

Free!

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[0 : 00] Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would work mightily in our hearts and our minds, our wills, our affections as we open your word.

Father, we thank you that as Jesus becomes the Savior of our lives and as he becomes Lord of more and more of our lives, that you build within us a deep inner freedom.

Father, we thank you for this mighty work of your Holy Spirit in our lives. So, Father, pour out the Holy Spirit now and we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Please be seated. Just want to sort of begin by asking for your prayers for me. You know, I really do know how hard it is sometimes just to share about Jesus.

Maybe I'm way more sensitive to what people think about me than you folks are. But just yesterday, I was in a Starbucks and I was working on my sermon.

[1 : 07] I had this book out with my pen and I kept staring off into space and I was praying and I was having a hard time trying to put my sermon together. But there's this couple that I'd never talked to before.

They were a bit older than me and they just, everything about them just said, these are two people that were probably university professors, just very urbane, educated, competent people.

But just somehow or another, from the way they dressed to the way they carried themselves. And I'd seen them there quite a few times over the years. I'd never talked to them. And yesterday, after I'd been working away at my sermon for about an hour and a half, we got into a conversation.

And one of the very first things they asked me is if I was working on a speech. Now, here's where I'm asking for your prayer. I have to say that within myself, I paused and I almost felt like saying yes.

But I didn't want to say I was working on a sermon. This isn't George at his best. This is George as a sinner. And I actually, it felt like a long time, but it was probably only a fraction of a second that went through my mind was, I'd like to really just sort of feel like I'm at one with these people, you know, urbane, educated, you know, whatever.

[2 : 21] But, you know, probably in heaven I'll find out that one of you were praying for me at that exact moment. But I said, well, actually, I'm not working on a speech. I'm a pastor and I'm working on a sermon. And that ended up bringing about a conversation we had for about 20 minutes.

But here's the other thing about that, which is so funny. And so on one hand, I ask for your prayers because I'm a sinful, fallen human being. And it's easy to just want to try to curry favor with people rather than bearing witness to Jesus.

You know, the funny thing, of course, is that we didn't have a bad conversation. They didn't say, oh, well, you're really stupid. I'm not going to talk to you. We actually had a very good conversation for 20 minutes. But here's the other funny thing about it. That just before, but probably about five minutes before I prayed to them, I actually wrote down in my book two prayer requests because I was having a hard time.

I wrote down, Lord, how do I begin my sermon? And the second thing is, Lord, how do I connect this sermon, this topic to Christians and non-Christians?

And five minutes later, I had my conversation with these two non-Christians. It was only afterwards that I thought to myself, God answered my prayer in five minutes. Especially because, and this is the last part about the story, because I actually probably didn't do a very good job talking to them.

[3 : 42] It was one of those cases where afterwards I thought of 23 better things I could have said. But, you know, I did my best because they asked me what my sermon was going to be on.

And I didn't do a very good job of answering it, partially because I was still trying to put things together in my mind. But one of the things which we talked about, the three of us, was something

which, in fact, has troubled me at a certain time in my life.

And I know troubles many Christians. We got into a conversation about whether or not people only believe what they believe because that's what they were raised with. Like, basically, they said to me, George, don't you think that if you're raised as a Christian, you become a Christian?

Like, people, if you're raised as a Buddhist, you become a Buddhist. If you're raised as a Hindu, you become a Hindu. And we had a bit of a conversation around that. But that very, very topic is actually one of the main things that the gospel text, which we're going to look at, addresses.

Not in those exact terms, but it talks, in fact, it's a scripture text which talks about the importance of human freedom. And the fact is that sometimes people have the possibility to use their freedom in a way which leads them towards truth.

[4 : 57] And sometimes we use our freedom in a way which leads us away from truth. But it's, in fact, actually essential to how God relates to us. This is what I'm saying to you. I was more like blah, blah, blah with them.

