

Know the Truth about Jesus!

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[0 : 00] Father, we ask that you would pour out your Holy Spirit upon us as we read your word, as we think upon your word. Father, we ask that you would lead us and guide us into all truth, that you would give us minds that are always inquiring to know you more, to know you better, and to be more completely and utterly open to you and your rule and your saving and healing power in our lives.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So, I don't know how carefully you were listening as John read the text, but is the Bible encouraging us to demonize people?

Is the Bible encouraging us to demonize people? So, first of all, some of you, if you're a guest here, you might wonder, why on earth is George even talking about that?

It'll become a little bit clearer as we go on, but we are an unusual church. We're not the only church in the city who does this, but we're an unusual church, in that what we do is we read and preach through whole books of the Bible or big chunks of the Bible.

And the main reason that we do this, by the way, is because the Bible was written as books. It's not written as a series of quotes that you can just sort of pick and choose some different quotes that you'll look at this week.

[1 : 23] It's not like the Koran, which is just a series of independent little thoughts. You don't have to know anything about the context if you read the Koran. Every thought just sort of stands on its own.

But the Bible was written as the New Testament is 27 different books. Paul began at what is now chapter 1, verse 1, and he went through till the end of chapter 13.

And so it's a natural way to read things. And the second thing is that it helps to protect us as a congregation and those who are guests and are maybe seeking and searching to understand that we're not just trying to hide fine print from you or the awkward or uncomfortable parts from the Bible.

And I don't sort of, I'm not picking on people or it's not like I have a hobby horse when we talk about particular things. Whatever the Bible talks about next in that book of the Bible, that's what we talk about.

And today it seems to talk about demonizing people. And that's a big human problem. And we're going to look, does the Bible encourage us to demonize?

[2 : 25] I was speaking on Parliament Hill on Friday. I had the great privilege to speak to some of the staffers on Parliament Hill on Friday at lunchtime. And so I gave them a rough draft of this sermon.

And I began by saying, I know that in Parliament Hill something like this never happens. So you're really going to have to imagine what it's like to have to struggle with demonizing people who differ from you.

And of course they all laugh because that's exactly what they have to deal with all the time. It's a very, very big human problem. And it isn't helped if the Bible encourages us. So first, you might even think, boy, did John say that in the text when John was reading the Bible?

Let's just look at the text and see what it says. And then as we continue to go more deeply into the text, we'll just try to understand, is the Bible encouraging us to demonize those who differ with us? So it's 2 Corinthians chapter 11, and we're going to begin with verse 1 of chapter 11, right down to verse 15. And if you weren't here last week or you don't remember, what happened just before this is that Paul, the Bible reminds people that they're jars of clay.

[3 : 35] And that what matters and what is important and what is powerful isn't us because we're jars of clay, but it's the message, God's message that we share. It's the message which is powerful, not the messenger.

It doesn't matter if you're a PhD or a bishop or anything like that. It's the message, God's message, which is powerful, not the individual. And so it's always unwise to compare yourself to others and commend yourself because what really matters is God using you and saying well done.

And that's what happens just before this, and then he continues on in verse 1. I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me, for I feel a divine jealousy for you.

And in a moment, later on in the service, we're going to put this verse up on the screen. In the original language, what he's actually saying is, I feel God's jealousy for you.

And jealousy is a bit of an odd word. It can also be translated as zeal, like great passion and concern. And that's also a proper way to understand the text.

[4 : 49] And it's that God has this great zeal. He's zealous for you, and Paul is feeling a little bit of this. God's zeal for them. He's feeling a little bit of it himself.

So it's saying in the original language. So I'll say that again. For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

You might remember that it's from Genesis 3, that the big question that the serpent asked Eve is, did God really say? Did God really say?

And that's a good question if somebody's misquoting the Bible. But if, in fact, you say this to try to twist the scriptures or obscure the scriptures or take people away from even thinking about that, then it's not a very good question.

