

The One and Only Trustworthy Gospel

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Date: 26 June 2016

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[0 : 00] Father, sometimes we think that we're very good and you do bad things. Sometimes we worry and act as if you are very distant and powerless.

And we have all the power. And Father, sometimes we get in trouble and we want you to act with great power and just completely and utterly rescue us.

And we confess before you, Father, that we are often unbalanced and confused. We ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would gently but deeply be poured out upon us as we open your word, that your word would come into our lives, that your word would touch our hearts, and that we would bear much fruit in our daily life for your glory.

Father, do this powerful thing in our midst and in our lives at this time. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Please be seated. So, one of the things that we occasionally wonder about when we rent the Ottawa Little Theatre for our Sunday morning services, and occasionally we wonder whether we should take like a 10-year lease of this space.

We only go year to year. And maybe one of the things that we would like to do is be able to have a sign on the outside. You know, maybe something like Church of the Messiah come worship with us or something like that.

[1 : 27] Worship the Lord with us. It would have been very funny if this past month we'd had a sign like that out in the front because if it had something like Church of the Messiah come worship with us, right beside it would have been the play that the Ottawa Little Theatre, which is putting on, which is called The God of Carnage.

So, come worship the God of Carnage with us. That actually is sort of very resonant to a lot of our culture. If you notice in lots of movies lately, if they want to say that they're going to do something that's going to bring about a lot of destruction, what do they say?

They say it's going to be biblical. Maybe you don't watch action movies, but often in action or spy movies, they're going to have lots of explosions, lots of death, lots of carnage.

They say it's going to be biblical. We, in fact, as a people, a lot of us do in fact worry that God is, if he does exist, if he's able to do anything at all, that if he does things, it's going to be violent.

It's a very, very common cultural belief. Most of us just, you know, live our lives not even thinking about God whatsoever. We can go day by day, week by week. Maybe we fire off an odd prayer.

[2 : 40] Some of us are maybe very puzzled about the way the world is going. What does it mean that in the U.S. election, people have to choose between Trump and Clinton?

What does it mean to the world that the U.K. has voted to leave the European Union? For a lot of people, they find it very, very unsettling. A lot of people, not only do they tie the belief that things are maybe getting better or better or worse and worse with what human beings are like.

Many of us sort of struggle with the idea of the God of Carnage. The whole play is, in fact, about an idea that if you strip away the civilized veneer of people, that underneath we love carnage and we love violence and that the tether of civilization is very, very, very weak and easily broken and our nature of carnage comes out.

So where does the Bible fall on all of this? Like, what does it have to say about what God is like? And maybe just as important for many of us, although actually the first question is the more important one, but for many of us, are human beings good?

Are we bad? Are we prone to doing lots of violent stuff? Are we prone to doing more and more good things? Like, what are human beings like? Well, the book of Titus talks about this in a very, very powerful way, in a way which is, I think, very unique amongst the spiritualities and the religions of the world, and that if we look at it and take the time to look at it, I think we'll see that it's very wise and speaks into our life in a powerful way.

[4 : 12] So it would be a great help to me if you would take your Bibles and open up to Titus, and let's just look at how the Bible speaks about God and about our human situation and whether we're sort of good or bad or a bit of good and bad or just what goes on with human beings and makes human beings the way they are.

Titus 3. It's sort of close to the end of your Bibles if you're using paper versions, which I still recommend at least at times to use paper versions. It helps to remind us that there's a book and that there's context, a literary and grammatical context.

And here's how it begins. So the last two weeks we've looked at Titus 1 and 2. We preached the books of the Bible. Now we're looking at Titus 3, bringing the book of Titus to an end, and here's how it begins. And it actually begins in a very, very curious way about talking about civic virtues. How you actually are to try to live your life in a pagan society. In fact, it's very, very interesting. As I read these next few verses, you have to remember that if Paul was alive today and dying today, we probably wouldn't like him.

Paul was short, probably within a year or so of the writing of this letter, Paul was arrested by the Roman authorities. And he did very brief but very hard time in a dungeon in Rome.

[5 : 37] And then he was executed by beheading just outside the city gates. And if the papers of the time were reporting Paul's execution, they would have said two things about Paul.

They would have said that he was well known to the authorities because he'd spent much of his life, he'd spent many years in jail. And the second thing is he would have said that he was a person of no fixed address. And if we're honest ourselves, when we read about somebody doing something bad in the paper or being sentenced and we read that they have a long history of spending time in jail and they have no fixed address, we don't think very highly of the person.

