

THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

EPHESIANS 4:32 • TV054A

A television broadcast sermon delivered
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4TH, 1977

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Transcribed, edited and published
JULY 24TH, 2018

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Ephesians 4:32

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

I want you to turn in your Bible to the book of **Ephesians 4:32**.

My subject today is entitled: **“THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL, THE VERY HEART OF THE GOSPEL.”**

Now, I’d like for you to look at this verse of Scripture and look at it carefully with me, **Ephesians 4:32**: *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”*

Now there are three words in that verse of Scripture that I call the very heart of the Gospel. Look at the verse again: *“Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”*

Now those three words which I believe are the very heart of the Gospel are these, *“For Christ’s sake.”* Now you hear those words used in wrath, anger and confusion. Men are angry or filled with wrath and they use it in a blasphemous way as an oath, *“For Christ’s sake.”*

THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

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But there are no more precious words in the human vocabulary, no more important words than these three, *“For Christ’s sake.”* These three words are the foundation of mercy; *“God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”*

These three words are the three most important words in prayer, *“For Christ’s sake.”* Our Lord said; *“If you ask anything of the Father in my name, according to my will, (or for my sake) they shall be done.”*

So those three words are the foundation of mercy; *“God for Christ’s sake has shown you mercy.”* And the three most important words in prayer, *“For Christ’s sake;”* I pray in the name of Christ.

And then these three words are the key to the Old Testament Scriptures. In **Acts 10:43** the Scripture says; *“To Him give all the prophets witness.”* That’s what it’s all about. It’s about Christ, the writings of Moses, the writings of the minor prophets, the writings of David in the Psalms, the writings of Isaiah; it’s about Christ, *“For Christ’s sake.”*

And these words are the key to divine healing. All healing that God the Father does is for the sake of His Son. You know, when Peter came to the man at the gate who was lame from his mother’s womb and he said to him: *“Silver and gold have I none but such as I have give I unto thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ rise up and walk.”* It was for Christ’s sake that that man was healed.

And then these three words are the password to the throne of grace. *“We come to the throne of grace to find mercy and grace to help in our time of need.”* But there’s a reason why we can come to the throne of grace and that is because, *“We have a high priest at the right hand of God who maketh intercession for us.”*

And because, Paul said, in **Hebrews 10**, *“Because we have such a high priest let us come boldly;”* let us come with a full assurance knowing that we shall be heard.

So, these three words, *“For Christ’s sake”* are the foundation of mercy. They’re the three most important words in prayer. They’re the key to the Old Testament Scriptures. They’re the key to divine healing and they’re the password to the throne of grace.

Now, if I should die tonight and there’s a great possibility that I might or you might because our Lord said; *“Boast not thyself of tomorrow. You know not what a day shall bring forth.”* And David said; *“Teach me to number my days that I may apply my heart to wisdom.”*

I may die tonight and I may stand before God. And suppose God were to ask me this question; *“Why should I let a sinner like you into the kingdom of glory, into the kingdom of grace? Why should I let a sinner like you into my holy presence?”*

Well, I wouldn't plead my good works. Now I wouldn't be that foolish. I wouldn't say; "Well, because I preached in your name and because I've done many wonderful works in your name and because I've cast out devils in your name."

Because, I've already read in the Scripture where some folks pleaded that at the Judgment and Christ said to them, "*Depart from me; I never knew you.*"

So, if God said, "Why should I let a fellow like you into my kingdom?" I wouldn't say, "Well I've done many wonderful works" because I may hear Him say just what He said to those people, "*I never knew you.*"

And then I wouldn't plead my righteousness's because I know what Isaiah said about our righteousness; he said, "*Our righteousness's are filthy rags.*" I know what Paul said about the flesh; he said, "*In the flesh dwelleth no good thing.*"

I know what he said about the flesh when he said, "*In the flesh no man can please God.*" And I know what he said and what he meant when he said, "*By the works or the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.*"

So I'm not going to plead that. Suppose the Father said, "Well why should I let a wretch like you, a sinner like you into my kingdom?" Well, I'm not going to plead my faithfulness because I know this, what the old song writer said;

**"If one sheep of Christ could fall away
I would fall a thousand times a day."**

I know that and you ought to know it.

And then I wouldn't plead my church membership because I remember a fellow named Judas who was one of the apostles, who was a member of the early church who walked with Christ for three and a half years.

And I remember another fellow named Simon Magus who was baptized and a fellow named Demas who was a companion of the apostle Paul. So I'm not going to plead that; it won't work. Well what am I going to plead?

