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Why We Feel the Need to Prove Ourselves

March 8, 2026

Series: The Rescue

Romans 3:27-31

BIG IDEA – SAVING FAITH IS CHANGING FAITH

Good morning, Two Cities Church. If we haven't met, my name is Zach Meyer, and I'm on our staff here. Today, we are wrapping up Romans, chapter 3. So, at all of our campuses, grab your Bibles, grab your journals. I'll meet you there in just a second, but I want to set up our passage this way.

On July 16, 1969, NASA sent three men on Apollo 11, the first space mission to successfully put man on the moon. Now, I know some of you y'all don't think we actually went there. Two of the men on that mission, as the records say, you've probably heard of... Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong. What many of you probably don't know is the name of the man who got them there. His name was Michael Collins.

He's known as the loneliest man in history, because while the other two guys were on the moon, allegedly, he piloted the command module orbiting the moon for over 21 hours all by himself. If you've ever dropped Mom off to run inside Harris Teeter and grab something really fast while you drive circles around the parking lot and wait, that's basically what happened.

Without Michael Collins, the guys would never have made it back home alive, nor would they have made it to the moon in the first place. Here's the point. One of the most significant feats in human history would not have been possible without Michael Collins, yet almost none of us know his name because he lived in the shadow of Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong.

I tell you that story because that's how I feel about the passage we're going to look at today. Last week, we saw what Martin Luther called the central passage of Romans and

the whole Bible. Leon Morris, another New Testament scholar, said it was the most important paragraph that had ever been written. The verses that follow... It just seems like Paul is kind of rambling for a little bit. Let's look at it together. This is Romans, chapter 3, starting in verse 27.

"Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law."

On the surface, it seems like Paul has just given some inconsequential thoughts on the law and faith, but what I want us to see is that these verses I just read are an essential addendum to the gospel-saturated verses we studied last week. If you weren't here last week, let me just catch you up.

Last week, we saw that no matter who you are or what you've done, you can be justified. That just means declared righteous. You can be saved through faith in Jesus Christ. What we're going to see today in *these* verses is that the same faith that saves your soul will change your life. That's the main idea. *Saving faith is changing faith*. There's no such thing as an unchanged or unchanging Christian.

Just imagine with me for a second if I got up here and said, "Guys, you will never believe what happened to me last night. I was walking by myself downtown, and all of a sudden, I got jumped by 10 MMA fighters." You'd be like, "Yeah, I don't think so, bro. You don't look like you have a scratch on you, and by the looks of you, I'm not sure you could take my grandma in a fight, much less 10 MMA fighters."

If that had actually happened to me, there would be some significant and obvious change. How I look would be changed. How I walk and talk... The entire trajectory of my life would be changed. The same is true of those who put their faith in Jesus Christ. When you truly encounter the grace of God in the gospel, things in your life change.

What we have to understand is that justification by faith, this doctrine we've been looking at over the last couple of weeks, is not just an important theological doctrine; it's a living, breathing reality that has implications for our lives. If you're new here, and you've just kind of been coming around the last couple of weeks, genuinely, we're very glad you're here, and we hope this place can feel like home for you very soon.

But one of the things you need to know about our church is we're not just in the business of information transfer; we're in the business of life change. As a society, we have more

access to information than any other society in the history of the world, yet we are more stressed and more anxious and more addicted than any other society in the history of the world.

What you and I need and what our kids need is not just access to more true information. We need power. We need power for transformation, and that's what the gospel does. So, today, we're going to walk through those verses I just read, and we're going to see three ways that faith changes you.

The first thing we see is that *faith changes your view of yourself*. Let's read Romans 3:27-28. Again, it says, **"Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law."**

The first thing Paul talks about here is boasting. To boast is to brag, to gloat, or as the kids say, flex. It's the attempt to grab glory or collect credit. Paul talks about this first because that's what the Jewish people in the Roman church were doing. There were three primary things they were boasting in. They boasted in their *possessions*, their *people*, and their *performance*.

Their *possessions*. God had given the Jewish people a lot of things, but probably most notably he had given them the Torah, the Law, and they saw that, wrongly, as some sort of divine favoritism. They also boasted in their *people* or their ethnicity. They thought they had an inside track on a relationship with God because they were children of Abraham. They also boasted in their *performance*. They assumed a sense of moral superiority because of how many of God's commands they obeyed.