That's the person who's writing that which we now call Titus 3. And it's very interesting to hear how he begins by talking about civic virtues. If you just understand this historical context, he begins by saying this.

I guess it's not really begin since it's chapter 3, but this part begins. Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

Now that's a very, very interesting thing for somebody to say. He's writing this letter in between having been in jail in Rome and history reveals that Paul, it's recorded in the book of Acts and after Acts, the last chapter of Acts is written, and Paul probably had two or three years where he was free.

[7 : 14] It is during that time period that he goes to Crete, which is where Titus is, and he evangelizes the island. And then sometime after this, he's captured by the authorities, does a short period of hard time, and then he's executed by beheading.

But he talks about Christians being submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

Now, how does he ground this, so to speak? Like, why does he tell you to do it? There's lots of people who will give you similar advice, but the reason that they give you the advice can matter a great deal.

So it might be that in a shame and honor culture, they'll talk to you about how you should maybe show courtesy to each other because it's the honorable thing to do. It would bring shame upon you to not show courtesy.

Maybe in another culture or in another context, they would tell you that you should show courtesy to people because of karma. If you show courtesy to them, then they're going to maybe show courtesy to you.

[8 : 26] Maybe another reason why you might be told to show courtesy to somebody is that it's just practical. It helps things to go smoother. Others will actually maybe give you a utilitarian reason, actually a selfish reason.

It's a way to manipulate people, that if you show courtesy to them, they're much more likely to do what you want. And therefore, you're going to get what you want. And if you want to get what you want, then if you show courtesy, you're more likely to get what you want.

So show courtesy. In other words, the suggestion or the advice to do courtesy is ultimately based on enlightened, skillful selfishness.

And I've just basically summarized virtually every leadership book in chapters. It's often built on enlightened, skillful selfishness to get what you want.

Or is it just maybe tradition? There's a tradition of showing courtesy. So how is it now that Paul, who said these quite surprising things, given that he spent much time in jail, and given he doesn't know, obviously, when he's writing, in 2 Timothy, which is written after this, he knows that he's about to die.

[9 : 33] But when he writes Titus, he doesn't know that he's going to be executed by Nero. So how does Paul explain it? Like, why does he say that you should do it? Well, it's in verse 3 and following, and he actually begins with a really, really, really surprising, in a very, very surprising way.

Look what he says in verse 3. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

Now there's an uplifting view of human nature, if you've ever seen one, isn't it? It's actually quite surprising that he roots the basis, because look, it begins with for.

Look, for or because. It could have also been translated as because. Because. You know, why should you show courtesy toward all people and speak evil of no one and avoid quarreling?

Because we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

Now, many people would say, George, that's extremely, that's an extreme understanding of human beings. And obviously, George, you don't think that's true. Like, nobody thinks that's true.

[10 : 53] It's very extreme. Sort of a very bleak way of understanding human beings. Well, here's the part that's often missing when we think, when we read a Bible text like this, there's something we miss in there.

You know, if Nietzsche says similar types of things about human beings, or if Ayn Rand says something similar about human beings, if Hegel says as part of a development of human beings that this is what they're like, if Freud says something similar as part of human beings, they all have a very, you know, the Bible isn't saying anything at all like what, I mean, it might sound a bit, but it's very different.

It has a very, very different context. I'll try to give you a bit of an example. Imagine for a moment that it turns out you had a long-lost aunt who lived in Australia, and she'd found you in Facebook and liked what she saw in Facebook, and she dies, and she leaves you \$100 million.

That's real money. \$100 million. And so you have \$100 million tax-free, and you end up after a couple of months thinking that you should give back in some way.

And so maybe through the church or some other place, you come across a person, 16 years old, really, really rough life. They've been living on the streets, and you decide to take them in, and you're going to make a difference in their life.

[12 : 18] And so you have this 16-year-old, and you pay for them to be detoxed and get out of their addictions, and you have them live with you, and you make sure that they have clothes, they have money.

You pay for driving lessons for them eventually. You give them a car. Different times, you come and you pick them up, and you drive them home. You pay for them to have French lessons and dance lessons and computer lessons and just about any lesson that they want.