I'll tell you the only thing that I choose to plead. I would say; "Father; admit me into thy kingdom. Receive me into your presence for Christ's sake."

That's the foundation, the foundation for forgiveness, pardon, regeneration, and eternal life. "Receive me for Christ's sake." Take away this foundation and the whole building falls down.

Now I want you to see two or three things from this message. I'm saying that these three words "*For Christ's sake;*" these three words are the heart of the Gospel, the very foundation of the Gospel, the very essence of the Gospel.

Now, the reason for mercy is for Christ's sake, "*Even as God for Christ sake.*" You forgive one another. You be kind one to another. You be tenderhearted. Remember that God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you and shown you mercy.

Why is God the Father pleased and moved to forgive me for Christ's sake? Why is God the Father pleased to pardon sinners for Christ's sake? When we do something for someone's sake or for the sake of another there's got to be a reason.

If I do something for the sake of another person there's got to be a reason and I'm going to give you some of the reasons why I believe that God pardons sinners, God forgives sinners, and God gives life to sinners for Christ's sake.

First of all: God shows mercy to sinners for Christ's sake because of the glory of His person, because of who He is.

When our Lord was standing in the River Jordan having been baptized by John the Baptist the heavens opened and the Spirit of God descended upon Him in the form of a dove and God the Father spoke from heaven and said; "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*"

Again, when our Lord was transfigured before the apostles eyes on that mountain, on that high mountain that day when Moses and Elijah appeared with Him; the voice from heaven spake again and said, "*This is my beloved Son; hear ye Him.*"

Here is the first reason why God will pardon you for Christ's sake, why God will receive me for Christ's sake, why God will receive a sinner for Christ's sake because of who He is.

Isaiah 7:14 tells us this; "*Behold the Lord Himself shall give you a sign. A virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son and thou shalt call His name Immanuel, (which is being interpreted God with us).*"

Jesus of Nazareth, born of Mary, walked the streets of Jerusalem, crucified on a cross, buried and rose again, is none other than God almighty. That's right! **Isaiah 9:6** says; "*Unto us a child is born. Unto us a Son is given. His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*"

And then in **Philippians 2:5-9**, Paul writing about the Master says; "*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus who thought it not robbery to be equal with God but made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a servant, being obedient, even to the death of the cross, wherefore, God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven, earth, under the earth, and that every tongue shall confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*"

And Paul writing in **Colossians** says; "*In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin through His blood, who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.*"

One day Phillip said to Him, “*Lord; show us the Father* (give us a glimpse of the Father, let us see the Father) *and we’ll be satisfied.*” And our Lord replied; “*Phillip, have I been so long time with you and yet thou hast not known me? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.*”

Yes, God shows mercy to sinners for Christ’s sake, first of all, because of who He is. Who is Jesus Christ?

When the angels appeared to the shepherds that morning on that Judean hillside they said; “*Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and good will toward men. We bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.*” That’s the reason.

Secondly: God shows mercy to sinners for Christ’s sake because of who He is! He is the eternal, He is the immutable, He is the infinite, He is the almighty, and He is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth.

God shows mercy to sinners for Christ’s sake because of the work which He hath done. Now my friend, if we accurately preach the work of Christ in redemption, we have to present Christ’s work.

Now listen to me and this is so important; if we accurately preach the work of Christ in redemption, if we accurately tell sinners how God saves sinners through Christ and His person and His work and what He did actually to redeem us; we have to begin back in eternity past and we have to go all the way to eternity future.

Now you don’t present the whole Christ, the complete Christ, the redeeming Christ, unless you talk about what He did in the past, what He did yonder on Calvary, what He’s doing now, and what He shall do.

In order to accurately present the work of Christ for sinners you have to go back to the time when He first represented sinners, when He first undertook to save sinners, when He first undertook to be their Surety.

That’s right! Way back yonder before the creation of the world, before God ever put the sun in space, before God ever put the stars in their place, before God ever made the world, before the foundations of this world were ever laid, listen to me, “*Christ was the lamb slain.*”

That’s what God says in His Word. “*He was the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*” I’m saying that the Bible teaches there was a Saviour before there was ever a sinner. There was a Saviour purposed and provided. There was a Saviour presented before there was ever a sinner. That’s right, a Saviour for sinners before the sinners ever fell.

Christ Jesus is the Surety of the eternal covenant. It’s an everlasting covenant. And in **Ephesians 1:3 and 4;** read that; “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who*

hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children.”

Paul wrote in **2 Thessalonians 2:13**; *“I thank God for you beloved of the Lord because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.”* He chose you in Christ. Christ is the firstborn of every creature. Christ is the first elect. We are all in Him.