What we know to be true is that all of us are tempted to boast in those same three things. We just do it in more subtle and sophisticated ways. There's virtue signaling. That phrase, "Standing in solidarity..." We use that. We say that. We post it with certain groups and causes. It's not really because we actually care; we just want to seem morally impressive.

We boast in our busyness. We aim to impress with how packed our calendars and our schedules are. There's the humblebrag. This is the mom who will drop things like, "We just don't know what it is about our son Johnny. We haven't really done anything, and he just excels at everything he does." We hear stuff like that, and we're like, "Man! Wow! You're so humble. (And I kind of want to slap you in the face.)"

Boasting is everywhere. If we can have an honest moment, it's annoying. It is annoying to sit there and listen to people brag, yet we're tempted to do the same thing every day.

We're all tempted to boast. Why is that? Well, there are two deeper things I want us to see about boasting.

The first is that *boasting exposes your identity*. What you boast in shows what you draw your sense of self-worth from. It's like Uncle Rico from *Napoleon Dynamite*. If you've never seen the movie *Napoleon Dynamite*, don't watch it. All of the people who are laughing know. It's one of the most ridiculous, if not the most ridiculous movie that has ever been created.

In the movie, Uncle Rico is the 47-year-old uncle who consistently talks about how good of a quarterback he was in high school. It's painfully obvious that this dude's source of significance is still coming from his athletic abilities as a 17-year-old boy. What it shows us is that if you want to find out, "Where's my identity? What is my source of worth or significance or confidence? Where does that come from for me?" all you need to do is ask the question, "What am I boasting in? What am I bragging on?" because boasting exposes identity.

Another thing is *boasting expresses pride*. Boasting is the outward expression of pride. I want to talk about pride for a second, because it's a massive deal, not only in the Bible but also in our culture. First, let's talk about what pride is not. Pride is not a healthy satisfaction.

For all of the parents in the room, we say to our kids a lot of times, hopefully, how proud we are of them. What are we saying? What are we doing when we say that? Well, we're communicating a sense of joy or satisfaction in something they've done. Healthy satisfaction says, "I find joy in your success." Pride says, "I find joy in how your success makes me look."

So, pride is not healthy satisfaction. It's also not holy confidence. A lot of times, people confuse confidence with arrogance just because they don't know what to do with a godly, confident person. It's like a unicorn. People don't know what to do with it. But if there's anything our world needs more of, it's more men and women and children who are godly and confident, who are centered and secure in Christ, who have a knowledge of how God has wired them and what their gifts are, and they're stewarding and leveraging those things for the good of others.

Pride is not healthy satisfaction or holy confidence; it is self-centeredness and self-obsession. It's the inflation and exaltation of me, myself, and I. Have you ever wondered how Satan became Satan? It's probably not something we spend a lot of our time reflecting on, but if you've ever had the thought, "How did Satan become Satan..." Well, in the Bible, we see that the answer very clearly is pride.

I want to show you this. This is a passage from Isaiah 14, where God explains how Lucifer, one of his angels, became Satan. As I read these couple of verses, I want you to notice what gets repeated. God says:

"You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit."

That shows us a couple of things about pride. First, pride was the first sin and, really, is the foundation of every sin. Saint Augustine is one of the most famous theologians in church history, and he made the observation that because Satan's fall is attributed to pride and, in the Bible, Satan is described as the god of this world, then the foundation of all the sin in the world is pride.

Just think about it. What does lust say? It says, "I will satisfy my desires." Greed says, "I need more than God has given me." Envy says, "I deserve what they have." Bitterness says, "I won't forgive." Anxiety says, "I must be in control of my future and of the circumstances in my life."

I've heard it said before that pride is spiritual cancer. It spreads and mutates and ends up infecting and affecting every area of our lives. The thing we know about cancer is we can't always see it at first, and we don't always know it's there. Because of that, I want to share with you a couple of diagnostic questions, things I've found helpful in my own life when trying to detect and discern when pride is present. There are four of them. Let me share them with you.

First, *are you able to rejoice with other people?* When someone else in your life is winning...things are just going awesome...are you rejoicing with them or are you threatened by them? C.S. Lewis, in his book *Mere Christianity*, has this awesome chapter on pride, and in it, he makes the observation that pride is essentially competitive.

He says the proud person takes no pleasure in being wealthy or successful or pretty. They take pleasure in being wealthier or prettier or more successful than the person they compare themselves to. What it means is if you find yourself competing and comparing with the successes of other people in your life, there's a good chance that pride is present.