And they go to university. A very elite university. You pay for tutors. You do all of this. And you do all of this just because you want to give back, and it's hardly anything out of \$100 million. But let's say that, you know, some night their car's broken down, and they text you to come and pick them up, and you go and you pick them up, and you pick up their friends, and as you're driving them home, this person that you've helped, they, first of all, never even say hi to you when you pick them up.

They don't thank you. They don't say hi to you. The entire drive while you drive them home, back to your home, and drive that person's friends all the way home different places, they never talk to you even once.

They pretend as if you're not even there. And, in fact, as they're driving home, the person that you've helped regales people about how great they are at French, how great they are at dancing, how great they are at computers.

[13 : 42] They regale you about the stupid little notes that somehow show up at your house occasionally, like after you've had breakfast, put your plates back in the sink that helped me as I

wash them for you.

And you regale friends with how ridiculous and stupid and foolish this is. And you talk all about your accomplishments, all the while completely and utterly ignoring the person who's driving the car, which is you.

And you gave them the house. You gave them the lessons. You got them detoxed. You pay all of the bills. You're picking them up at 3 o'clock in the morning when their car broke down.

That's how it is with every human being with God. Every single person here with God.

He gave you life. He gives you your every breath. He weaves whatever talents and gifts you have into your being. He has the sun to rise every day.

[14:46] Every single thing you have was given to you. Nothing is your own. Wouldn't you have described the person in the first case as being foolish and disobedient, living his life in malice and envy?

I've just described myself. You see, that's what makes, when the Bible is saying these particular things about human beings, it's what makes it different than what Ayn Rand says or Nietzsche or Freud or other philosophers or social theorists, is if there is in fact a God who does exist, who is the creator and sustainer of all things, and we live our lives in such a way that we basically never talk to God, never thank him, and just basically ignore him.

That's why the Bible says that we're foolish. And even this very, very hard thing about hated and hating, and it might very well be that if we really pressed into your life that there isn't a single person you hate, that might very well be the case.

Often what happens is we just don't remember the people that we hate. But all that would have to happen is that as you walk out of here, you bump into a person, and maybe you're with your friends and they just see a person, I don't know, a woman with brown hair wearing shorts and a, you know, a shirt.

But you stiffen because this person stopped you from getting that promotion. This person claimed that what you did, they did, and they got the praise for it.

[16:27] Or they did something wrong and they made it so that people thought it was you who did wrong and you got the punishment. Or maybe you think you don't hate people or don't have anything to forgive or anything like that, but you walk out that same situation and what happens is it's not the particular person, but you smell a smell, a perfume, and it brings you back to your mother or your father or a former boss or a teacher and all of a sudden you realize how much you still, actually if you were honest with yourself, hate that person.

And the fact of the matter is is that for many of us, even if we think that there's not, maybe we are a blessed person who doesn't have anybody that we hate or who hates us. Because it might very well be that we walk out and that person walks away because we're the ones who've done all those things to her.

In fact, isn't it so much easier for us to think in that analogy of us going out to meet somebody who's done all those wrong things to us and we feel hurt than it is for us to imagine that we walk out the door and she sees us and we're the ones who've caused the damage to her?

Why is it that we find it easier to identify with the first case and not the second? Why is it that probably 99% of people find it easier to identify with the first case of the person having wronged us than it is for us to think that we might walk out the door and another person, their whole day is ruined because they've seen us and are reminded of what we've done to them.

The Bible has a very, very frank discussion of what it means to be human in the context of the living God. Andrew, if you could, or Rebecca, if you could put the first point up.

[18:07] Here's the point of God, of the Bible, saying this particular thing here in verse 3. And it seems like a very, very odd way to begin to discuss civic virtues. But it's put there for me to understand, for you to understand that I cannot make myself right with the living God.

I cannot save myself. I cannot make myself right with the living God. I cannot save myself. Even at my best moments, I can't.

And that's what the Bible here is trying to communicate to us. But then some of you might say, okay, well, George, now that you've painted a complete and utter bleak picture of human beings, although I have to say that you caught me by surprise with some of your analogies.

But George, like, what are you saying? Does that mean that human beings have no hope? That God just reveals our hearts and what really goes on in our hearts, but there is no hope? Like,

George, even if there is a God, like, it doesn't look as if God does anything that's very helpful to me. Yeah, sure, there's been the odd time I've said a prayer and something's happened. And sure, you know, I've had some promotions and I've had some success in life and all that type of stuff. But George, look at what's going on in the States and look at what's going on in Europe and look at what's going on in Ottawa.