So one of the things we can do for each other is just pray that when God opens doors to talk about, just bear witness that we're followers of Jesus, that we walk through that door rather than walk away from that door.

And that we pray for each other that we can do a good job in talking. But also that we just pray for each other to know that if we don't do a good job, it's not the end of the world.

Life goes on. God is still God. But how does this text actually address this topic of freedom? So if you get your Bibles and turn to John chapter 11, John chapter 11, verse 45, it's actually sort of seen in a sense in the shadow of the text.

It's not what the text actually show. On one level it shows, well, let's just look and see. It's a very, very interesting text. It's John chapter 11, verse 45.

[6 : 04] And as I explained a little bit earlier, what's just gone before this is that Jesus has raised Lazarus from the dead. And if you go back on your own and read the story, and one of the things that can be good is to print the Bible text out sometimes.

One of the things I actually do every week before I preach is I handwrite the scripture text out.

Because if you handwrite the scripture text out, it helps you to be more present with the text.

And then afterwards I do things, if you look in my notes, I circle things with different colors and stuff like that to notice them. And one of the things that's interesting is if you look at the scripture text and just circle all the times it gives you some indication that Lazarus is dead, you'll see I think some 20 times in the 45 verses in different ways it emphasizes that Lazarus is dead.

And it emphasizes the miracle-ness of the miracle. Miracle-ness isn't a word, but I just, you know what I mean. It emphasizes the miracle, even to the point that Lazarus is buried in a cave with a stone rolled on top of it that takes several people to move.

The fact that he comes out with the cloth over his face, that even if he had been in a swoon, the cloth would have suffocated him and he would have died. And so it emphasizes the deadness of Lazarus.

[7 : 20] And one of the things which is very interesting in the text is that the way that circumstances work, there's a fairly large number of people who are there. The miracle happens just two miles outside of Jerusalem.

So many people from Jerusalem have come. And not only are there a large number of people there for the miracle, but the miracle is witnessed by friend and foe of Jesus, by people like Mary and Martha who love Jesus.

They don't fully understand who he is or what he can do, but they love Jesus. They're Jesus people. And it's also witnessed by a lot of people who are anybody but Jesus people, anti-Jesus people.

And both types of groups are all there for the miracle. And so this spectacular miracle happens. A man who's been dead for four days, Jesus brings him back to life.

So what is the response to the miracle? Well, here's where we start to get into the issue of human freedom. Like how do people respond to this very, very powerful miracle?

[8 : 25] Well, this is what the text begins with in verse 45. Many of the Jewish people, therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

Many did, but not all of them. Verse 46, But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Now just pause there. They didn't, the but which is there, it's a, sorry, I love saying this.

It's a big but. And it's a, it does, they don't go to the, they don't go to these people and say, wow, you guys are going to believe Jesus too after this. No, they know that these are the people who hate Jesus.

And they go to cause Jesus trouble. Like it's really interesting. They use their freedom to go out of the way to cause Jesus trouble. They're not even indifferent. They want to have Jesus get in trouble.

And so how do the people react? Verse 47, So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council. And just sort of pause there. The actual word in the original language is Sanhedrin.

[9 : 33] And that means this is a very special council. And there's nothing really like it in Canada. So just try to imagine that in Canada, if Canada was sort of at the very highest level of ruling Canada, you had a group of, in this particular case, only men, a group of men that's both the Supreme Court and also the cabinet and also the head of the police forces and also the head of the religious institution and also the top faculty, Université de Montréal and McGill and University of Toronto and UBC.

So you have the top academics, the top lawyers, the top cops, the top politicians, all in one group to govern the country.

And that's who's gathered. There's nothing like it in Canada. We separate these powers. But in that time, they were all one. And so just, we'll read that verse 47 again. So that's who's gathered.

So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council, the Sanhedrin, and said, What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. Isn't that interesting?

They don't say, This guy is the best magician I've ever come across. He keeps fooling people. They don't say, Listen, this is the best drug dealer that we've ever come across.