Secondly, *are you able to admit when you're wrong and apologize?* There was a time in my life when I thought I was pretty humble, when I was single. When I was single and could go wherever I wanted and do whatever I wanted whenever I wanted, I thought I was pretty humble. Then I got married and realized that, in fact, I am a proud, selfish

jerk. When conflict arises in any relationship, but especially in marriage, it's super hard to both admit when you are wrong and apologize.

Honest moment. Conflict is almost never entirely one person's fault. It's almost never entirely one-sided. What one of my mentors told me one time... I'll never forget this. He said the truly humble heart is eager to do these three things in conflict: to search their own heart to figure out if they did anything wrong, to own and admit what they did wrong, and then apologize for what they did wrong and ask for forgiveness.

If I could just say to all of us, but specifically to the married couples in the room, I believe genuinely that the overwhelming majority of marital problems would be over before they started if both sides would just commit to doing those two things. Specifically, to the men in the room, it's your responsibility to go first.

There are few things that show a man's weakness and immaturity like the inability to apologize. One of the things it means to be a godly man is to go first. Not to *be* first but to *go* first...to go first in reading your Bible, to go first in gospel opportunities, to go first in generosity, to go first in conflict resolution. Are you able to admit when you're wrong and just apologize?

Thirdly, *are you able to take a genuine interest in other people?* We've talked about how boasting is one of the obvious and egregious forms of pride, but I think another one is just the inability to ask genuine questions and take an interest in someone else. Some of the most humble people I know are more question-askers than they are statement-makers.

Lastly, *are you able to be overlooked?* See, the proud person needs to be noticed, whether it's on social media or at the gym, staring at yourself in the mirror, or in the staff meeting or even in Community Group settings at times. The thing about humble people is they just don't need the credit. It reminds me of a quote a friend shared with me a couple of months ago, and I want to read it.

It basically says, "The meek man [or the humble man] cares not at all who is greater than he, for he has long ago decided that the esteem of the world is not worth the effort. He develops toward himself a kindly sense of humor and learns to say, 'Oh, so you have been overlooked? They have placed someone else before you? They have slighted your work? Very well. Go on about your work. You are too small a matter to be troubled about.'" Welcome to church.

See, one of the primary reasons it's really important to do the hard work to try to figure out where pride is and if it's present in our lives is because of the biblical truth that pride puts us in opposition to God. First Peter 5:5 tells us, "**God opposes the proud but gives**

grace to the humble." That means God is either against you or he's for you. The God who spoke the cosmos into existence with a word, who owns all things... The cattle on a thousand hills are his. He is either a headwind of opposition or a tailwind of blessing in your life.

I was thinking this week... What would it look like for God to be in opposition to someone who is proud, like, on a Tuesday afternoon? What would that look like? I think there are a couple of things it could look like. It could look like the frustration of plans. Like, doors that were open just shut unexpectedly.

It could look like the allowing of a humbling circumstance in your life... failure, loss, rejection. I don't know. Something happens that just takes you down a couple of notches. I think most generally, it's just the withholding of the favor of God in your life. Things slow down. The ministry stops growing or the family starts struggling.

Listen. I'm not here to play Holy Spirit and say that some situation or circumstance in your life is the discipline of God due to a lack of humility. What I think this passage is saying, though, is that there is no place for pride and boasting in the Christian life. Period. They're like oil and water. The things don't mix, because our way in and our way through the Christian life is a gift, and it's grace. Salvation is by grace through faith. That's the point Paul is making.

Let's read verses 27-28 one more time. Paul says, **"Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded [put away from us]. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law [or principle] of faith. For we hold that one is justified [made righteous] by faith apart from works of the law."** What Paul is saying is if religion and religious deeds made you righteous, then boasting would be normal and natural.

If you contributed even an ounce to your salvation, you would have something to boast about, but you don't, because you didn't. I want to read a couple of verses from Ephesians 2. I know, a lot of cross-references, but this is one of the most clear passages, maybe the clearest passage of the whole Bible, of the gospel's relationship to boasting. So, just a couple of verses.

"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked... But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ... For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Okay. Let me try to tie a bow on this point this way. When your heart is wrecked by the grace of God, boasting is not just removed; it's redirected. I dare you this week to just try

to stop boasting, to just stop. It's impossible. You can't do it, because we're hardwired to boast. Boasting is just a form of worship, and everyone worships. It's just a matter of what.