And back yonder before the world ever began, before God ever made the world, before He ever made Adam and put him in the Garden of Paradise there was a Saviour, a Surety, a Redeemer, a Covenant-head and a Representative. That’s right!

And then if you want to present Christ in His redemptive work, in His saving work, and I’m talking about presenting the whole Christ, the complete Christ, the redeeming Christ. The redeeming Christ is not just someone who came on the scene 2,000 years ago.

The redeeming Christ is not one who just appeared in Bethlehem’s manger and somebody says, “Hey, here’s a Saviour, here’s a Redeemer.” He’s always been the Redeemer. He’s always been the Saviour.

We’ve always been acknowledged and accepted and approved in Christ. If you are in Christ now you were in Christ back when the eternal covenant was made in the councils of God. That’s right; that’s what the Scripture says. *“Having loved His own He loved them to the end.”* How long does He love them? He said: *“I have drawn you with an everlasting love, an eternal love.”*

Secondly: His work is represented and portrayed in all of the Old Testament sacrifices and ceremonies. From Eden’s Garden, when the first blood was shed; you know; when Adam and Eve fell and they tried to cover their nakedness with fig leaf aprons and God came and took an animal and slew that animal and shed its blood and made coats of skin to cover Adam and Eve? That was Christ. That’s a picture of Christ. His blood is shed to cover our nakedness, to provide for us a robe of righteousness.

When Abel brought that first sacrifice and put it on the altar; that was Christ. When Israel slew the lamb in Egypt and put the blood on the door, on the lintel and two side posts and God said, *“When I see the blood I’ll pass over you;”* that’s Christ.

Our Passover is Christ. That’s what Paul wrote. That rock which was smitten in the wilderness that gave forth a refreshing drink to the thirsty people; that rock was Christ. Read the Scriptures. All of those types; the tabernacle is Christ, the priesthood is Christ, the atonement is Christ, and every lamb is Christ.

If you want to talk about the redemptive work of Christ you’ve got to go back to the place where God planned it, where God purposed it, where God presented it, where God portrayed it, where God typified it, where God foreshadowed it, with all of these Old Testament sacrifices.

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“He died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” He was the fulfillment of every Old Testament Scripture. Abraham wasn’t saved by his works; he was saved by looking to Calvary. Moses wasn’t saved because he was a great prophet; he was redeemed and forgiven and pardoned by God because Christ died for his sins and he looked to Calvary.

“Moses wrote of me,” Christ said. Why those Israelites said, *“We have Moses to our Father.”* He said, *“You don’t know Moses; Moses wrote of me. If you would have believed Moses you would believe me. His whole writings are about me.”*

Read David’s Psalms, the Messianic Psalm and you will see Christ in all of these Psalms.

And now, if we’re going to present the redemptive Christ, the redeeming Saviour in His redemptive work; we’ve got to come down and talk about when He actually came into this world, when He actually came into this world.

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The Son of man came into the world to seek and to save the lost. God in the fullness of time sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were born under the law.”

“By one man’s disobedience, (that is the first Adam, the one who was of the earth, earthy) by his disobedience we were made sinners. By the obedience of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, we were made righteous.” The sinless became sinful that the sinful might be sinless.

Did you ever hear that song? That’s the Gospel:

**“Living He loved me
Dying He saved me
Buried He carried my sins far away
One day He’s coming
Oh glorious day.”**

That’s the Gospel. Christ loved me, He justified me, He redeemed me, He ascended to heaven where He intercedes for me, and one day He’s coming again to receive me unto Himself. He died on the cross as our substitute.

If you want to talk about the redemptive work of Christ you’ve got to go to Calvary. *“He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was laid upon Him and by His stripes we are healed.”*

And then He ascended to glory. You know, Paul asked this question; *“Who can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who maketh intercession for us.”*

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God shows mercy for Christ's sake because of who He is, the infinite, immutable, God almighty. And because of what He did from eternity past to eternity future; He has stood for His people.

He has represented His people and He has come to this earth in the flesh to do for us what the law could not do and what works cannot do and what church membership cannot do and what good works cannot do.

He gave unto us a perfect standing before the holy God and He satisfied the justice of God by bearing our sins. And at the right hand of God right now He is our Mediator. *"There is one God and one mediator between God and men"* and that Mediator is the man Christ Jesus.

And He intercedes for us. He's our Advocate. John wrote and said; *"My little children; these things I write unto you that you sin not. But if any man sin, (thank God we have a high priest) we have an advocate."* We have one who pleads His righteousness and His sacrifice and His blood and it's all effectual.