[10 : 59] He keeps giving people magic mushrooms and they're having these hallucinations. He's the best trickster. He's the best fraudster. No, they don't say any of those things. They say, This guy's performing miracles.

This guy is performing miracles. That's 47. 48. If we let him go on like this, Isn't that sort of funny? As if God said, I'm not going to perform any miracles there unless I have the permission of the Sanhedrin. No, that's not how it worked. It would be as if the Trudeau government, or any government, it doesn't matter who the government is, or the next province of Ontario, so it doesn't look like I'm playing political favorites.

They said, No miracles by God are allowed in this province unless it's passed by the legislature.

What? Like, that's just stupid. Anyway, but that's how they're thinking.

If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation. That's their worry.

[12 : 05] And the word place here has sort of a double meaning. On one hand, it means the temple. On the other hand, it means our place. Like us being the Sanhedrin, us being in control, us being in power.

And they say, Listen, Jesus is performing all of these miracles. We've got to fight against these miracles. We've got to stop the miracles. And if we don't stop the miracles, Rome is going to destroy our nation, the temple is going to be destroyed, and we're going to lose our place.

So, verse 49, one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, and by the way, Caiaphas is known to historians. He was the longest serving high priest of the first century.

He served from A.D. 18 to A.D. 36. He's known outside of the Bible. It's one of the many ways that we see that this biography of Jesus is historical by their proper use of historical locations and names.

Verse 49 again, But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, You know nothing at all. In other words, you guys can't think. You're stupid. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.

[13 : 22] And in verse 51, he did not say this. Now, this is John speaking. John, the writer of the Gospel, says he did not say this. That's Caiaphas. Did not say this of his own accord.

But being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who were scattered abroad, so that from that day on, they made plans to put Jesus to death.

Now, this is an odd story. We're going to read some more of it, obviously, in a moment. But what's up with Caiaphas actually being able to prophesy?

Like, what's up with that? How does that make any sense? Caiaphas, Caiaphas, is an envious, power-hungry, unjust, manipulative, insulting, murderous man.

And he gets to prophesy? Like, what's up with that? Like, like, what's up with that?

[14:36] Is, is, is, and this is what troubling, if you think about it for a second, for many people, when they, they think about that, they go, there seems to be like, there's two types of possibilities. One possibility is, and this, this feeds into the fear that many people in our culture have about Christianity, is that God somehow is rewarding him for his evil behavior to be, to make him able to prophesy.

Or is it that God just sort of all of a sudden takes Caiaphas, and Caiaphas is going around, and all of a sudden, Caiaphas is making his plans, and all of a sudden, God just grabs Caiaphas by the head, and overwhelms Caiaphas, and Caiaphas, against his will, says the words that God wants him to say.

Is that what's happening here in this story? What's up? Well, Andrew, hopefully you got that I changed my points. Did you get that? We're going to find out. Yes. Thank you, Andrew. So here's the first thing.

God works through human freedom. God works through human freedom. The fact of the matter is, is that Caiaphas is an envious, unjust, murderous, power-hungry, high priest.

That's what he is. And the fact of the matter is, is that what he said is 100% from Caiaphas. But here's the other thing about it.

[16:00] It's also 100% from God. And that's what's a little bit puzzling to people. You see, what it is, is that God never, many of the fears that we have about getting close to Jesus are really fears about getting close to the devil.

It's lies that the devil tells us. And he tells us lies which speak very deeply to our own heart and our desire for power. And the devil tells us these lies about God.

God. But really, really what he's making us afraid of isn't, it's funny, he's, the devil is making us sort of trust the devil and worry that God is like the devil even as we trust the devil.

It's a very, very powerful type of delusion that the devil works in us. That somehow or another if we get close to God, if we get close to Jesus, if he becomes more and more the Lord of our lives, that somehow God will overwhelm us and take away our freedom.