When this doctrine of justification by grace through faith hits you in the heart... Like, when you realize just how sinful and broken you really were and that it deserved to be you up on that cross, but that Jesus, the Son of God, came and lived a perfect life, died on that cross in your place, and rose again so you could have life and be forgiven and spend eternity with him...

When that hits you, your boasting is redirected to the one who is ultimately and truly worthy of it, and it's not you; it's Jesus. So, let me ask you. Who are you boasting in? Who's getting the glory in your life? Who are you worshiping, church? Faith changes your view of yourself. No longer a recipient or an object of worship but an instrument of it.

Okay, let's keep going. Romans 3:29: ***"Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith."*** To understand the point Paul is making here, it's helpful to understand some of the context.

We have to remember that this book, Romans, is not just a theological treatise; it's a real letter that was written to an actual church that was struggling with conflict and division. You could read more about this in your Community Group this week if you're interested. It's in Acts 18. The gist is this.

In AD 49, the Roman emperor Claudius kicks the Jews out of Rome, leaving the church to be full of Gentile Christians. A few years go by, and the Jews are allowed to return, and they return to a church that is much different than they left it. The pews were gone, the fellowship hall had been repainted, and there was an electric guitar where the organ used to be. You can just imagine the type of tension and conflict that caused in the Roman church.

Basically, what Paul is doing in these verses is correcting the Jewish view of Gentile Christians by basically saying three things. There's one God, there's one type of person, and there's one way of salvation. There's one God. There's not a Jewish God and a Gentile God. There's one God who created everyone and everything. There's one type of person: a sinner who needs a Savior. And there's one way. It's through Jesus, through faith in him.

The point Paul is making is that *faith doesn't only change your view of yourself; it changes your view of other people as well*. There are a million ways we can view other people...blessings or burdens, inferior or superior, tools, projects, and threats. There are

so many ways we can wrongly view someone else. When we put our faith in Jesus, it changes how we view others in three primary ways.

First, we begin to view all people as image bearers of God. One of the foundational things behind every worldview is the answer to the question...*What is a human being?* What are we? AI is having us ask this question now more than ever. What does it mean to be a human being? Are we smarter animals that have just evolved over time? Are we chemical accidents? Are we blank canvases that are just sort of built and constructed by our environments?

Well, no. According to the Scriptures, to be a human being is to be a living, breathing image or reflection of our Creator. It means all people are intrinsically full of dignity, value, and worth. It means the poor aren't invisible, and there's no race or ethnicity that's inferior. It means the elderly and the disabled aren't burdens to manage or problems to solve. We could go on and on.

Do *you* view people that way? How do *you* view people? I think most of us probably are like, "I think so." Here's where I want to press a little deeper. What about those who are different from you? One of our fallen tendencies, as Christians, is sometimes to view people who are different than us in *our* image rather than in God's. Sure, we believe in the inherent dignity, value, and worth of all people, but mainly, if we're honest, those who are just like us.

There are two ways, as Christians, that we can treat people who are different than us: with insult or with indifference. For the Christian, to treat someone who is different than you with insult, frankly, is just to forget who the enemy is. I remember being on social media right after the Charlie Kirk shooting and seeing Bible-believing, Jesus-loving Christians just eviscerating other people with differing political views.

I remember seeing that and thinking, "Ah, I get it. I see what's happening. I see what the Enemy is doing." It's really hard for a Christian to be waging war on the kingdom of darkness when they're behind a screen waging war on another image bearer who just is a little bit different than them. Right? It's really hard.

This is probably not for all of you, but maybe for some of you, you just need to be reminded that one of the quickest ways for you to tarnish your witness and bring dishonor to the name of Jesus is by treating an image bearer like the enemy. But for most of us, that's a little extreme. That's not our temptation. Our temptation is just to view the different with indifference.

About a year ago, my wife and I bought a house just inside of Davidson County. We moved, and it has been awesome. We've loved it. We're still in pretty close proximity to

Winston, but we have more space for our kids to run around and play. Maybe best of all, we don't have to pay Forsyth County taxes. And all God's people at the Lexington and Davie campuses said, "Amen."

In the last couple of months, my wife has been being a little bit more intentional with our neighbors, trying to meet them and get to know them and reach them. Her pursuit of them has led me to the sad realization that over the entire year of us living there, I have not had one meaningful or spiritual conversation with either of my neighbors.

