

Good News

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[0 : 00] O to see my name written in the wounds for through your suffering I am free. Death is crushed to death life is mine to live one through your selfless love.

! Our Father as we come in your word to these precious truths we pray that these truths might live for all of us here today. We ask that we may be able to see the personal application of these truths for us.

We pray that we would not stand at a distance from the truth that Jesus died upon the cross for sinners. That we might come very very close to these truths again today.

Open our hearts we pray. Speak to us by your holy precious true word. Apply all this to us by the power of your Holy Spirit.

We may be convinced of our need and wonderfully convinced of the supply that is made for us in Jesus Christ. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.

[1 : 24] Does God love us? Obviously. Obviously. Many people would take that view. Many people have that sort of default reaction.

God is love. So God must love us. It's an obvious thing. And many people go through the whole of their lives with that cozy, comforting, homely kind of feel that God is benevolently waiting for them at the end.

And how many funeral services have taken place where that kind of hope is granted to people, offered to them. Your loved one is with God because God is love.

Answer two. God. Does God love us? Probably not. Probably not. If God is a God of love.

And it's probably not a sort of God that we would like to have to face. A God who is capricious, unpredictable, vindictive, powerless.

[3 : 06] He doesn't seem to be able to stop a tsunami. Or to prevent refugees. Or to stop wars.

Pretty much like the gods of the ancient world. The Greek gods. Who sat in mountain places and had their own little dynasty sagas.

They were pretty unpredictable. Rather unpleasant. Probably not. Probably God doesn't love us.

It probably actually tells us that he's not there at all. Well a bit of these responses lies in all of us at some time or other.

We'd like to believe in a God of love. We'd like to believe in a God of love. Everything's going to be okay. You know where the lights go out at night. And God as it were soothes us and says it's all right.

[4 : 05] It's all right. But every bit of dark news sows a doubt. And some experiences seem to sow terminal doubt. Now there's some more reasons why this question matters.

I'll address this to Christian people now. Christian people. We fail. We fail. And we don't only fail once or twice. But we fail repeatedly.

And we fail in the same areas repeatedly. So it's a valid question to ask. Does God still love us?

One of the writers in the book of Psalms says this.

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquity, who could stand? The Bible makes a distinction between those who do wrong things in ignorance and those who do it against light.

Against what they know to be true. I've told you before. Christian people are in a place of light.

[5 : 23] They do know what is right and they do know what is wrong. And so it's particularly alarming when we do the thing which we know to be wrong. How much love does God have for us then?

How much love has God left in him for us then? Is there a limit? Can I really come back to him?

I address this now to people who are maybe searching for God. And you're honest enough this morning to be saying, I really don't know God in the way that it appears.

The people who stood next to me just now singing that song appear to know him. I can see that others speak of knowing God. But is God actually interested in me?

What kinds of reception might I receive from this God? And there's a big question for all of us.

[6 : 32] Because the Bible gives us clear and repeated reasons to suggest it's a massive problem for God to have anything to do with us.

Does God love us? Of course. This is actually a blind and sentimental and spiritually ignorant response. There is in fact every reason to believe that God should not love us.

And I bring as witness to this the character of God himself. Spread over the pages of scripture.

Reflected over two and a half thousand years of human history. There is a very, very clear portrayal of the character of God. The God who reveals himself to mankind.

God who is very careful to say to us, I want you to understand the sort of God that I am. So in not an isolated way, we find out something of the character of God.

[7 : 50] What the Bible calls, for instance, his holiness. His purity. In the book of Habakkuk, chapter 1 and verse 13, it's on page 940.

You want to see this. This rather very small book in the Bible, obscure book, has a very telling phrase about the character of God.

Chapter 1, verse 13. Your eyes are too pure to look on evil.

You cannot tolerate wrong. It is completely against the character of God to tolerate wrong.

He is utterly opposed to it. Well, this is the picture that God portrays of himself consistently.

[9 : 15] And, it's also clear from the Bible, that not only does he have an attitude against what is wrong, but he also does something about it.

We call this the righteousness of God, that he is not just one who might criticise, who might examine what is wrong, and come to an internal conclusion about it, but his character is to do something about what is wrong.