But God works through human freedom. It's in fact, as we get closer to evil, it's as we get closer to the devil that our freedom is overwhelmed. You've heard me use this example many times and there's lots of different ways to put it, but it's still a very, very good analogy.

[17:23] If you think about, if you've ever been to a room of drunk people, like people who are just really, really, really drunk, the drunkenness overwhelms their individuality and their uniqueness.

It's hard to distinguish between four drunk men. When they're sober, you might find that one, in fact, is really good at badminton. One is really handy. One can tell limericks.

One is really filled with jokes. But as the alcohol overwhelms them, it overwhelms them and removes their uniqueness. If you see four people watching pornography, if you were to videotape four people deeply immersed in pornography on their computer, what you see is you see the effect of the pornography reducing their differences in their uniqueness as they become slack-jawed and empty and overwhelmed with lust.

That sin always makes us less ourselves and lowers us to some type of lower common denominator.

And you can go through all of the sins, whether it's anger, whether it's pride, that in fact it always overwhelms. And what we see here in this particular text, in the original language in verse 51, it says, he, that's Caiaphas, did not say this of his own accord.

[18:57] But being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation. And in the original language, it says that he didn't say this from himself. And what it means is it's not that the words we have, Jesus must die, that came from himself, but the prophecy didn't come from himself.

So what happens is that God oversees, Caiaphas is completely and utterly free, 100% free, but God, in a sense, uses Caiaphas' freedom to see that the words that he wants to have spoken are spoken.

But Caiaphas is 100% free all the way through. But some of you might say, well, George, what's up with that? I thought you said that the Bible was inspired. And now you're sort of saying, I don't know

what you're saying, George.

You're saying that a murderous, power-hungry, envious man can say that and they're free and somehow the right words come and that doesn't seem to make any sense. Well, if you could put up the next point, Andrew, here's the thing which is important for us to remember.

It's the words that are inspired, not the person. The words that are inspired, not the person. That's why in the New Testament we have pagan poets who are quoted.

[20 : 16] We have unjust judges which are quoted. And if you read the Old Testament, a donkey is given the ability to speak. Now, you see, if it was that the individual was somehow inspired, not the words, it would mean that every time that donkey said, eah, eah, eah, we'd have to have it in the Bible.

It would mean that every single word that Caiaphas said would have to be in the Bible. But it's not that the individual is that there's something special about the individual. I've shared this analogy, I'll say it again.

If they find, if archaeologists find another letter by Paul, and they can tell that it says, I, Paul, the apostle, and you can tell that it's from Paul, it would be a very great interest to scholars, but it wouldn't go in the Bible.

Why wouldn't it go into the Bible? Well, because Paul was not an inspired individual. It wasn't that everything that Paul said had to go in the Bible. Out of the hundreds of thousands of words that Paul said throughout his life, only some of them were the words that God wanted to have spoken and then written down and then recognized as his and then preserved so that we have them today. So that's why it is, it's this, it's the words which are inspired. These are from God. It's not that the individuals have some special power of inspiration.

[21 : 39] So it is with Caiaphas. Caiaphas spoke out of his own evil, murderous heart. But at the same time, what he said completely and utterly of his own, God used his words to be a prophecy, to be recognized that Jesus was not just dying for himself, but that he was dying not for the Jewish people and for any person in any people group who would put their faith and trust in him.

Now, why is it that, but, one of the things then that people might say, well George, I don't know, you said that the, that God is concerned with our freedom, but surely if, if God has these words words that are his, if you really believe that these words are God's, doesn't that sort of reduce our freedom?

Like, doesn't that sort of stand against us in some way? Like, how can we really be free if like when Ken, Ken just wrote, read the Ten Commandments just a little while ago, you know, you shall not do this, you shall not do this, you shall do this, like if, how is it, that doesn't make any sense, George, that if God revealed himself in words that somehow or another were free?

But if you say that or if you're thinking about that, you don't understand what freedom is like and you don't understand, well, here's the thing, one of the things, one of the fears I had when I was a kid, a teenager, started to get interested in girls, is, one of the fears I had was, how on earth could I ever marry somebody?