[5 : 55] And, in fact, it was ruinous for Eve. Verse 4. For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, and note that if you have Bibles and you're following along, the word spirit here is in lowercase.

In other words, it's not that God has seven different types of Holy Spirits. He has a Holy Spirit for, I don't know, heterosexuals and a different Holy Spirit for gay people and another one for people from Africa and another one from...

No, no, no, there's only one Holy Spirit. And so you can't receive... You either receive the Holy Spirit or some other type of spirit. And that's what's being said here. We'll say verse 4 again.

For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super apostles. Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge.

[7 : 03] Indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things. And just sort of pause here, because you might wonder what's going on about super apostles. There's a letter that comes from about, I think it's about 60 or 70 years after the death of Paul.

And it was written by a man who claimed to know a man who knew a man who knew Paul. So, you know, you can't take this to the bank. But in this, there was a bit of a description as to what Paul looked like.

And Paul is described as having very bushy eyebrows with no gap between them. He had bulging eyes, close set in his head, a very prominent nose, a bit of a pot belly, short of stature, and bowed legs.

He did not look like George Clooney or Brad Pitt. And so one of the things that Paul is dealing with as a problem is that there's been a group of people who've come into the church.

And, you know, just to put it in, like, modern language, they all look like George Clooney. And, you know, they all went to Oxford or Cambridge or Harvard or Princeton.

[8 : 13] And they knew how to dress well. And they knew how to, they'd all taken the top-level speaking abilities. And, you know, they knew how to dress. They knew how to, they're just culturally very smooth.

They had a forceful personality, but not so forceful that it was obnoxious, but just forceful enough that you were drawn to it. And they were just really culturally more attuned and superior to Paul, who just looked like a little bow-legged hick compared to them.

And, you know, let's just be honest, you know. We're drawn to people who just are very, very smooth and culturally sophisticated, but not in an obnoxious way. And we're drawn to that. And these people had come in, some of these people had come into the congregation, and they're teaching about a different Jesus, a different gospel. Basically, it's something that sounds like the same religion, but it's very different.

And they're drawing people away. And Paul here, he just acknowledges that, listen, you put me up beside George Clooney or Brad Pitt, I'm going to lose every time in the looks and smoothness department.

[9 : 17] But then he says, it doesn't mean I'm a dummy. It doesn't mean I'm a dummy. And that's what's going on here. And then look at verse 7. Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge?

In the original language, this is one of four, I think it's just four places in the New Testament where Paul plays a little bit of a thing of word. It literally, if you were to translate it literally, he'd say, because I gospelsed God's gospel to you free of charge.

He uses gospel as a verb. I gospelsed God's gospel to you. And what he's talking about humbling himself and all here is there's this other thing. He had this, I've been a pastor now for a long time. And I think there's been maybe three times in my ministry where a person, in every case it happened to be a man, who had significant means, took me aside and basically said, unless I change what I was preaching or what the church was doing, he was going to take the money away from me.

The church. He's going to take the money away from me.

[10 : 49] Because this church has existed for about six years now. He was the one who was, that God used him and his team to bring people in Corinth to a faith in Jesus.

Several of them came out of Judaism, but most of them came out of paganism. And, but Paul had a sense for some reason when he came there that he should never accept any money from any of the people in Corinth.

Like not a penny. They didn't have pennies back then, but whatever the smallest unit of money was. Not a penny. He just had this sense. Because, you know, the fact of the matter is, is in the world, what is that saying? He who pays the piper calls the tune.

Right? If you're paying the musician, you can ask the musician to play whatever you want. And he just had this sense maybe that in Corinth, there were a lot of people who were coming to faith who had financial means that were going to try to use their power, their money power, or their, you know, that they had big groups of people who'd follow them.

And they were going to try to use that to try to manipulate Paul. So Paul had this sense in his spirit that he was to humble himself. And so what he did is he engaged in manual labor to support himself while he shared the good news of Jesus.