He will not let the guilty be unpunished. There is a price to be paid for wrong. God's judgments are in all the earth.

He makes it known, in very plain terms, what he considers about what is wrongdoing in his sight. So that's the character of God.

This is one part of the equation, which makes it extremely difficult for us to say, of course God loves us. What a pure God we face.

[10 : 32] What a holy, perfect God we deal with. Well, what a great standard. Well, let's think about the character of man.

Our character and behaviour. The character of man. This is actually what we've been looking at in the book of Romans in this series there, where the Apostle Paul takes at least the first three chapters of this book to make it very plain that whoever we are, there is something deeply flawed in our characters which constantly manifests itself.

And he's at great pains to make it clear that it is whoever we are. Because we are very adept at being able to pass blame to other people, other cultures.

But in those first three chapters of Romans, and he's only really repeating what has been evident in those 2,000 to 3,000 years of Bible history, that man, women, children, high-born, poor, healthy, weak and sick, whatever their situations, backgrounds, intelligence, levels, education and so forth, that all of them are found to have fallen short of God's standards.

And indeed, naturally speaking, we don't even attempt it. We don't even try. Our very first parents in the Garden of Eden decided to go their own way and we have inherited their attitude, their choice.

[12 : 39] And after Paul, in a courtroom situation, has explored all those avenues of excuse, he says in a rousing statement in chapter 3 of Romans, there is no one righteous, not even one.

That's pretty comprehensive, isn't it? He looks at human history and he says, there's no one righteous, not even one.

What he, by the power of the Holy Spirit, says then, is said to us this morning in this place.

None of us are righteous. I can't find one person here who's a righteous person. If this congregation was a hundred times bigger, still ask the question, is there a righteous person here?

Can we find a righteous person here? Can't be done. Can't be done. Ah, that's God's verdict.

[14 : 09] God who sees and knows our hearts, who looks into the deep places of all of us. He says of us, ah, there's none righteous, not one.

Ah, what about this? No, there's none righteous. So he says in chapter 3, verse 19, now we know whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced.

That's a very powerful phrase. reading of several court cases recently where the defendant has sort of proclaimed their innocence, has got something to say in their defence.

The Bible says, ah, you've got nothing to say in your defence. When the day of reckoning comes, as we come before God with our own characters, well, we've got nothing to say in our defence. Every mouth is stopped. We've got nothing to say. We can't defend ourselves. Every mouth may be silenced and the whole world, whole world held accountable to God.

[15 : 40] No one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law. rather through the law we become conscious of sin. That's what we've been learning these last weeks, isn't it?

This is what the law of God does. It exposes, it puts a light onto our lives. It says, well, you've been living by your own standards, but when God's law comes with its light upon your life, then you see that you've fallen short.

We become conscious of sin. So, it's not, it's not a cruel thing for us to be saying this morning that the idea that God loves us is an of course is actually completely unbiblical.

Unbiblical. It's not found in the Bible. There's not an of course about it. There's not an of course about it. There's not an of course about it. And it's the kindest thing of all today for you to be knowing that.

If you've been thinking in your own mind today, I just live my life to the best of my ability. I do how I've been brought up to do. I try to do good to others. You know, I want to do my best and so forth.

[17 : 00] Well, you have to hear what the Bible says. No one will be declared right in his sight by observing the law. Can't be done. Can't be done.

It's so important you should understand that. It's so important you should get to that point where you say, I know I can't satisfy God by the way that I'm trying to live.

I cannot do it in my strength. I can't do it in my energy. Even if I had all the will in the world, I can't do it. God would find faults with me.

His law would expose me. Some of you are coming to that understanding. And I pray that by God's spirit he would really make it much, much stronger in your life so there wouldn't be a shred of doubt in your mind that you cannot please God by the things you do.

You can't meet his standard. So there is a problem. There is a very big problem here. How can God be holy and yet be a God of love?

[18 : 16] The passage that we've looked at in Romans 5 is very helpful at this point. It directly addresses these questions. So let's look at this passage Romans 5 verses 6 to 8 please have your Bible open at that particular point.

God demonstrates his love for us. Do you see that in verse 8? But God demonstrates his own love for us. This is a wonderful thing.

God does not only speak of a love for people but he shows a love for people. He backs up his words by action.

