

My Hope Is Not in Myself but in Christ

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Now let me share something with you for Christians who struggle with sadness and looking at yourself and always really feeling down. The more you know God, the more you're going to see His holiness. The more you see His holiness, the more you're going to see your sin, which leads you to deeper depths of conviction, contrition and mourning. But if that's all you see, you're in trouble. But with that greater revelation of God's holiness, and that greater revelation of your sin also comes a greater revelation of what God has done for you in Christ, and that unconditional love, and that grace abounding to the chief of sinners. So although, you're almost like a paradox, the more you walk with Christ, the deeper is your contrition and mourning over sin, and yet greater your joy, and there's a transmission that goes on. No longer is your joy found in your own performance, but it's found in the finished work of Christ. So, if the devil walks in and starts pointing out all kinds of things about you, you yawn.

And you go, you don't even know half of it. This has never been about me. Have I ever said this was about me? This is not about me. I don't hope in me. If I hope was in me, you could kill my hope with a dagger right now; the smallest pen knife would take down my hope. But my hope's not in me. It's in my older Brother, and if you don't leave, I'm going to call Him. You don't want me to call Him. Oh, believers, I want you to know something. People sometimes - young men, will come and they'll go, they look at guys who preach in a lot of places around the world, and all these young guys think, man, this guy, he reached some spiritual level, and because he reached that spiritual level, God really uses him. No. No. The older you get, the more needy you become of grace. And the more happy you are in Christ alone. The older you get, the more of your sin you see. And you trust not in the flesh, you glory in Christ Jesus. And when all your everything is based upon His perfect work, as weak as you might be, you're as solid as a rock. Because the devil can't touch Him. The devil can't touch Him.

A young guy one time, he calls me up, he was a seminary student. He was just saying, Brother Paul, he wrote me, I'm so ungodly, I'm so unrighteous, I'm so this and that. I knew the young man. He was a fine, sincere Christian. And he was just so struggling. He said I'm just so ungodly and ignorant. And I wrote him back and I said, "Dear brother, you are much more ungodly and much more ignorant than you now know. Love, your brother, Paul." I have the gift of mercy and encouragement. And so he calls me up on the phone, and he goes, "Thanks?"

And I said, look, I've watched your life. In many ways you seem to have made greater progress than I have. But I'm happier than you. And he said why? I've given up on trying to find hope in my performance. And all, everything for me, is in the unconditional love of my Savior. If you know anything about the ministry that the Lord's given me. If you've heard anything, you go, man, that man just talks about sin, he nails people, he's the meanest preacher that ever walked the planet. Let me tell you something. When it comes to unbelievers who are professing faith in Christ and they are asleep in their sin and they are going to die and go to hell, yes, I am going to rip, rip, rip, because it doesn't appear to me that hardly anyone else is doing that. I am not going to let them go to hell except over my cries that they wake up and see their destruction.

But, when I pastor, sometimes people come to church if I'm preaching and they go, are you the same guy on YouTube? Because all you do is talk about love, love, love, love? Why? Here's the reason. If the person truly becomes converted, I don't have to do anything. They're sheep. They're going to follow Him. As a shepherd, you know what my greatest worry is, for the people who are truly converted? I don't want them coming under false condemnation. And I don't want them doubting the love of God. You see, the whole deal depends on conversion. Do you see that? You get them converted, and you talk to them about the unconditional love of God, and you know what they'll do? I'll tell you what they won't do, they won't stand there and go well, if it's like this, let's just sin.

No, you tell a true sheep about the unconditional love of God and that it doesn't matter what they do or how far they fail, Christ loves them and is going to restore them and work in them, and a bruised reed He will not break and a smoldering wick He will not put out. You tell them that, they say, well, if it be like that then I want to love Him more. I want to serve Him more. I want to follow Him. If I'm really free, you see? So, all you have to do is get converted, and I'll be nice to you. But here's another thing, if I'm preaching on the streets in a place where everybody's just wild and wicked as Sodom and Gomorrah, on this present day planet, I stand up and I preach the love of God. The time for preaching hard is when people have become deceived by religion. And when they think they're something they're not. And when most of the religious authorities in the world are affirming them in their false conversion. And for self-preservation, those preachers are saying "peace, peace," when there is no peace. And people, they are building their huge churches on the bones of carnal, dead church members.