[12 : 01] And what he did is he took very manual labor because that was something that he knew. So it would be a little bit like if you or me were going to go and try to plant a church in Rockcliffe and to support ourselves, we worked as garbage men.

And that probably wouldn't impress people in Rockcliffe. But somehow or another, many people in Corinth became Christians. Paul continued to do manual labor.

And one of the things that these culturally smooth people were doing when they were coming in is now started to say, you know, are you sure? Are you sure that Paul's like a real apostle? Like, come on, you know, like in our example, you know, if somebody says they're a lawyer and they're going to help you out, well, they like to get paid, like if somebody says they're a doctor and they're helping you out and they never get paid from anybody, well, come on, are they really a doctor?

Are they just some sort of hack, you know? And so these very smooth, well-educated, well-connected people are undermining Paul.

But Paul, in his spirit, even more so can feel that if he starts to accept money from them, they are going to want to start to try to think that they can pull him around like he's a, you know, a dog on a chain and move him around.

[13 : 19] So that's what's going on in the letter. Let's just continue and we'll get down to this part about the demonizing. Read verse 7 again. Where did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted because I preached God's gospel?

I gospelled God's gospel to you free of charge. I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need.

So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia.

He's boasting not in himself, but in the fact that God's provision, God's gospel, that's what he boasts in. God's revelation, that's what he boasts in, not in himself. And why? Because I do not love you. God knows I love you.

And what I am doing, I will continue to do in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission, they work on the same terms as we do.

[14:20] For such men, and here's the part about demonizing. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.

Their end will correspond to their deeds. And here Paul isn't claiming, you know, that every night behind closed doors they get down and invoke Satan. He's just claiming that just as the serpent ended up leading Eve away from God, in whatever way they're following, if it's just trying to make Jesus more compatible to religious Jews, whether he's making it more compatible to those who go to pagan temples, whether they're trying to make Jesus more compatible and palatable to Platonic thought or Stoic thought or Aristotle, that whatever it is that they think they're doing to improve Jesus and improve the gospel and improve the emotional experience of the people, whatever it is that they think they're doing to help them, the fact of the matter is, is that in fact they're doing just what the devil ultimately wants, which is to lead people away from Jesus.

So is this demonizing? And is the Bible here encouraging us on a path to disagree, to call people of the devil if they disagree with us?

When I was, just after I became a Christian, I attended a church for a short period of time. And because I'm old, this was a long time ago, and the charismatic renewal had just come into the Ottawa area in a very powerful way.

[16:11] And the church I attended, they couldn't get in their doctrinal statement of faith this because of some technicality. So right behind, after their statement of faith, they put in a statement that tongue speaking is of the devil.

Tongue speaking and those who promote it are of the devil. It was one of several reasons why I left the church. Just a bit of a time out here. I'm not going to talk about this very much.

You know what? If God, if God, I don't know, God's holding the universe. He's making suns and stars. He gives the gift of speech.

Like what? This is like my pay grade to tell God he can't have somebody speak in tongues? I mean, it's in the New Testament. Come on, guys. You know what God wants to do, he's going to do it, you know? I just, I didn't get it then.

I don't get it now. No, it was just, it was demonizing is what it was in the bad sense. But is this what Paul's doing here? So how do we sort of get it?

[17:12] Well, the way to begin to understand this text and why it's not demonizing and why it's not at all this huge process that we're all very familiar with. In this same church just before I left it, they used to have prophecy conferences all the time.

I don't know if churches still do that. We don't do it. And this was in the late 70s, mid to late 70s. And if you went back in a time machine to churches back then, on Sunday morning, everybody dressed up in jackets and shirts and ties.

And everybody had like the same type of very conservative haircut. And at the time, I had, my hair was down to here. And I wore jeans and like a plaid shirt.