[19 : 25] How on earth can you believe that God cares or that he's good or kind or loving or that he'd actually do something for me, that he knows me? Look at the stars, George. Don't you sometimes stand outside and if it's a cloudless night and it's dark and you can look and you can see, you know, in Ottawa, you can only see a few stars.

Maybe you've been in Algonquin Park or somewhere far more remote than that and you look up and you look at all the stars and the galaxies. George, how on earth could you possibly believe that God cares about you or me?

Like, George, isn't that more reasonable? Doesn't that fit with experience? Well, the Bible's not finished. So, look at verse 4. So, verse 3 is, you know, for we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

But, but, that's not the end of the story. There's a contrast. That's what the but is there for. It's a big but.

Praise God for big but. You can keep that in that and have it recorded, Andrew. Praise God for big but. There's a big but. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit whom God poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior so that being justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

[21 : 18] A very, very, very glorious text. Could you just put up the third point please right now? Or did I just say the second point, I guess.

Am I out of order? Some I've miscounted. Oh yes, I missed that second point, yes. If God has to do something to save us, that was the second point.

Put up the third point. Sometimes, you know, I don't do things perfect. Keep praying for me. The gospel is the good news of what God really, truly did in space and time in human history and which he offers to you as pure gift.

The gospel is the good news of what God really, truly did in space and time in human history in which he offers to you as pure gift. Look at this, how it begins.

It doesn't sound like it's very dramatic, but what it says here is, but when the, verse four, but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us. And the image here of appeared, in the original language, it's a light image.

[22 : 27] a light image. And it's an image of the room being completely and utterly dark. And actually, probably this room could be made to be fairly dark if you just put some things underneath the doors and you turned all the lights off, this room would be pretty, pretty dark.

But let's say you could make the room completely and utterly dark, get rid of even the exit sign so it's completely dark. And all of a sudden, somebody turns on a flashlight, light appears in the room. And that's the image here that God, who is by himself goodness and loving kindness, the Savior appears, comes into this dark world and he's really present.

Now, this, Paul is making a claim that this really, really, really, really truly happened, that it's not just a story. I love the Lord of the Rings books.

I've probably read them ten times. You know, if Jesus tarries and I continue to be able to read, I'll probably read them another few times before I die. I like reading them every couple of years.

[23 : 39] I like the movies. And, you know, in the movie, just a little while ago, I was re-watching the third Lord of the Rings movie and one of my favorite scenes in all of movies is towards the end of the third Lord of the Rings movie and Aragorn, if you don't know anything about the Lord of the Rings, you know, you can think about your grocery list or something, but hopefully you can follow the image.

The Aragorn has led this small group of fighters, the good guys, right to the gates of Mordor where the evil ruler is and the gates open up and there's this vast, vast, vast army that's about to approach them.

There are this small number of soldiers, this vast army is about to approach them and I almost had Andrew put the speech up there but there's this wonderful thing, one of my favorite parts of movies where Aragorn starts to ride around and he said, there will come a day when the light of men will fade and the strength of men will fade but this is not that day.

This is not that day and he keeps saying this as he's running around with his horses rallying the men. And I love watching that. I just love watching it. But it's just a story.

Just made up. It's inspiring but it's just a story. And after you watch it, I maybe have to turn it off because I'm watching it downstairs because I have to go up and do the dishes because Louise wants me to do the dishes.

[25 : 06] You go back to the real world. The person who wrote this text, who had a record as long as your arm, who was well known to the authorities, who had died by beheading, died because he saw Jesus after Jesus had risen from the dead.

And he, that so completely transformed him. He already was from Jerusalem. He knew that the grave was empty. He knew that nobody had taken the body.

He saw Jesus after Jesus had resurrected from the dead and had led this man to leave his well-educated, politically, socially, culturally, and educationally secure role to a life that would mean that he'd eventually spend much time in jail and eventually be beheaded by a Roman soldier outside one of the gates of Rome.

The entire, why is it that in Islam it doesn't matter if there's any miracles? It doesn't matter if there's any miracles in Buddhism. It doesn't matter if there's any miracles in Hinduism. But it matters to the Christian faith because at the very heart of the Christian faith is this claim that God breaks in, that God comes and actually acts in our midst.

It doesn't matter whether things in the Koran on one level are completely historical. It doesn't matter at all whether anything about Buddha's life actually happened.

