

Well first service we were over in the chapel. It was interesting in that chapel some twenty some years ago in the pew just to my right is where the kindness of God specifically in its salvation moment came to me. And where I responded to the gospel message and it's very gracious of God to allow me to have the opportunity you know to come back and be a part of this place. And so I'm just really grateful. And it was fun to be able to speak in the chapel that God used somebody in that chapel to save me. And so it was a real privilege. It's a real privilege to be with you this morning. And I'm grateful for that. Also just grateful for Kelly as he shared in California. He has been and continues to be just a very good friend, great friend to Paula and to me. And we're just grateful for that. I told my, yeah the car wasn't working well at all when he moved out to California. We used to have to turn on the heater in the middle of the day to take the heat off the engine. So you can image on a summer day in California you know it was 95 degrees and we would have the heater going on full blast, the windows down. Yeah, it was just an interesting thing, interesting time. But anyways I'm grateful to be here and we're gonna go right into it.

Lessons from the life of Paul. Much of what I've been learning in the last probably five to ten years and much of what I'm going to share this morning comes from two influences in my life. And I think it's important to say that. First, is a gentleman named Mike Bulmore who was a pastor in Wisconsin. And the other is a gentleman named C.J. Mahaney. And those two people two men of God have been huge influences in my life. And they helped me to understand a little bit more and more of what Paul kind of what's important to Paul. And so that's what we're going to look at this morning. And the two lessons real quick are this. There was nothing more important than the gospel to Paul. The second one, second lesson from Paul's writings would be this. There's also nothing more practical than the gospel to Paul. So those are the two lessons we're going to look at. And let's just pray real quick.

Father thank you so much again for your word. Lord I'm humbled at the opportunity and again I'm aware of just the great responsibility and also the great privilege to speak your word. And it is my prayer God that you would just open our eyes to see wonderful things from your truth. We eagerly anticipate the work of your spirit to fasten these truths our hearts and to our minds. And we pray this in the son, your son's name, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Well three introductory thoughts real quick before we jump into those two lessons. The first one is this. We need to understand what the gospel is before we begin talking about the gospel. What is the gospel? And again a friendly helpful way to remember that it can be remembered on hand. And it's this. Christ died for our sins. That is the essence of the gospel. It can be unpacked further from there. But that really is the gospel message. It's the person and work of Christ. Secondly, we need to understand how Paul used the gospel. If that's the gospel message how did he use it? And I believe that as you look throughout scripture Paul used it in two different ways. One, he used it as an instrument to save sinners. We understand that? That's kind of the idea of our justification. When we come to find out that we're sinners before a mighty god and that we need a savior and the only savior is Jesus Christ. And there's a justifying moment where we're declared righteous based upon the merits of Christ. But there's a second way that he used. Not only did Paul use it as an instrument to