And so if you came into this church, there were like 100, I don't know, 150, 180 people there. And, you know, let's say there was 180 and 179 of them all looked the same. And then there was me.

And so this guy in the prophecy conference, he had a, he had the, you know, this is really old stuff, you know.

But there used to be these things you could write on plastic and there'd be an overhead picture that you could sort of see overheads. And he was a bit of an artist. He would draw as he was talking.

And he got talking about the Antichrist.

[18 : 26] He looked around the room and he said, let's make him a hippie. Oh, 179 people with conservative haircuts. All look like young Republicans.

And me, let's make the Antichrist a hippie. I mean, that's how you make people feel really welcome. Anyway, that was another reason why I left that church a little bit after, you know.

Being the model for the Antichrist, you know. There you go. I mean, maybe that's one of the things that's different about me than the rest of you. Maybe you've never been used as a model for the Antichrist in a public sermon.

Anyway, so is Paul encouraging this? Is that what's going on in the text? Okay, the key to understanding this entire text and the key to understanding a lot of what's going on in the entire 2 Corinthians is in verse 2.

Okay, verse 2 is a big image that Paul gives. And if you understand this image in verse 2, then you'll understand what's going on in the entire text.

[19 : 32] And if you could just put verse 2 up. And just to, you know, to be honest with you, what I've done is I've taken one of the academic commentaries that I read. I've taken how they translated the first part of verse 2 and then the last part of it is just from the ESV.

This isn't to get around any complicated stuff or anything like that. It's just, it's, and if you could, why don't you read it out loud with me? For I am zealous for you with God's own zeal, since I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

So notice the key thing here is the second part of the verse. This very, very, very powerful image of what it means to come to faith in Jesus Christ. Okay, it's not joining a denomination.

It's not taking upon yourself a particular philosophy. It's not learning how to dress a certain way. It's not learning certain rituals. It's not coming to certain political beliefs or beliefs about music.

It's not coming to a certain set of beliefs about how economy should work or psychology should work or social work should work. It's not coming down to an acceptance of a particular guru or anything like that or sect or party.

[20 : 43] Paul gives this very, very powerful image. I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. And as well as that, just to understand, if this was being translated by Irish people, they have a plural for you.

And they would say, I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. It's plural. But it's plural in a sense of it's involving everybody.

So it's both an individual reality and a corporate reality. And it's a very, very powerful image. And here's the first thing about this. I'm going to give you three points sort of close to each other to try to unpack this single big idea in the text.

Help you to understand this one thing. First of all, if you could put it up. The Christian faith centers around a real person. The Christian faith centers around a real person.

Jesus. Messiah, Savior, and Lord. Imagine for a second that you're the parent and there's a 10-year-old girl. Let's call her Annie.

[21 : 49] And Annie, she invites one day, she invites Christine, another girl, to come over to play at her house. Maybe to have a tea party with her and her mom.

And Christine says to Annie, I'm not going over to your house. And Annie says, well, why aren't you going to come over to my house? And Christine says, well, because your mommy's really mean.

Like, you know what? Your mommy, when she makes raisin cookies, they're not raisins. They're flies. They're dead flies that look like raisins. That's what she puts in her cookies.

And she twists people's ears. And she's really mean. And she hurts people. And I'm not going to go to your house to play with you with your mommy. And Annie would say, that's not what my mommy does.

She doesn't put dead flies in the cookies instead of raisins. And she's not really mean. She's really nice. Why are you saying that? And Christine says, well, Priscilla, she's the smartest girl in the class.

[22 : 52] And she's the best athlete and the best artist. And that's what she says about your mommy. And Annie would say, but none of that's true. You see, in Canada, we tend to just think of religion and spirituality as just being something private, just something emotional, and just something spiritual.

Well, at the heart of what Paul is talking about here is Paul's talking about a real person. You know, so this isn't like when I was doing my first degree.