I had a hard time talking to a girl for a minute and if I married her, I'd have to talk to her for decades and where on earth would I have enough words to talk to her for decades?

[23 : 36] Like, how would that work? And then the other problem I had, I used to, I'm getting read even talking to you about this, but I'd call up, like I remember when I first would call up Louise and I'd make a list of things to talk to her about.

I would go through in my mind at first how the conversation was going to go and then I would make a few notes that I'd have by the phone.

Now, here's the thing about talking to a real person as opposed to how a conversation is going to work with an imaginary person. Generally speaking, my imaginary conversations all work out fine, but my conversations with real people don't work out quite as fine.

I mean, they interrupt or they change the topic or they bring up a topic I hadn't thought about. Well, and that's what it's like to be with a real person. And, see, this is what's so powerful about God's revelation is it's not just that God gives me some, if God just gave everybody private revelations, they'd probably be no different than just me, like me having an imaginary conversation with Louise. Where before I met Louise and I was trying to imagine the woman of my dreams and how I would talk to her and how she would respond. Oh, George, you're so wonderful.

[25 : 04] You know, whatever. Get my jokes, laugh at my jokes, you know, all that type of stuff. You know, never be mad at me. I've told you this before, right?

I'm so clueless. I wish I'd written all of these things down. I remember the time I told Louise that she was aging beautifully. And then, because I'm so dumb, I couldn't understand why she was so unhappy with me for such a long time afterwards.

But in my imagination, that's not how that conversation went. That went swimmingly. You see, what Christianity shows is that Christianity, God doesn't restrict our freedom, but He's real.

He's real. He speaks to me through His Word. And I might say, oh yeah, God's going to say this, He's going to like this. No, no, no, no, no, no, no. You shall not steal.

You shall not commit adultery. You shall not bear false witness. I do miracles. This is how I am. This is how I work.

[26 : 16] This is relating to a real being, not just an imaginary one. Like, the fact that God reveals His Word to us allows us to have the freedom to enter into a relationship with a real person, not an imaginary one, not a make-believe one, not a fantasy one.

to sign a reality. It's what allows not only our freedom to blossom, but our love, because God loves us and He wants us to love Him back.

And that's why, I mean, on one hand, that's why there's this tragedy of sin and it's this tragedy of evil and this tragedy of brokenness, but God reveals Himself.

In fact, Andrew, if you could put this up, God's revelation is open and public, not secret and hidden. God's revelation is open and public and not secret and hidden.

And that means that you can't just have some bishop saying you blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, this is the way it is and this is the way it is because, you know, even to a bishop, it doesn't matter if you have a, you know, one of the things that was so hard for me when I was studying at my equivalent of seminary, I mean, I had these professors, they had, their IQ was probably three times higher than my IQ, they effortlessly knew six languages and they were very, very, very eloquent, but half the time, more than half the time, they were completely and utterly wrong and not wrong because I'm Irish and us Irish people are used to dealing with those who are our betters going to them.

[28 : 01] No, because it's just, that's not what the Bible says. Like, they're just wrong because it's not as if they're somehow, I mean, all that knowledge and all that, if it doesn't, like, you can, in a sense, fell them with a single word from the Bible.

But doesn't Jesus say, I am the way, the truth, and the life when they tell you that when they tell you that Jesus isn't the only way or when they say that there's the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history and then you just point to them all of the different times in the New Testament where they say, this Christ, you crucified.

I mean, it could go on and on and on. They can be felled by a single public word that, in fact, an open public revelation deconstructs and undermines power.

And makes it something where God can speak to all. I mean, the wonderful thing about his word, and this is one of the things we should pray about with our own Sunday school, is that, and those of you who have young kids, is the very first stories that a child can have read to them can come from this book.

A little tiny child snuggled up on your arm and you can read them this. Those wonderful teachers who are spending time, even with very, very young children out there, you can be a part of that too if you want.