save sinners, but he also used it as an instrument to sanctify believers. The word sanctification is basically this idea that now that we're saved that God continues to grow us. He continues to mature us. That's this word sanctification. So there were times when Paul spoke the gospel for evangelistic purposes to save unbelievers. There were other times when he would unpack the gospel to grow and empower believers anticipating that the gospel would bear fruit in their lives. Let me give you an example of that. It's in Colossians chapter one. And I'm going to start reading in verse three. It says we give thanks to God the father of our Lord Jesus Christ praying always for you. Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love for which you have for all the saints. So he is speaking to Christians. The context here is that he is speaking to believers. And he says this. Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven of which you previously heard in the word of the truth the gospel. Now this gospel verse six has come to you just as in all the world also it constantly bearing fruit and increasing even as it has been doing in you since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of god in truth. See what he's saying there? There was a point in time when they heard and understood the gospel and since that point that gospel has been continually bearing fruit in their lives. The gospel has been used to mature them and develop them in their lives as believers. So, we need to understand what the gospel is. We need to understand how Paul used the gospel in two different ways. And then third we need to be aware of the temptation which exists for Christians to dismiss the usefulness of the gospel after our conversion to Christ. We're tempted to confine the gospel to that first way that Paul used it. We're tempted to confine the gospel to our justification only. Without realizing our need our desperate need for it as believers. The reality is that this has been going on for a long time this temptation to not see the gospel as beneficial to us as believers. It happened in 60 A.D. when Paul spoke to the believers in Galatia. And here's what he said. He says you foolish Galatians. Who has bewitched you? Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. And then in verse two he says this. This is the only I want to know from you. Did you receive the spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? That phrase received the spirit basically means coming to Christ. Having been justified they received the gift of the spirit in their lives. So they were saved. So he wants to know this one thing. Did you become saved by the works of the law by your own merits or by hearing with faith by the merits of Christ? We know the question right? We know the answer to that question. It's simply utterly wholly dependent upon the merits of Christ. And then he goes on and says this. Are you so foolish having begun by the spirit being saved. Are you know being perfected (sanctified) by the flesh? Of course not. See what Paul is saying is this. And he said it back in 60 A.D. He said the same gospel that justifies us is the same gospel that sanctifies us. It's powerful in our lives as believers. Just a few years later in second Timothy chapter two, verse eight Timothy was Paul's true son in the faith. It was somebody that he invested his life in. and in second timothy this is Paul's final letter that he wrote. It was his last letter. And he wrote to his son in the faith, Timothy. And he says this in second Timothy 2:8. Timothy remembers Jesus Christ. Don't you find that little phrase a little bit odd? I mean, Paul had spent years with Timothy conversation after conversation in a discipleship relationship. And he's leaving and the last thing, one of the last things that he wants to tell Timothy is Timothy do not forget Jesus Christ. In 1973, John Stout commented on this verse. And he said this. All around us we see Christians in churches relaxing their grasp on

the gospel fumbling it in danger of letting it drop from their hands all together. And just a few short years after that in 2006, a pastor named Milton Vincent said this about the same topic. He said a costly mistake made by Christians is that we view the gospel Christ died for our sins as something that has served out its purpose the moment we believed in Jesus for salvation. Not knowing what to do with the gospel once we're saved he says we lay it aside soon after conversion so we can move on to bigger and better things. Even scriptural things. So there is a temptation for Christians to confine the gospel to the saving event of justification. Praise God for that saving event, right? Praise god for the message that justifies us. But we are tempted to dismiss it to only that. And what is Paul is saying is that it is powerful to bear fruit in our lives as believers. So I believe that Paul's lessons will train us how to make the gospel more than just spiritual jargon. More than just a phrase that's stated or an event that took place in our lives back when we were saved. But that it would be the power source of everything we do. And that on a daily basis the gospel Christ and his work on our behalf would bear much fruit in our lives as believers. So, with those introductory thoughts kind of behind us let's dive into the two lessons that Paul shares with us.

Number one , there was nothing more important than the gospel to Paul. Let's look at his words and again note the context here. The first one is first Corinthians 15. In first Corinthians, again he's speaking to the believers at Corinth. And yes, they were messed up. And they had many different issues, but he says that they were believers. And here's what he says in first Corinthians 15:3. He says I delivered to you that which was of first importance that Christ died for our sins. He uses that phrase "of first importance" nowhere else but here. So for Paul what he's saying is there was no other message which was more important than the gospel. There was no other event more important than Calvary. There is no greater person of interest greater than Jesus Christ. There was nothing more important than the gospel to Paul. He says it a different way in Galatians 6, verse 14. He says may it be that I would never boast in anything except there's one thing Jesus Christ and him crucified. What's that little phrase referring to? The gospel. Galatians 6:14 so in all of endeavors in all of his pursuits in all that his life was about he would say there is only one thing to boast about. There's really only one thing that matters. That's the gospel of Jesus Christ. Philippians chapter 3, again a context to believers. To the church of Philippi in 3 through 8 the context there is that there were those that were those that were taking confidence in their own achievements and he rattles off this list of achievements of his own. That he was a Pharisees that he was of the tribe of Benjamin as to zeal he persecuted the church. All of these things that basically kind of put the other people you know in a lower seat because of all that he had done for Christ. And here's what he says in verse seven and eight. He says but I can consider all of that all of those things that would put me ahead of you I consider all of that loss to knowing Christ. There was nothing more important to Paul than the person of Christ and what he accomplished. Back one more one more passage in first Corinthians 15: 14 through 17. We won't take the time to look at it directly, but in there he's talking about the resurrection of Jesus. And again the death burial and resurrection are all a part of the gospel. And he says in first Corinthians 15 that if the resurrection never happened if it never took place then your faith and my faith he says would vain and it would be worthless. We would still be stuck in our sins. You see that