Basically, every one of my professors in the sociology faculty were Marxists. And they would regularly snipe at each other about what's real Marxism.

And they would snipe at each other about whether they were following the young Marx or the old Marx or something like that. And then they would get into these complicated historical things. I mean, you know, it's just like back, I don't know if they have them very much nowadays.

I remember there's a, I was watching the pro-life demonstration. There were a whole pile of communists demonstrating against them. And I said to the person beside me, communist? Like, who's a communist anymore?

[24 : 01] And they said, yeah, you're right. Like, who's a communist? Anyway, there used to be lots of them in university campuses. And, you know, the Trotskyites hated the Marxists. And, you know, and they hated the, you know, the Maoists.

And, you know, they'd say horrible things about each other. But, you know, it's all just about philosophy. It's all just about, you know, a theory about how economies work and how history is developing.

It's just theories. And people get all hot about it. They can get really angry about it. And it's just all about ideas. It's about their party. It's about their group. It's about their sect. It's about having control.

But what Paul is wanting to say here is, listen, it's just like Annie talking about her mom. That's not my mom. Listen, I don't have 10 moms. I don't have 20 moms.

I just have one mom. And that's not my mommy. And so you can't have an apostle, somebody who claims they're a super apostle, who's talking about a different Jesus than the Jesus that Paul knows, that he's met, that he's seen on the Damascus Road, and that he's checked his understanding of Jesus with all of the other people who knew Jesus face to face.

[25 : 10] And he's saying, listen, I'm not telling you that there's not depths to Jesus. I'm not saying that there's not intricacies about Jesus. I'm not just I'm not saying there's not subtleties about Jesus. But what I'm going to tell you is what they're talking about isn't Jesus.

He just isn't. It's just not Jesus. And you can't just sort of pretend that Jesus somehow he's really like a Platonist or that somehow Jesus is just like a Pharisee or that somehow Jesus is just like a Stoic or that somehow Jesus isn't just like a Marxist or he isn't like a like a white South African. Or he's not like somebody he's not like a person who wants to build colonialism or he's not somebody who who's completely and utterly into post-colonialist thought and that Jesus is some type of an early form of post-colonialist thinker.

Jesus. There's just Jesus. When I first came to the church, there was a bit of a thing in some of the papers about people.

I think it was for single women in particular that part of the way they would protect themselves. It was a little bit of a flurry. I don't know if it was in Ottawa, but it was in the papers in the in the mid 90s.

[26 : 26] And so they'd have pictures. They would pretend they had a boyfriend or a husband or something to make it look like there was a man in the house. So there was this woman and I went to I went to visit her on a regular basis.

She had her mom living with her. And and I would go and bring communion to the mom. And this the woman who came to the church, she only came to the eight o'clock service, the early service. She didn't know any of the other people in the congregation. She started coming about six months after I'd arrived to the church. And she always came by herself. She didn't know anybody else in the congregation. I would go and visit there and she would talk about her husband.

But I never met her husband. Like she came to the church for like four years and then she moved. I never met her husband once. And I remember after I'd been doing this for a couple of years, my wife says to me, are you sure she has a husband? You know, like there's been these things in the paper about people have the pictures, you know, of the boyfriend or the husband to make people think.

But George, you actually like how do you know she has a husband? And so here's the thing. Here's the second thing. If the first point is that the Christian faith centers around a real person, Jesus, the Messiah, the Savior and the Lord.

[27 : 33] If you could put up the next point, the Christian faith centers around a real relationship with a real person. The Christian faith centers around a real relationship with a real person.

Listen again to verse two. We'll just say the second half. I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. It's a very, very powerful image.

If you come to church over Christmas season, and it doesn't matter if it's this church or just about any church, and when they talk about Matthew and Luke, one of the things they'll try to explain to you is the strange status of Mary.

Because at the time of the New Testament, they had this sort of, there's two stages of betrothal and marriage. And they're not like having a fiance today now. It's a different type of thing.