As I've reflected on, "Why is that? What's wrong with me? Why is that the case?" the realization I've come to is it's because they are different from me. One of my neighbors looks a little different. The other lives a little differently. Guys, what I've had to really wrestle with and repent of before the Lord is that someone who has been changed by the grace of God does not view those who are different from them with indifference; they view them as people who are valuable and worth pursuing.

The second way our faith changes how we view others is *we view the lost world as sinners who are in need of a savior*. One of the things that's abundantly clear at this point in the book of Romans is that all people are not inherently good. They are sinners by nature and choice.

If the Bible is true (and we believe it is), it means there are people in your life who, if they were to die today, would spend an eternity apart from God in hell because of their sin. I mean, it's not popular. It's not a popular thing to say, but I think it's helpful to say that out loud sometimes, because it reframes our perspective.

Your children are not just sweet little babies. Your friends are not just for fun. Our city is not just a bunch of good people. The nations are not just faraway foreigners. They are people created in God's image who are far from him because of their sin and who are in desperate need of a savior. One of the truths in the Scripture is that God wants to use you...yes, *you*...to bring them to him.

A third way our faith changes our view of others is *we begin to view the church as our body*. The Jewish Christians in the Roman church were certainly struggling with all of these but probably most specifically *this* one, at least in *this* passage. Do you know what the number one metaphor for the church is in the New Testament? I guess I kind of gave it away already. It is the body of Christ.

Just think about the body for a second. God designed the human body to have a bunch of different parts that are unique but all work together for a common purpose: to survive. In order for any of us to survive... Some of you are thinking about this right now. You need to eat. We need to eat in order to survive.

In the process of doing that, of getting your food and cooking your food and eating your food and digesting and then disposing of your food... I'm not an anatomy expert, but it seems to me like you use just about every, if not every single part of your body. Now, just for a second, just think with me...humor me...about how ridiculous it would be if your literal human body parts were divided in that effort to survive.

You know, you're hungry, so you get some food, grab your utensil, scoop some up, and bring it to your mouth, and then your left hand is like, "Get that junk out of here!" It's so foolish. It's just silly. So, why do we treat each other in the church like that sometimes?

Like, why do we gossip about people instead of just going up to them and confronting them? Why are we stingy instead of being generous with other people? Why do we assign motives to people instead of assuming the best about them? Why do we compete and compare? We could go on and on.

See, the thing we have to remember, church, is that just as a human body that's divided against itself can't survive, a church that is divided just won't survive. I want to show you a picture. It's pretty bad quality, but it's because of how old it is. This is the Gospel Tabernacle. It was a church that was founded by A.B. Simpson in 1881 in what's now Times Square in New York City.

It was a massively influential church in its heyday. They started the Christian & Missionary Alliance, which is a well-known denomination that's going and blowing today. They started the first Bible College in North America. A.W. Tozer, who's a big theologian who I've already quoted once, came out of this church.

Now I want to show you another picture of that same church building from 150 years ago today. That is the home of John's Pizzeria. It's the largest pizza shop, square footage-wise, in the entire United States. A Jesus-loving, Bible-believing, gospel-preaching, missionary-sending, church-planting church, in just over a decade, turned into a pizza shop. How does *that* happen?

It makes me wonder what *this* building will be in 150 years. What will our campuses be in 150 years? I hope they will still be places where people can come and encounter the presence of God. I hope they're places where there are kids meeting Jesus and making friends. I hope they're places where people, leaders, and churches are sent out from to see the mission of God move forward.

By his grace, church, I believe they *will* be, but if that's the case, it's only going to happen as we, campus by campus and generation after generation, continue to view others rightly, to view all people as image bearers, the lost world as sinners who are in need of a savior, and to view one another as fellow members of Christ's body.

Okay. Romans, chapter 3, concludes this way: "***Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.***" What Paul is doing here is anticipating and responding to a Jewish objection, which is, "Okay, Paul. We're justified by faith, not the law. Then let's just throw the law out the window. It's useless." Paul says, "No. By no means. We uphold the law because it's valuable."

Even the presence of that objection in the Jewish people shows us something about them and, by extension, about us: that we have a tendency to wrongly view God's law as a ladder. What's the purpose of a ladder? To reach something you can't reach. Ever since the fall of humanity, when Adam and Eve ate the fruit in the garden, God has been out of reach. Our sin has separated us from God.