[29 : 30] We always need more teachers. And the very first stories that they ever hear can be from this book. And if God spares us and Jesus tarries and we die at 106, the day before we die, we can read this book too.

And you can have a PhD in physics or you can be down syndrome and you can read this book. It's simple and open and public and it's for all.

And it comes from God because he loves you and because he wants you to know about him and enter into a relationship with him and come to know Jesus.

And it's open and public. It's not for the elite. It's not just for those who have high IQs or have abilities to have special relationships. I mean, special types of intuitions.

And here's the other thing about this is that, you know, so we look at this thing of Caiaphas and we say to ourselves, why is it that Caiaphas has this special, that God, in a sense, uses him to prophesy?

[30 : 46] like he's such a bad guy. Like he's, he's an evil man. He abuses his power. He abuses the law.

He, he fights against God. But you see, even when we say that, deep in our hearts, deep in our hearts, we, like Caiaphas, desire power.

If you could put up the next point, Andrew, the fruit of the Holy Spirit matters more than the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Holy Spirit matters more than the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Now, that doesn't mean the gifts of the Holy Spirit don't matter. And, and for those of us who are in Jesus, we do receive gifts of the Holy Spirit. But the fact of the matter is, is that God could use a donkey to prophesy.

And if God gives you the gift of prophecy, well, that's good. And, and hopefully you will humbly use it to the glory of God. But you know what really matters?

[31 : 48] Isn't whether or not you prophesy. We should always remember Caiaphas prophesied. A donkey prophesied. What matters is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. And if you look at that list, and it comes from Galatians chapter 5, it's such a wonderful list, isn't it?

Because there's a singular fruit. If you go back and read Galatians chapter 5, there's a singular fruit. It's just one word. But this one word, this one fruit, has nine aspects.

And isn't the, excuse me, aren't these nine aspects a perfect description of inner freedom? Of an inner freedom which is inwardly whole.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

This working of the Holy Spirit in our lives describes this wonderful, powerful, deep, inner freedom.

And as Jesus gets closer to us and we get closer to Jesus, as he becomes more and more the Lord of our lives, as the Holy Spirit has a deeper role in our lives, what matters is not whether there's sort of works of power, not whether there's words of eloquence.

[33 : 03] What matters is the fruit of the Holy Spirit working within our brokenness, our sin, our woundedness, our natural abilities, excuse me, our brilliance, working within that for this deep inner freedom.

It's not just an inner freedom to do evil. It's not an inner freedom to get our way. It's an inner freedom characterized by love, by joy, by peace, by being patient, by being kind, by being good.

faithfulness means being trustworthy and keeping your word. And self-control and gentleness means that your words are words that you want to keep.

And your self-control means your words are words that you say that you want to keep. They're not just words that mean you've flown off the handle and lost control. The work of the Holy Spirit is what really matters in our lives, the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

I just want to wrap this thing all up in a close. Wouldn't you think it was pretty pathetic if you discovered that your co-worker had an app so that every hour the phone sent him a message?

[34 : 12] You're wonderful. You're the best. You're brilliant. Gosh, I love you. Like, if you found that out, wouldn't you think that's pretty pathetic? He programmed or she programmed the phone to send them a message like that all of the time.

You see, God could turn you into that phone. God could use all of his power to program you in such a way that that's what it would be every hour.

God, you're great. God, you're wonderful. God, you're beautiful. God, I love you. But he doesn't do that. He can do these wonderful miracles.

We're free to respond. He can speak to us from his word. We're free to respond. God, you're free to do it. That, in fact, everything about God's relationship with us is that he does everything so that we will come to that point where we will put our trust in Jesus and receive what he has done for us and that we will love him freely.

And as the Holy Spirit moves deeply and deeply in our lives, it will only create more and more inner freedom. You see, one of the things which is so powerful about this text is that Caiaphas uses his power so that he keeps his place by having Jesus die.