[28 : 35] And at the time, when you became betrothed to someone, you actually went through a ceremony. And there was like vows exchanged. And it was very, very solemn.

And even though you still lived in separate houses, and even though you didn't share the same bed or have like just, in a sense, one financial purse, it was a very solemn commitment of a relationship that was going to culminate, unless death happened, it was going to culminate in marriage.

And it was a season of being betrothed to the other person. And as people will talk with Mary and Joseph, that when Mary was betrothed to Joseph, and it was after that that the angel came and asked Mary if she was willing to be open to God.

And then she said yes. And God does a miracle so that a fertilized egg is created in the womb of Mary and attaches itself to her. And that's going to be Jesus, the Messiah. It's a miracle done by God.

And of course, in the angel world, when you were betrothed, if something like marital unfaithfulness happened, you literally had to be divorced, even though you weren't married. And so what Paul is saying here, he's using this very powerful image.

[29 : 42] He's saying, you know, when you came to know of Jesus, and when you came to hear about what he did for you on the cross, and when you hear that he took upon himself everything that estranges you from God, every obligation and debt and wrong thing you've done to another person in God, and the punishment that was due for that, and he took every single thing upon himself that keeps you far from God and far from others, every shame, every claim that anybody, he takes it all upon himself.

In a sense, he takes his doom upon himself as he dies upon the cross. And he deals with that on your behalf. And in exchange, he takes your doom and he offers you his destiny.

And that this is what Jesus really does for us on the cross. And it's vindicated when he rises from the dead on the third day. And so that when you're, in a sense, reaching out your hands to Jesus and saying, Jesus, will you be my savior and my Lord?

It isn't that your arms are long enough to reach Jesus, but that Jesus's arms are long enough to reach you and want to reach you. And it isn't even as if you have to have a full, complete and utter surrender to it, because some of you might be sort of just putting your hands a little bit like this.

In fact, it might be that one of your hands are like this or just like this. And it's not about how firm your desire is and how powerful and assured your desire is. It's that Jesus wants to take your hands.

[31 : 04] And at the least sign that you want to give yourself to him, his arm is long enough to reach you. And it's not that your grip is so steadfast that you never let him go, that you never have any doubts, that you never have any questions, that you never do anything which just makes you feel deeply and utterly ashamed.

It's not at all about your grip. It's that his grip is strong enough to hold on and never let you go. And rather than just using this imagery of that type of relationship of grabbing you, he's also saying it's almost as if that when you've given your life to Jesus and he takes you as his child, you become betrothed to him.

It is as if you are a bride and he is your betrothed husband. And when Jesus comes a second time or when you die before that day and see him face to face, that's your marriage.

That's your marriage. And so you're not just some unimportant, maybe not culturally very sophisticated, not always full of faith, not always full of, you know, perfect thoughts, not all full of, it's not, you know, it's not, Jesus has become your betrothed husband.

And that relationship will not come to an end. In fact, it will only culminate in marriage. And so the Bible is saying is that the gospel leaves, the faith, the faith, the Christian faith centers around a real relationship with a real person.

[32 : 51] And some of you might say, George, you know, this language of pure virgin, it's very, very complicated. Boy, if you knew who I was, pure virgin would not be the word that would come to your mind.

If you knew the things that I've done. In fact, George, if you even knew the things I think this week, the things I think even just a few minutes ago in the service, if you knew the different things, if you knew, George, how proud I can be, and then how full of despair I can be, if you knew the things I said about other people, then, George, you would not, you would not ever think that this, this verse could never, ever, ever, ever possibly describe me.

Some of you are Christians is thinking that. Maybe if you're here as a seeker, that's going through your mind, you might say, well, that's all right for these other people here. They look pretty good, you know, but inside George, that is definitely, definitely, definitely not me.

Let's listen to the text again. For I, in my version here, for I am zealous for you with God's own zeal, God's own zeal, since I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin of Christ.