The problem with the Jewish people, and the problem with some of *you* is that you wrongly view God's law as a ladder, a means of climbing back up to him, of being in good standing with him because of your spiritual effort and obedience. This is the religious spirit, and it's the feeding ground for boasting, like we've already talked about.

What faith does... This is the third way faith changes us. It *changes our view of God's law*. We no longer view God's law as a ladder but as a mirror and a map. Pastor Kyle touched on this last week, but I wanted to bring it back, because it's the exact point Paul is making. God's law is a mirror.

What that means is when we read the Bible, what's supposed to happen is that the Bible is supposed to read *us*. In one sense, we love to be read. *You* love to be read. You love to take those little quizzes, like the StrengthsFinder and the Enneagram and the Myers-Briggs. Some of y'all even take those goofy Facebook quizzes that tell you what kind of vegetable you'd be.

We love finding out about our silly strengths and our personality quirks. What we don't love is finding out our sinful habits and our tendencies, but that is one of the purposes of God's Word. It's supposed to read us and give us an accurate picture of who we really are. It's not a means of attaining salvation but a moral mirror to show us how far from salvation we actually are on our own.

It's also a map. God's Word guides us. It shows us where to go, how to live a life of flourishing that leads to flourishing and God's glory. We could summarize it this way. The point of what Paul is saying is that we uphold the law because it shows us our *need* for change, guides us in *what* to change, and points us to the *source* of change, which is the gospel.

Right after I graduated from college, I did four years of college ministry at the University of Virginia, which means I did a fair amount of discipleship conversations with college

guys. One of the questions I would often get from a college guy was maybe the same question that some of *you* may find yourself asking toward the end of a message like this.

"What do I do when the change I'm supposed to see isn't there? If saving faith is changing faith, what do I do if I don't feel like I'm seeing change in a specific area of my life?" It's so easy to find ourselves there. Like, some of you may think, "I've put my faith in Jesus, but if I'm honest, I'm still way more consumed with my glory than God's." Others of you may think, "Yeah, I've put my faith in Jesus, but my marriage still feels like a 4 out of 10, and it has been that way for 10 years."

"I believe, but I really don't care about the lost like I should." "I believe, but I keep going to that website." We could go on and on. We believe, but we struggle to change. Church, what I want to encourage you with is that in order to not lose heart when you're not seeing the change you want to see, there are two things you need. You need hope, and you need humility.

You need the hope of the gospel. The hope of the gospel is that God does not condemn you. You deserve to be condemned, and so do I. We've all done the thing we said we wouldn't do again, again. We deserve to be condemned, but the hope of the gospel is that God does not condemn you because he condemned Christ instead of you.

Church family, the hope of the gospel is that your sin struggle has an expiration date. You've been justified. You've been declared righteous. You're being sanctified daily, slowly but surely being made righteous, and one day you will be glorified. That just means in the presence of Jesus, completely righteous, with no more sin and no more suffering. One day, God is going to finish the work he started.

You need that hope, but you also need humility. We need humility. Humility is just the admission that as bright as my future in Christ is, I'm not where I need to be today. It's the posture of the heart that says, "God, I know I need to change, and I *want* to change, but I need your help." You need hope and humility.

So, as we prepare to respond, I want to invite you to bow your heads, and I want to give you, at all of our campuses, an opportunity to humble yourself before the Lord. Where are you not seeing the change you want to see in your life? Where does your sanctification journey feel like it's stalled? Where do you need God's help?

For some of you, God may be calling you this morning to bend the knee, to stop trying to rule and control everything in your life but, instead, to make Jesus the Lord of it. Some of you, in just a minute, need to come up here and confess something before the Lord, before someone else. I don't know. Maybe it's your boastful spirit or your tendency to look down on other people who are different from you.

Others of you need to get up here, and you need to intercede for change in someone else's life who doesn't have the strength to do that on their own right now. For others of you, God may be calling you today to do your part to resolve a conflict, to go first and apologize. We have to hold on to the truth that we can't work our way into humility; we have to worship our way into it, and that's what we're about to do.

Jesus, we look to you and we worship you. You are the perfect Son of God who humbled yourself by dying in our place and taking the punishment we deserve. God, give us a greater knowledge and an awareness, and make us humble as we look to you. God, I pray that you would help us not to be discouraged or to lose heart. Help us to remember, as the book of Proverbs says, that the righteous falls seven times, but he rises again. Give us faith. Make us more like Jesus, amen.