[26 : 40] In Hinduism, it doesn't matter whether things are historically accurate. It doesn't matter to any of these things. But why is it that Christians are concerned about whether or not Jesus actually rose from dead?

Why is it? Well, it's because there's this belief that it really happened, that it's not just a story. It's not like listening to an actor pretend to be a fictional character giving a rousing speech to carry on and to fight against immeasurable odds.

The claim is that it's not just a story, that it actually happened, that the God who really does exist is good and kind. He's not distant. He's not asleep.

He's not powerless. He actually listens. He's involved in creation. He broke into time and space and human history in the person of his son.

And his son lived a sinless life and then died a violent death upon the cross that if you went back in time, you would have seen the soldiers sweating and cursing just like soldiers do when they have a job they don't want to do on a hot day, probably muttering about stupid Jewish troublemakers causing them to have to spend the time on this hot and dusty day when they'd rather be in the shade with some nice wine and some hummus and some tabbouleh and cursing and the thing place was so public it had to, the charge against Jesus had to be in three languages.

[28 : 05] And the claim of the Bible is it really happened. The tomb was empty. And it was empty because Jesus had risen from the dead vindicating all of the promises of God and vindicating what he had said about who he is and that his death was not a mere death but was God's unbelievable but I hope you believe it.

Counterintuitive action to save ordinary human beings like you and me. Human beings who are disobedient and foolish and led astray by various passions and pleasures and days of malice and cannot save ourselves.

That the God who actually exists actually acted in human history. His salvation appears. And that's the Christian claim.

And you'll notice that this is the spectacular thing. It just gives here three different images of what it is that God does. What it is that God does as his son who's lived a sinless life dies upon the cross and dies and tastes all there is to death and then rises again on the third day.

Actually Andrew if you could put up the fourth point it sort of summarizes it but we'll just go through it. When I receive the gospel by faith alone God pours out his Holy Spirit upon me to give me new life he makes me right with himself and he adopts me as his precious child.

[29 : 45] Look at verses four to six again we'll see the three images but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared he saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness but according to his own mercy and here's the first image by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit and that that image it's an image it's if it tries to picture that when you put your hands in the hands of Jesus and you trust him to be your Savior and your Lord when you put that you think of what Jesus has done for us on the cross you hear that it's God's provision to make us right you put our hands in the hands of Jesus and this isn't this once again this isn't an Aragorn story this isn't a Lord of the Rings story this isn't just something that's there to inspire you the Bible claims that this is God's own description of what he himself does for ordinary people who put their faith and trust in him and we can trust the word of God because the tomb is empty and Jesus is risen and that when we put our hands in the hands of Jesus as an ordinary person unable to save ourselves one of the things to understand is if God pours out just like we can have consent underneath a waterfall and the water pours out but here the image is that it's as if the Holy Spirit is like a waterfall and it not only comes and falls upon us as our body but actually comes and enters into our mind and our heart and our will and our soul that the Holy Spirit is richly deeply poured out upon who we are and the result of that pouring out is that it is if I have been given a new life that comes from God that's what regeneration means and restored means that I'm still human he doesn't turn me into an angel he makes me restored to what I was originally meant to be and the second image comes right after it whom he poured out so verse 6 whom he poured out on us richly through

Jesus Christ our Savior so that being justified by his grace just a couple of weeks ago I was in Vancouver because I helped to organize a conference that was there and on the Monday night before the conference began I was with several and we also took out one of the guest speakers and we took him out to this simple restaurant and I said I'm going to pay for the guest speakers so I give the waitress my credit card and you know it's just all chatting declined well this is a bit embarrassing and so I say well let's just try it again and you know because we all know that's how things work right it's declined try it again maybe it won't be declined the second time I don't know why maybe Pixies will you know sprinkle Pixie dust on it but I try it the second time it's declined again this is very embarrassing fortunately I have a second credit card I give them the second credit card it goes through and then afterwards I'm calling after as I'm walking back to the hotel