the gospel the gospel is the foundation to our entire belief system. We can go out of these walls and we can live a life to our best behavior and yet if the gospel never happened if we never submit to Christ we're gonna be moral people who head to hell forever. See there was nothing more important than the gospel to Paul. In fact it goes on forever. An interesting note in the book of Revelation you know the last book that talks about into eternity do you know how Jesus is referred to more than any other name or any other reference? Jesus is referred to in the book of Revelation sixteen times as the lamb, the lamb that was slain. He's identified in the book of Revelation on into eternity as the one who suffered and bled at Calvary. There's nothing, nothing more important than the gospel to Paul. The center of our lives should be the person and the work of Christ. In fact Paul says you know in other passages that the gospel or the person of Christ there's unsearchable riches. So you can gaze at Christ over and over again and never come to the end of it. You can study Calvary and the ramifications of that and never come to an end of it. It's unsearchable. So understanding its importance, next question what place should then it have in our lives?

Which is the second point, not only is there nothing more important than the gospel of Paul. But secondly there was nothing more practical than the gospel to Paul. And when we think of practical, we all need help right? I mean it's not easy to read God's word and then go out and do it. So there are specific areas of instruction in the Bible that tell us how we're suppose to live and what we're suppose to do. And those things are yes indeed very practical. However I would argue and I think what Paul argue is that there is a step behind that. And that is this. That understanding how the gospel impacts our lives as believers is more important is more practical than anything else. Because it impacts the way that we behave it influences the way that we think. And that's what we're going to talk about here. There's basically two ways that it's practical. It's practical in our thinking. And it's practical in our behaving. First of all, our thinking. The gospel is what the spirit uses to produce right thinking in our lives as believers. These are what are called gospel truths. In first Timothy 1:11 Paul says that there is sound teaching or there is doctrine that conforms to the gospel. In other words these are truths that take their shape from the gospel. One other way to say it is this. If the gospel never happened these things would not be true. In other words these truths are completely and wholly dependent on the person and work of Christ. Romans 5:1, I'll give you three examples. The first one is Romans 5:1. It says therefore having been justified by faith we have peace with God. The truth there is this. That we have peace with God but what's it dependent upon? Therefore having been justified by faith, that phrase having been justified by faith speaks specifically to the person and work of Christ. There is no other way to be justified by faith. It's only through Christ. So the peace with God comes through the gospel. Second, Romans 8:1 is another one. It says, therefore there is now (key word) therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. What is he talking about being in Christ Jesus? Well that comes because of what happened at Calvary. Having been justified by faith we received the gift of the Holy Spirit. We're in Christ. Because of that there is now, different from what used to be, there is now no condemnation. So before Christ came in, guess what? The very wrath of God, the condemnation of God rested upon us as sinners. It says in the Bible that God is angry at sinners every day. That the wrath of God abides upon us apart from Christ. And yet, what this verse is