[35 : 34] If you could put up the next point, Andrew. And that's generally how things work in this world. Not that the powerful want everybody to die. Most of the time, the powerful don't give a hoot about you.

They don't even know you exist. They don't even care that you exist. But if it comes time to choose for the powerful person between them keeping their power or somebody else having to die, they will almost always, we will almost always choose the other person dying.

The powerful want you to die for them if it comes down to the end. But Jesus, he has the power to raise the dead. He has the power to feed 5,000 men with a few loaves and fishes.

He has the power to heal a man who was blind from birth. He has the power to heal a man who had been an invalid for many, many, many decades. He had a power to heal a nobleman's son who was very, very far distant.

He had the power to turn water into wine. But Jesus, the powerful one, dies for the powerless. If you could put up the final slide, Andrew.

[36 : 48] It's very, very interesting how John has chosen to write this book. If you go back and read John chapter 1 and you'll see how Jesus is first introduced. I love this.

It's one of my favorite parts in the Bible. How is Jesus introduced? Go back and look it up in John chapter 1. John the Baptist says, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And now, when all of the miracles are coming to an end that John is going to talk to us about, and as we come to a final time of Jesus teaching his disciples one-on-one, we see that Caiaphas says that Jesus, how does he put it?

Verse 50, he says, It is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish. And if you go back and read the next few verses, this happens as people are preparing for Passover, where the Passover lamb will be sacrificed.

We are to understand that all of these wonderful teachings of Jesus about rivers of living water, about bread from heaven, about eternal life, we are to understand that all of these miracles, that it is the miracle worker who dies upon the cross, that he dies in my place.

The heart of the gospel, in my place condemned he stood. True story. You want to know who wrote those words, in my place condemned he stood. His last name was, I'm not making this up, Bliss.

[38 : 19] Bliss. His name was Philip Bliss, 1875. What a savior. It's one of the lines in the hymn. In my place, condemned, he stood.

That is the heart of the gospel. The powerful dying for you and for me. And we receive it by faith. You are free to choose.

You are free to choose. But let me tell you, that if you choose to receive what Christ has done for you, you are not going to have one who is going to so overwhelm you and destroy your uniqueness and destroy your individuality and overwhelm your personality and make you into a robot, make you into a zombie.

No. He died for you. He loves you. And I stand before God not because I can speak well or I can't speak well or not because my church is big or small or this or that or anything like that.

I stand before God. My only confidence before God is that in my place condemned, he stood. That that which has kept me far from God fell on him and he took the punishment.

[39 : 33] and the innocence and righteousness and perfection and goodness of Jesus comes on me all out of grace, all out of love, freely bestowed, freely to be received.

And as we receive what Christ has done and draw close to him, his great work within us will be a growth of inner freedom. Please stand.

Bow our heads in prayer. Father, we ask that you would grip us with the gospel.

Help us to remember who Jesus is. Father, that on one hand we ask that you give us a godly fear of you that we might know that you are God and that we are not, that we might know where we begin and end and where you begin and end and how you are always God and we are never, ever, ever, ever, ever God.

That's good. That we might have that deep sense of that difference combined with a thankfulness and an awe and a longing for you which is that true and proper fear of you.

[40 : 56] Father, we ask that you grant us that. But Father, deliver us from all foolish, flesh-born, devil-inspired fears that you will somehow hurt us.

Father, we thank you that you will never hurt us, that you will be with us when we are in sorrow, that you will be with us when we are in difficulty, that you will be with us at the day of, as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

You will be with us when we hear the terrible diagnosis. You will be with us in our celebrations and in our joys. You will be with us in our rising and our lying down at night, that you will be with us, that you will walk with us, that you will be our God and that we will be your people and that your Son died for us and your Holy Spirit works within us to bring inner freedom.

Father, grow within us that deep, abandoned growth of ability to abandon ourselves upon you. And all these things we ask in the name of Jesus.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.