord. I need to repent. And I need something more glorious to recapture my straying heart. Excuse me.

I compare and contrast comfort with Christ's glory and who I am in Him. My heart responds with gratitude. To get my heart where it needs to be I often use a series of questions based on Philippians 2 1-11.

They highlight what Christ did when He left Heaven to suffer, die, and be raised for us. Here is what it would sound like in this case. I think these are excellent. And it's... I never thought of looking at my sin and my idols in this way.

But here's His questions that He asked Himself on the way home. Comfort, you look beautiful to me right now, but when did you ever leave your place of prominence and glory to humble yourself for me?

[34:47] Comfort, when did you ever enter my world to suffer on my behalf? Comfort, when did you ever shed your blood so that I could be cleansed from my sin? Comfort, when were you ever raised from the dead on my behalf?

When did you ever promise to give me new life and power? Comfort, when did you ever promise to send the Holy Spirit to fill me with true comfort that would help me to please God even when my earthly comfort was threatened?

Comfort, when did you ever promise to intercede for me to my Father in Heaven so that I could be strong in trial? Comfort, when did you ever promise to come again and redeem me from the things that capture me and make me their slave?

What has your idol ever done for you? When I do this by faith, I can see Christ in His glory and my benefits in Him. I am able to repent of making comfort my God and it gets put back in its proper place.

Comfort is something to be enjoyed but not worshipped. Do you see how he's got faith there? He's looking at what Christ has done and repentance. He's saying, forgive me for making comfort so important. He's got both. He says, I've experienced the work of the Spirit on my drive home.

[35 : 56] I've engaged in intelligent repentance and faith, identifying the heart sins beneath the behavioral sins. I've applied the powerful realities of the Gospel to my life. The roots of comfort idolatry begin to wither and I sink my roots more deeply into Jesus, the true vine.

This vertical reorientation back to God will change the way I interact with my family as I get home and face the same circumstances. I will seek to be kind, patient, and gentle as I begin to serve my family.

I may need to be firm with my children but they will encounter a shepherd who cares for them, not a drill sergeant. My wife will not face a spouse who thinks it is her job to deliver the comfort I deserve. She will encounter a partner who intends to shoulder the challenges of our life together. She will meet a man who is living out of his identity in Christ and that will encourage her to do the same. You ever had a drive home like that? I think we should. We should spend time thinking on what Christ has done for us and how little our idols do for us and how when we get our priorities straight what a sinful monster it turns us into.

[37 : 08] So we should focus on Christ and His cross by faith remembering what He has done for us and what He is doing for us and what He will do for us and who we are because of what He is doing.

We focus on the present reality of His power to forgive our sins and to give us the grace and strength that we so desperately need to live a life that's honoring and pleasing to Him. So to live a cross-centered life we live a life of ongoing repentance and faith in our faithful God.

The Father who calls us to obedience has provided everything we need in Christ to live it out. When we fail He promises never to leave or forsake us. He wins us back by the Spirit and gives more grace when we confess and repent of sin.

So may God make us a people of repentance and faith today and every day that we might be a people that are changing for the better bringing honor and glory to His name and becoming more like our Savior Christ.

Amen. And we're dismissed.