telling us is that because of Christ because of what he's accomplished for those of you for me who have put our faith and trust in Christ, in Christ alone, we don't get that wrath anymore. That condemnation is not for us. It was completely and utterly spent poured out on Christ at Calvary. Praise the Lord! Romans 8:1 because the gospel happened, there is no condemnation now for us. Romans 8:32 is one of my favorite verses. And it is gospel language as well. It says this. He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all what's that talking about? The gospel, right? The next phrase is this. How will he not also freely give us all things in him? See the logic of this verse? It's amazing. If God went to such an extent to slay his son to save what makes us ever think that he's ever going to give up on us? If he justified us, he's going to sanctify us. And the gospel is proof of it. This is gospel truth. But guess what? If the gospel had not happened, we would have no idea of God's disposition toward us. In fact, he would be for us, he would be against us. It's gospel truth. So, the question is. What should these verse do? Or how should they function in our lives? I see, you know may be saying Josh I see the connection between the gospel and those truths, but really how is that practical? Great question. These truths are practical because they speak against enemies which attack our thinking. And this happens every day. Every day, daily, daily, daily, not seasonally, not monthly, not occasionally, but daily we battle enemies which attack our thinking. I'm going to give you three of those. It's not an exhaustive list by any means. But it will be helpful for us to understand how the gospel is practical in our thinking. The first one is condemnation. Condemnation, for most of us condemnation is a common experience and for too many of us condemnation is a constant companion. When you sin throughout the day, quick on the heels of that sin is condemnation and guilt, right? I mean we've all experienced it. We know. Satan wants to just make us understand that we're miserable, that we're worthless. And that condemnation comes. We feel like we have three hundred pounds of luggage. And we live more aware of this 300 pounds of luggage than we do of the saving work of Christ, the gospel. Too many of us are more familiar with condemnation than with justification. So how do you know if you're carrying baggage today? How do you know if you're struggling with this? Well you keep a respectful distance from God. You feel like God is disappointed with you rather than delighting over you in his son. You view God as just simply tolerating you. You feel like you're kind of you know you're on probation even though you can confessed your sin. You feel kind of like you know I got in on the group plan. You know Kelly said prayer and there was a bunch of us in the room and at that point I kind of said a prayer and I felt like I just got in because everybody else got in at that point. You live with low grade unresolved guilt. You rarely experience joy. You know, that's me on a daily basis. I know be battle with that daily. And here's how this gets practical. Romans 8:1. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. As we battle condemnation, guess what attacks it at its root? The gospel, the person and work of Christ. For Jesus to say no, don't carry that around because I've already taken care of it at the cross. Let's not let condemnation. Let's not let guilt ruin, ruin our lives. It's done. It's over. There is no condemnation for us. Conviction on the other hand is a great thing, right? Because what conviction should do for us rather than condemnation conviction should move us closer to Christ, to Calvary, and to confess our sin and deal with it and understand what has happened with it that is removed as far as the east is from the west. Condemnation is gone. Conviction is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Second, legalism.

Legalism is seeking to achieve forgiveness from God or justification before God and acceptance by God through our obedience to God. Legalism is about achieving. The gospel is about receiving. Legalism is about promoting yourself. The gospel is about promoting Christ. Legalism is our attempt to add or substitute our works for Christ's finished work. It's thinking that our performance determines God's disposition toward us. We experience that on a daily basis. We, you know it's the good day, bad day mentality, right? When you're having a good you feel like things are going well. You woke up early. You spent time with the Lord. You were in the word. You were praying. You went to work. You got an opportunity to share the gospel. Things were humming along, right? You feel like God is really pleased with you. Based upon what? Based upon your performance. God must be really pleased with me today because you know I'm preaching. So he's got to be happy with me, right? I'm having a good day. Bad day, example. The alarm goes off, you hit snooze. You don't spend time with the Lord. You're off to work. Things aren't going well. How do you feel at that point? You're sinning left and right. You're just, not feeling like you're in fellowship with the Lord. The opposite can be true as well right? You feel like somehow that God is angered at you. That you have condemnation or guilt that, that goes with you. So let me ask you. At that point has God's disposition changed toward you? No! Why? Because God's attitude toward you and God's disposition toward you is solely and wholly dependent upon the merits of Christ. Not yours, good or bad! (Clapping) yeah, that's awesome. Now, I will say this. That when we sin, there are consequences to that sin. And there is discipline from God to get us back into fellowship with him. And sometimes there can be a distance in that fellowship not because of him but because of us. And so there is no condemnation. There is no wrath. So you may be thinking, is he angry at me? I know specifically the bible says no condemnation. The wrath is already spent. But is he angry toward me? I don't believe he is. When you're in Christ I think God's disposition toward you is completely and wholly as a father to a child who yes, disciplines you but that discipline is not anger. I guarantee when I am disciplining my children if there is anger in my heart something is wrong. Right? Something is wrong if I am disciplining my kids and there's anger in my heart. To translate that God. There's no anger when he disciplines us. It's out of love for us. Again there are consequences. There is discipline. It may not feel good for a while. But it's not that he's angry at. It's not that our relationship with him has changed. There's no condemnation. Romans 5:1 say there is peace with God. The gospel attacks that legalism at its core. The third one is unbelief. You know sometimes it is a daily battle to believe that God is good. It is a daily battle to believe that God has our best interest in mind. That's been true ever since the Garden of Eden. When Satan came to Eve and lied to her. And said you know what God did not say that you shouldn't eat from the. Or God didn't say that you will die. He lied to her. And when he lied to her, what happened is this. It causes her to now doubt. Is God really good? Or is God somehow withholding something from me. Because that tree looks really good to me. And that fruit will probably taste really good. So Eve starts to doubt God just like we do today. That event or that activity or that pursuit that somehow we think is going to make us so happy and yet God says you know what, don't go that way. Because if you go that way it's not going to go well for you. And doubt slips and unbelief. And Romans 8:32 sneaks in and attacks that unbelief. That he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all how will he not also freely give us all things in him? You see the proof of God's care for us, the proof that God