He gives proof this is far more than words. In the days when there used to be markets where all sorts of things went on there used to be people who had gadgets.

I loved going to these places where there was a counter and the person had a gadget. It was probably a kitchen gadget or a tool of some sort and this was the tool or the gadget that was going to actually help you so much in preparing food or I don't know mending the whole of your house just by a little tool and so forth.

[19 : 50] And I was always amazed in the way that they were able to demonstrate the usefulness of these tools and gadgets. And I have to say I bought a few things on the basis of that.

Didn't quite work out for me but they were able to demonstrate their words. They were able to show how the thing worked. Now you see the most wonderful way God demonstrates his love for us.

And it's this passage that helps us most of all to understand the bigness, the depth, the richness of the love of God.

God demonstrates his love for us. He does this in all kinds of ways in the world, doesn't he? I think all of us have been blown away by some magnificent scenery, a fantastic sunset, the richness of a of rain and dew on mown grass, all these lovely beautiful things, they are all expression of God's love, of his kindness to mankind.

Or we see the relationship between a mother and a child, or the wonder and the thrill of new birth. And all of that is a precious illustration of the love of God to mankind.

[21 : 13] God and he causes his rain to fall on the just and the unjust. And he fills our lives with so many rich and good things. But here in the Bible, the apostle Paul is not thinking of any of that stuff, as good and important as it is.

He's saying, if you really want to understand the love of God, you've got to come to this point. God demonstrates his love for us.

He didn't need to do that. Do you know that? God is love. That is truth. He didn't need to demonstrate his love for us in the way that he has demonstrated it to us.

He chose to do so. We need proof because we're very feeble and unable to understand God. So he accommodates himself to us in this most marvellous way. He shows us. He writes it in human language. He puts it in something that we can properly understand.

[22 : 30] God demonstrates his love. Demonstrates his love for us. I love the plural. I love the richness. I love the broadness.

I love the invitation. The width of this expression. God demonstrates his love for us. Who are the us? Oh, it's actually all the people he's been speaking about in Romans 1 to 3.

Do you remember the story? Well, there's the Jews on the one side. We know about the Jews. They have a law. They're God's special people. And on the other side, there are the Gentiles. And they don't have God's law in that same open way. They don't have the sacrifices. They don't have the priestly system. They have a law of God written on their hearts and their consciences. And in that simple division expresses the whole of mankind, Jew and Gentile. It's not the way that we split up the world today, but it's the way that God splits up the world today.

[23 : 28] And he says Jew and Gentile. And he says that encompasses the whole of the world. So you today, in God's eyes, you're Jew or a Gentile. Most of us here will be Gentiles.

So now he says, God demonstrates his love for us. Oh, God must love the Jews. Yes, he does love the Jews. What about the Gentiles?

God doesn't love the Gentiles. He does love the Gentiles. God demonstrates his love for us. For us. And here's a word that comes knocking on our door today.

And it's a word for us here, for all of us. Don't dare exclude yourself from that thought and that hope. These words are written for you.

God demonstrates his love for us. That's the first point. The second is that Christ died for us. That is the demonstration of the love of God. You cannot look for any place where there is a higher, better, richer, fuller expression of the love, of the God who is love, than the death of Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago on a cross, on a hill outside the city of Jerusalem.

[24 : 56] this pinprick of historical reality is the biggest, greatest, richest, fullest demonstration of the love of God that there has ever been, and will ever be.

There could have been nothing bigger that God could have conceived of to demonstrate his love. Christ died for us.

Here is love, says John, in another passage, not that we love God, but that he loved us and gave his son as a propitiation for our sin.

Christ died for us, the gift and sacrifice of the Father. Romans 8, verse 32.

He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all. what a poignant expression that is.

[26 : 22] It's not only that God so loved the world that he gave, he gave as a gift, released, offered, but it says here, he did not spare his own son.

He allowed his son to be put through the most dreadful agonies. He did not spare his own son. He didn't relieve the suffering of his own son.

This is the measure of the love of God. The gift and sacrifice of the Father.

God is the very beginning of the Bible. There's a very remarkable story which concerns Abraham. You find it in Genesis chapter 22 where the heading to the chapter in my Bible says in rather bold terms, Abraham tested.