If you could wrap the third point, the Christian faith centers around a real person, and what he really has done, is doing, and will do, for ordinary people like you and me.

[34 : 19] You see, I don't make myself pure. And, you know, I can't say that I haven't, I've not given myself to idols, to pride, to idolizing myself.

I can't say that I haven't told lies, or done very, very evil things, some of which, if I shared them to you, you folks would be very horrified.

If I was to say those things, I would be a liar. If I was to say that somehow I was pure, like a pure virgin, in and of myself, and by my accomplishments, I would be a liar.

I would be a deceiver. I would be an arrogant bleepity bleep. And it would be even worse, if I somehow or another managed to convince you.

It's Christ who makes me pure. It's Christ who makes me beautiful. It's Christ who has dealt with all the muck in my life.

[35 : 40] And no amount of accomplishments on my part can make me ever, even one iota, more beautiful than Christ has made me.

And all of my striving and my accomplishments cannot make me more pure than Christ has made me. And this is the gospel message.

Everything else is religion. It's advice. It's striving. It's rule keeping. It's subtly teaching you to boast in yourself. It's subtly making you hard in your heart.

Like, what is it like if you're in the Hindu system and you're at the top of the social order and you really do believe that your excellency in your former lives and your excellency today somehow means you deserve to be rich and powerful and influential.

You deserve that. How can that possibly not harden your heart against the poor and others and make you proud? And the gospel undercuts this time and time and time and time again.

[36 : 52] It's constantly trying to knock us off our pride and knock us off our self-justification and knock us off of our boasting and mock us and make us realize I am a jar of clay.

I am not innately beautiful in and of myself because of my rebellion against God and I can never make myself beautiful. I can never make myself into those things. I am completely dependent upon the real person who really died upon the cross who really rose from the dead who really took upon himself my doom and really gives me his destiny and really makes me beautiful and really makes me his bride and will really one day in a sense be like it's like where it's an intimate relationship like a marriage for all of eternity.

Only Christ can do that. No other. And all of church history has been filled with people who want to make Jesus more divine.

They want to make him less divine. They want to make him more human. They want to make him less human. They want to make him palatable to Marxism. They want to make him palatable to Freudianism. They want to make him palatable to apartheid and white privilege.

They want to make him palatable to anti-colonialist thought. They want to make him palatable to capitalism and they want to make him palatable to queer theory, and they want to make them palatable to transgender theory, and they want to make them palatable to Muslims, and they want to make them palatable to Asian thought, and they want to make them palatable to this, and they want to make them palatable that. And all of it's doing is taking you away from the real Jesus who really died upon the cross, who relativizes all cultures, all philosophies, all isms, relativizes all of

them with his once for all invasion of our world to seek and save ordinary people like you and me, so that when we put our faith and trust in him and what he's done from on the cross, he makes us beautiful and pledges his love for you and me as real people as we really are for all of eternity. [39 : 01] And his hand will never let us go. He will never divorce us. There is nothing that can ever come that we have done that will make him turn from us. That is the gospel.

And there is no other Jesus. And people thinking they're helping him by improving him by making him palatable to capitalism or anti-colonialism or Marxism or queer theory, all they're doing is taking us away from what he's done for us on the cross. There is no other gospel. There is no other spirit. There is no other Jesus. There is just the one.

Friends, just in closing, we'll put these points up really quick. A couple of carryaways. You could put up the first one, A. It's not a Canadian thing. It's a letter. Jesus is the Savior and the Lord, and Satan is doomed. So in the words of Douglas Adams, don't panic.