has our best interest at mind is the gospel. That he went to such an extent to save us by slaying his son. We can know without a shadow of a doubt that he's for us. He's not against us. He's not a cosmic kill joy in heaven just keeping things from us that he knows will make us happy. He wants our best for us. And the gospel is proof of that.

So, there is nothing more practical than the gospel. First of all when we think about our thinking. It attacks the unbelief. It attacks condemnation. It attacks legalism at its core. Secondly, the gospel is what the spirit uses to produce right living. We call this gospel behavior. Philippians 1:27 Paul says, he says conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel. Which means to live your life in a way that it reflects the gospel that your behavior takes its, its fuel from the gospel its motivation from the gospel in other words because the gospel occurred or because Christ died for our sins we have the greatest not the only but we have the greatest motivation for our behavior as Christians. It is the purpose. Let me give you some examples real quick. Titus 3: 1 – 5 says this. Paul speaking to Titus. He says remind them Christians to be subject to rulers to authorities. To be obedient to be ready for every good deed. To malign no one to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. All of that are behaviors that God is telling us to do to others. Right? Moral imperatives. Here's what you should do out there in the world. And then he says this in verse 3. For, purpose clause, do all of that because you also once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved in various lusts and pleasures spending your life in malice and envy and hate. Hating one another, but when the kindness of God our savior appeared and his love for mankind appeared he saved us not on the basis of deeds which we have done, but by his mercy. Do you see those first two verses? The purpose, the motivation comes from our own understanding of what God has done for us. And out of our understanding of what God has done for us now we are to treat people in that same way. There's a gospel connection. It's gospel truth, gospel behavior. Another one is in first Corinthians 6:18 – 20. We're not going to turn there. But it says this. That passage is about purity. It's about understanding that you are the, that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. And so he says there that you are to conduct yourselves with purity. And he says this at the end. He says for you honor God with your body for you were bought with a price. Remember what that price was. It was the person of Christ at Calvary. And so because of what he has done for you, now honor God with your body. There's another. They're all over the scripture. But giving, we gave of our tithes and offerings this morning. But in first Corinthians, actually second Corinthians chapter 8 and 9, he's speaking to the church and he's asking them to support the church in Jerusalem. And he's asking them in the midst of their affliction and in midst of the persecution that's going on, he asks them to give to the Jerusalem church. And here's what he says in second Corinthians 8:9. He says for you know the grace of our lord Jesus that though he was rich he became poor for your sake. That you who are poor might become rich in him. Now that's not speaking about some bank account in heaven. That's speaking about the fact that Christ that had everything in heaven that he humbled himself and come down on this earth to die on the cross so that we who are on this earth might become rich in him. And now out of that, out of the fact that he gave up all those riches to die on the cross, now you give with great liberality. Second Corinthians 8 and 9. Just another one that came into mind. Romans 12: 1 and 2. It