[27 : 33] and that doesn't tell the half of it, does it? Abraham tested. God said, take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love.

Sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains. God is speaking to Abraham, he's called him, Abraham is following, now he says to him, take your son, my son, my son, I'm nearly 100 years old, my only son, the son I've been praying for, my only son, I've got no others, no expectation of

another son, this is a son who's been promised to me by God, as it were, all things hinge on him, he's a very, very special boy, and God says, take your son, oh just leave it there God, just leave it at that point, but he says, take your son, your only son, oh please leave it there, take your son, your only son, the son you love, the son you love,

I think of this story here, I'm thinking that the God who spoke those words to Abraham, knew, knew, 2000 years later, he would be going through that same test, he would be taking his son, his only son, the son whom he loves, and not sparing him, oh that's the point isn't it, that's the point, because in this strange story of Abraham and Isaac, as they walk along the way, and they get to that critical point of sacrifice, well God provided, the blade did not fall on Isaac, Isaac was spared, ah but here you see the love of God, he didn't spare his own son, the knife did fall, the death really happened,

I think also of the self sacrifice, the self sacrifice of the son, as Abraham took Isaac by the hand and they took that journey, days, days journey, to the place of sacrifice, Isaac didn't know what was going on, he trustingly went along with his daddy, he didn't know what was going to happen, but I want you to think about this, that Jesus Christ in eternity, he agreed with his father, to consciously go to a death, death, a death that would be in the place of sinners, and to endure the rod of God's anger, and he knew, he knew with utter clarity what he was going to do, and he was willing to do that.

the self-sacrifice of the Son of God, Galatians 3 verse 20, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

[32 : 10] The Son of God, who loved me, gave himself for me. what a marvellous thought it is, that way back in eternity, before time began, God the Father decided to go through with this most awful, and amazing, and beyond belief, demonstration of his love, by sending his own Son into this world to die upon the cross.

Son, and that the Son fully agreed to that plan. I'll go. I'll go.

And he did this. He did this for us, as it was for us. It wasn't to prove something in terms of the wonder of the cosmic Godhead, that they could do this in a vacuum, as it were, but Jesus Christ, was given this task of dying in the place of sinners.

And he had me in his mind. He had me in his mind in eternity. Christ died for us.

Notice again, the plural, the richness, the breadth of it. Who does Christ die for? Is it just the Jews? It's the Jews and the Gentiles.

[33 : 50] There's a very, very big, broad invitation that is made today to everybody in this room so that you should feel included did in this story.

And this is what Paul says also in this one verse, verse 8, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

While we were still sinners. He's actually alluded to it in the same way. In verse 6, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

I don't know a better place in the whole of the Bible that expresses just how wonderful this love of God is, because it's made completely plain and clear that when Jesus Christ was faced with going to the cross, it was in the knowledge that he was doing so, on behalf of those people who were powerless, ungodly, and still sinners.

The Bible is wanting to be very plain to us today. Christ did not die for the godly. And I want to say also, carefully, he didn't die for the potentially godly either.

[35 : 20] He died for sinners. He died for sinners. sinners. While we were still sinners.

He did not die for good people, but for bad people. He did not die for those who succeeded, but had not succeeded. He dies for failures. God gave up his son while we were still sinners.

Jesus self-sacrificed himself for us while we were still sinners. He became sin for us. He took the bad and the wrong and the guilt and the shame and the horror and the shortfall that lies within all of us and all that was laid upon him so that we read in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us.

So that if it were possible to strip away the naked flesh of Jesus Christ upon the cross and to see into the depths of his being and to see him as God saw him on that day on Calvary, we'd have to say that's just sin.

[37 : 05] That's just sin that you're seeing there. It's the sin of us that's found in Jesus Christ at that moment upon the cross.

that's exactly what his father saw at that time. His father turns his face away. Darkness falls upon the earth.

The punishment of God for sin falls upon Jesus Christ so that he dies on the cross not because of nails but because he's receiving God's punishment against sin because that's exactly what God sees in his son at that point.

Your sin and my sin is seen in Jesus Christ and a punishment is paid. And so God demonstrates his love for us in this.