You know, if it was all up for me and my accomplishments and all that to make these things, and then you think there's somebody who's basically, while they might be well-meaning, or really just like the serpent in the garden and saying, did God really say, you know, you should really be more like God? Or, you know, you should be a bit more divine. Like, you know, don't, don't, don't, you know, the heart of demonizing is it's all about ego. It's all about power. It's all about insecurity. It's all about crushing other people. It's all about ganging up on them. It's all about non-self-reflection. The gospel is so completely different. Nothing can help self-reflection more than knowing that nothing I have done will make me love God less when I have Jesus my Savior. Nothing I can do will make him love me more. And nothing can give us the security of self-reflection and self-assessment and humility more than being grounded on what Jesus has done for us in the cross. So don't panic. Second thing, Jesus is the Savior and Lord, and Satan still does live, and he still lies. So we do have to deal with false teaching seriously.

I mean, that's part of my job. Gary at Ryle Seminary as the academic dean, it's part of his job to train Christian leaders so they understand what the truth is of the scriptures and they can deal with error. The third thing, search the Bible from cover to cover to be clear about who Jesus is and what he has accomplished for us. This is the encouragement. I almost said be Bereans, but most people don't. You know, there's a thing in Acts when Paul goes to the particular place and every day he preached and afterwards the Bereans, I think he said, were more noble than the others because every day they'd search the scriptures to see if what he said was true. And that's why I want to encourage you. You know, if you can help me to understand the Bible better, pray for me that I can, share with me how I can, share good books with me. But you know, all of us together should jointly be trying to read the Bible from cover to cover to understand Jesus better with more humility, with more surrender, with more awe at what he's done for us on the cross, what he has done, is doing, and will do for us. And D, the final one, almost final one, for those in error who really are leading people away from Jesus, hear the message of 2 Corinthians as a whole, always pray for them. Seek to persuade them. Okay, don't seek to bully them, intimidate them, scare them, harangue them, denounce them, threaten them, frighten them, gang up on them. Don't do that.

[42 : 52] Seek to persuade them from the Bible. God wants us to freely give ourselves to Jesus. Freedom matters to the Christian. And finally, use godly authority as necessary.

Could you put up the beginning of the final prayer? Could you all stand, please? I'm going to invite you to pray a prayer. If the sermons touched you in any particular way, I just want to say before I do that if you're here today and you've never given your life to Jesus, there is no better time than right now. And as you've heard, I hope that the sermon has come through and this text has come through you. I can't make you anything, but in the gospel, it doesn't matter what you've done in your life, it doesn't matter how spectacular you've been or how broken you've been, how sinful you've been or how perfect you've been, that only Jesus can love you to such a depth that he will take everything that has kept you from God, every shame, only he has dealt with it on the cross, and he will never turn you away if you give your life to him this morning. And you don't have to be perfect in reaching out if you can just say, Jesus, be my Savior and Lord and never let me go. Use your own words. You can use the words of this prayer as well, but use your own words. And I'm just going to read this prayer out, and then if this is, if God has touched your heart, you'd like to pray it out loud with me,

I'm going to tell you what, because it's on two screens. The prayer is, Heavenly Father, please fill me with your Holy Spirit and keep my heart from listening to false and evil spirits.

Please help me to know what your word written tells me about Jesus and what he did to save me. Please free my mind from all errors and lies about who Jesus is and what he did for me on the cross and in his resurrection. Please make me a disciple of Jesus gripped by the gospel and living for your glory. In Jesus's name, amen. I need to pray this prayer. I make no claim that I've arrived. I need to keep searching the scriptures. Please pray for me. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, please fill me with your Holy Spirit and keep my heart from listening to false and evil spirits. Please help me to know what your word written tells me about Jesus and what he did to save me. Please free my mind from all errors and lies about who Jesus is and what he did for me on the cross and in his resurrection. Please make me a disciple of Jesus gripped by the gospel and living for your glory. In Jesus's name, amen. Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us all.

[45 : 45] Be sovereign in our lives. Thank you that in Jesus you will never let us go. You will never forsake us. You will never give up on us. That's all been dealt with by your Son. Father, thank you for this. In Jesus's name, amen.