His praying is always effectual praying. His pleading is always effectual pleading because He has the grounds on which to plead, His righteousness.

And then He's coming again. He said, *"If I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also."*

**"Jesus paid it all
All the debt I owe
Sin left a crimson stain
But He washed it white as snow."**

I use to hear an old country preacher from down in Louisiana sing. He would play the piano. All he could do was chord it. He wasn't a good pianist but he could sing. And he wrote his own songs and this is one he wrote; he said:

**"I once was lost but now I'm found
And by God's grace I'm heaven bound
But my only hope and my only plea
Is that when Christ died He died for me."**

So, the reason why God will forgive sinners and pardon sinners and give life to sinners for Christ's sake is two-fold because of who He is. He's God in the flesh. He's the perfect, well-beloved, only begotten Son of God.

And because of what He has done for us He has represented us from eternity past and His work on the cross of Calvary was for our justification. And He will come again and take us to live with Him throughout eternity future.

Thirdly: For Christ's sake, is not only God's motive for mercy but for Christ's sake ought to be, ought to be your motive for what you do in the name of God and for others and it ought to be my motive

Now listen to the text again; it says, "*God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*" But He preceded that with something; He said, "*Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even,* (here's your motive, even; here's your reason) *as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*"

Now some people have learned this. It's not an easy lesson to learn. It doesn't come spontaneously like wrath does and anger does and vengeance does; we have to learn it, we have to be taught by the Holy Spirit.

Hate's already there but the love of God has to be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The fleshly life is already there. It's born there when we come into the world. But the divine life has to be implanted.

The old creature, the old man's already there but the new man has to be created. And Paul learned it; he said, "*The love of Christ constraineth me.*"

The love of Christ is my motivating force. If He died for me then I was dead and I should not live unto myself but unto to Him who loved me and died for me for Christ's sake.

I've read stories about missionaries with no weapon but the Bible, who have landed among pagans and heathens and barbarians with no hope, with no hope of gain except to make Christ known with no weapon but the Bible, with no hope of gain except to make Christ known.

And they have sacrificed and suffered and they have toiled, they have died, and they have buried their children and their wives on foreign soil just to tell other people about Christ. Why, for Christ's sake, for His glory?

History records stories of those old Moravian missionaries. Have you ever read about them? Some of them actually, now this is true, some of them actually sold themselves into slavery so they could preach the Gospel to the slaves for Christ's sake.

And some of them; now get this, some of them, some of those old Moravian missionaries actually entered leper colonies and became lepers so they could preach the Gospel to the lepers.

That's love isn't it? That is the way God loved me. He actually came down here into this world and became a leper. He actually came down into this world and became a slave. He came down into this world and became a servant so He could tell me, preach to me, the slave of sin, the Gospel of redemption.

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He came down here and was diseased. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He took upon Himself my filth and my guilt and my sin and became identified with me, “*Numbered with the transgressors,*” imprisoned with the guilty so He could preach the Gospel to me.

And these Moravian missionaries have caught that. Most of us haven’t but they did. They caught the message. They caught it. “*You be kind to one another even as God for Christ’s sake was kind to you.*”

**“See from His head, His hands His feet?
Sorrow and love flow mingled down
Did err such love and sorrow meet?
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?**

**Were the whole realm of nature mine,
(some of it is, all of it’s not, but some of it is)
That were present far too small
Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”**

This thing of salvation is not just memorizing some doctrine and joining the church and quitting some of your bad habits and trying to act like a theologian; it’s walking in a vital union with a living Lord and being able to reveal for His glory some of His grace and some of His mercy.

“You be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

Look back at the verse preceding the text, **verse 31 of Ephesians 4:** “*Let all bitterness and all wrath and all anger and all resentment and all slander be put away from you, with all malice and be ye kind.*” These things aren’t in keeping in harmony with the grace of God and the mercy of God.

You know, our Lord told a story one time about a wealthy man who had some creditors or debtors. He had some debtors. These men owed him some money. One of them owed him an enormous debt.

It was an enormous debt, millions of dollars’ worth of gold and silver. And the Lord forgave him. He said, “*I’ll just wipe it out. You don’t owe me another thing.*”

And somebody came in after a while and said, “You know that fellow you forgave the debt and wiped his slate clean? Well he’s out there. Some guy owed him a quarter and he’s out there demanding payment and is going to send him to prison if he doesn’t pay it.”

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And he called that fellow in and he said: “*Bind him hand and foot and cast him into prison. If you forgive not men their debts neither will your Father forgive your debts.*” That sounds like us doesn’t it?

God has forgiven us of so much. He’s been so gracious. “*For Christ’s sake;*” let that be your motive!