It'd be a wonderful thing if somebody died for us scarcely for a righteous man some would dare to die. God demonstrates his love for us in that he died for the guilty for the ones who were absolutely opposed to him.

[38 : 25] He dies for his enemies. Jesus died for us not seeing what we might or even will become but seeing us in all our wretchedness.

Think of Calvary think of the scene he bore our sins in his body on the tree says Peter that was the intimate and felt experience of Jesus Christ dying for sinners becoming completely identified with them.

This is the heart of the good news. This is the very heart of the good news. I cannot take you to any other place in the whole of God's revelation to give you a better feel for the heart of the good news. What a privilege it is for us today to have an open Bible and to be hearing these things. It's actually the most precious good news in the whole world.

it's a most wonderful precious and intimate thing that we should be hearing this truth today. Gospel good news.

[39 : 47] It is good news because he's taken all my wretchedness and all my sin and failure upon himself and he's paid the full price for it.

all the superlatives that could be expressed they're all expressed there. There was nothing more left to be done. No more price to be paid.

No more sin to be atoned for because he'd done it there. We ought to think about this a lot. Paul said in one place I determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified.

he comes back to that again and again in his ministry and he's saying there's lots of other things I could talk about but actually this is what you need to hear because this is what God has given me to tell you.

I determined I made it a set thing in my ministry to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified. I won't get taken away from that theme because that's what you need.

[40 : 58] that's what God wants you to know. Christian, non-Christian, believer, non-believer, you need to hear this good news.

We need to hear this truth again and again because there is actually no greater demonstration of the love of God and no better place to understand our need for that love. This ought to disarm every reason we might have for not putting our lives into God's care and keeping.

Many people have said and they've said it here as well, I am not good enough. I am not good enough to come to God, to be a Christian, to be a follower, to be named as that.

That phrase is completely demolished by what happened to Jesus Christ on the cross. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Isn't that great? Isn't that truly, stupendously wonderful? That every sin that could be named, in thought, word and deed, Jesus knows it all, sees it all, took it upon the cross himself, and he's not taking any goodness upon the cross.

[42 : 36] He's not searching your lives and trying to find some mitigating circumstance that would cause you to be more desirable, more worth dying for. He's dying and taking the punishment of your sin.

Not dying for good people or potentially good people or people who are only a bit wrong. Whatever big thing creates a sense in you that God would never welcome you is demolished in the phrase he became sin for us.

not just taking sins but becoming sin with a capital S. He saw it all, he felt it all, and he did so willingly and thoughtfully.

Thoughtfully. Thirdly, this gives us all hope that whatever we have been and done there is sufficient space and room for each of us to be completely forgiven by God.

When Jesus died upon the cross he was deliberately taking for us the punishment of God that we deserve so that we should never have to experience this ourselves.

[43 : 48] Praise God. Come to God and ask for his forgiveness because of what Jesus did on the cross.

Don't come to God and say, please forgive me because your love God come to God and say, please forgive me because of what Jesus did upon the cross.

If Jesus hadn't died upon the cross, you and I would have no basis for coming to God at all. Even the character of God, as wonderful as that is, does not give us a basis for coming to God and having a hope that when we stand on the final day that he will accept us.

The only basis for hope and confidence this morning is that Jesus has died upon the cross and has taken our sin upon himself. So that we shall say, my sin not in part, but the whole is nailed to the tree and I bear it no more.

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[45 : 06] And here is a prayer which I invite you all of us to pray. I'm going to read it out so you might like to bow your head.

If you want to see it on the screen, there it is as well. Here is a prayer we're all invited to pray. O God, I know that nothing that I am or say or do can make me right in your eyes.

I'm sorry that I have lived my life at a distance from you, choosing what I want, not what you say. I deserve your punishment but see that your son, Jesus Christ, has actually taken the punishment that I deserve when he died on the cross.

Thank you. Because of what Jesus did, I ask for your forgiveness and that you would receive me as your child. Amen. God have a prayer.

If you've genuinely prayed that prayer, you've done a very important thing today. You've put yourself in the very place, the only place, where you can be right with God.

[46 : 25] If you haven't prayed that prayer today, may the prayer linger because the door, the opportunity is there. But don't leave it.

Don't leave it. Today is a day of grace. Today is a day of salvation.