says therefore offer your bodies as living sacrifices right? Great moral thing to do. To live life in such a way that you're just you're a servant you're out there. In that phrase it says this. It says according to the mercies of God. The mercies of God? The gospel, so the reason that we're supposed to you know live in that way is because we have experience the mercy of God. So it is the purpose. It's the motivation. But not only that, there are also times when it's the pattern. The gospel becomes the pattern for us. Because the gospel occurred you have an example to follow. Another one, humility. Philippians 2: 1 – 8 Paul says have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus. and it goes on to say that although he existed in the form of God did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped but he emptied himself right? This idea that he himself became humble to die on the cross so we looking at his pattern need to be humble people need to exercise humility on a daily basis. Ephesians 5:25 Husbands love your wives, how? As Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. That's gospel language people. That is the gospel that he gave himself up for us. And because he gave himself up for us now we as husband should give ourselves up for our wives. Do you see the connection? I could stand up here and say to myself and say to you husbands. Every day I could stand up here. Go love your wives and stop at that. Go love your wives. Go love your wives. Go love your wives. And it would be a good message. And it would be a true message. But more practical than that could be go love your wives and remember that God in Christ has loved you first in that same way. Now out of that, go love your wives. The gospel is the link to our behavior to motivate our behavior to fuel our behavior in a spirit filled way. Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another tender hearted caring for one another forgiving one another just as God in Christ Jesus has forgiven you. How do you find the motivation to forgive sometimes? People, me included, we're mean. Sometimes it's really hard to forgive isn't it? It's never more easy to forgive than when we're experiencing the forgiveness of Christ on our behalf. It's exactly what Ephesians 4:32 is talking about. Ultimately in scripture God links Christian behavior to the gospel and therefore it should flow out of the gospel. Otherwise these acts of obedience will be done in our own strength and difficult to carry out. It will happen for a while and then fall to the wayside. Milton Vincent in the Gospel Primer said this. He said I have come back to a focus on the gospel and found it sufficiency for daily living to be truly overwhelming. I have found nothing more powerful and life transforming than the gospel. That phrase powerful and life transforming we could put practical in there. Couldn't we? I have found nothing more practical than the gospel. And then he says this. I love this phrase. He says, doing right is not always easy. But it is never more easy than when one is breathing deeply the atmosphere of the gospel. You see to Paul there is nothing more important there is nothing more practical than the gospel. I would say that we would need to become experts at the gospel. Couple resources that may help. I've mentioned it before. But there's a little book. It's not very large. It's got short little chapters that help us. It's called the Gospel Primer. It's by a pastor named Milton Vincent. It is a very helpful tool to keep the gospel on the forefront of our minds on a daily basis. The other book that I would suggest is called the Cross Centered Life. It's by a gentleman named CJ Mahoney. But as I think about just application as we finish. Really, there's really nothing to do. There's really nothing to do except simply remember Jesus Christ. That same thing that Paul said to Timothy so many years ago is the advice that we need still today. Remember Jesus Christ. And why is that so important?

Because you and I are tempted to have the gospel simply be something that happened at our justification and leave it there. So remember Jesus Christ. Preach the gospel to yourself on a daily basis. And dare to reckon it true in everything that you do. Isn't this what communion is all about? I think one of the reasons that God instituted communion is that he knew our forgetfulness. That we would forget so on a regular basis we come back to savor Jesus Christ once again to remember what he's accomplished. You know there is no one there is no one that loves you more or better than Jesus. There is no event that means more to you that will ever mean more to you than Calvary. So as we move to communion I'm gonna ask Korban to come on up. Certainly communion is a time to examine yourself. And where God by his spirit brings conviction into your heart, take it to Calvary. Right? Receive the forgiveness that God offers in his son, Christ. So it certainly is a time, but it's also a time. It is also a time to glory in Christ. It is also a time to delight in your savior. It's a time to glory in what he has accomplished for you. It is a time to leave condemnation and guilt at the cross. It's a time to legalism behind and say God this is not about me and my efforts but it's solely dependent upon your efforts and your merits for me. And so as we begin thinking about the person and work of Christ examine yourself and having done that move on to rejoicing in all that Christ has accomplished for you. The one that loves you more than anyone else ever will or ever could. Rejoicing in Calvary the event that changed everything for you as you believe in it from now to eternity.