I call the credit card company and they say we can't tell you why it was declined but you have to go to a bank branch and bring two pieces of ID so the next day I go to the bank branch passport driver's license it turns out that Julie Lynn Spence had applied for a second credit card and an additional credit card on mine and purchases all that type of stuff the alarm bells went off they froze the card so now I'm on the phone with them and what do I want I want them to make it right I'm not mad I want them to make it right isn't that what you'd want I can't make it right what do I want I want them to make it right I want the other person's credit card cancelled they're going to have to cancel my credit card they're going to have to mail me another credit card by express delivery because they want to do it as quickly as possible they have to make sure that there's no purchases on there that if there are purchases on that card that weren't made by me but by this person who was trying to defraud and steal from me that those purchases are reversed they don't have to pay for it I can go on right I want to make it right I want them to make it right that's what the word justified means God makes it right God makes it right for me and what's the third image of what God does what is it that when we see Jesus dying upon the cross and rising from the dead and when we accept him when we trust that this is God's provision to save us he not only pours out the Holy Spirit upon us to make us like give us actual new life that comes from God he also makes it right with him and the third thing is what is the third thing look at this again so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life he adopts you he adopts you in Roman culture you could adopt a person at any age and here's the wonderful thing about this image look at that first image the image

I just gave you about the problem with the credit card that I had at the end of the day they made it right but all it making it right means is that all the debts that are mine I still have to pay but this is a different image it's not just that God removes things the actual sinless life of Jesus is now going to stand for me that the actual riches of God are now going to be mine this is going beyond the second image to discover you wake up and discover that Bill Gates adopted you I don't know how many billions of dollars is he worth all of a sudden you've been adopted by a billionaire who cares about

the credit card balance you can pay anyone off and that's the third image here this is what God does for you in the person of his son when his son dies upon the cross now and you see this is a really really important thing if you could put up the next point please that would be very helpful another way to express what

[36 : 15] I just expressed is a very classic way of referring to it that I am saved by God's grace alone in Christ alone through faith alone God saves me because he's gracious he saves me in Jesus I receive his salvation by putting my faith and trust in him by recognizing that it's not what I do or can do or ever can do but that God does it for me when I turn to him and acknowledge that I need him to save me you see for many many people in Canada we're going to wrap it up very quickly for many people in Canada so for many people in Canada they would now just say that when you die that's it you die you die before I became a Christian that's what I would have said you die you die it doesn't matter that you live on in somebody's memories as Woody Allen famously said I have no comfort in the fact that when

I die I live on in people's memories because I want to live in my apartment and so for many people you die you die but for many other people you say when you die you go to a better place and so for the average Canadian what they sort of think about it is that every day I've done five good things it's as if there's this heavenly bank account better place bank account I do five good things it's a little bit of of some money going in my better place bank account I better place bank account you'd see that you know it's pretty close to at least affording a down payment on a mortgage and God gives interest free loans and I'm sure I'm going to go to a better place and the Bible shocking news is that if you could actually look at your better place bank account you'd see that you owe 500 million dollars you have absolutely no hope and so for the average

Canadian when they me yeah like your poop smells better than mine does not that's why you see verse three is so central to the gospel and why how I've summarized it in that I am saved by God's grace alone in Christ alone through faith alone is so unbelievably important to communicate because we can get it wrong I grew up in a house my parents are Northern Ireland Protestants I'm a child of immigrants and my parents if I had done something that was really good or really smart or really beautiful they'd say that's very Protestant of you that's very Protestant of you the implication being that Catholics aren't like that but

Protestants our poop smells better than Catholic poop which of course is completely and utterly ridiculous you see it's so easy to quickly get back to believing what you see that's why the gospel is so important it's easy to turn the gospel into a list of rules about Old Testament rules or about genealogies you know you have a Protestant genealogy see that's what Paul is talking about when he keeps on going right here I've skipped a look on verse 8 this saying is trustworthy the gospel and I want you to insist on those things so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works I'm going to explain that in a moment these things are excellent and profitable for people but avoid foolish controversies genealogies dissensions and quarrels about the law for they are unprofitable and worthless as for a person who stirs up the vision after warning them once and then twice have nothing more to do with them knowing that such a person is warped and sinful he is self condemned you see if you could put up the next point a gospel centered church will humbly but firmly guard the gospel from those who push false gospels because it's the gospel that saves us it's so easy for us to start to think that it's about our own righteousness that it's about our own being somehow better than other people

Spurgeon tells it truer the Christian gospel the Christian faith is one beggar telling another beggar where to receive free bread and I'm saved by faith alone because God is gracious and what he did for me in Jesus he does not weigh my merits at all but you know this whole thing and Christians now aren't saying that they're perfect we live in the already not yet the time of Jesus appearing the second time in glory when we will receive our new resurrection bodies and complete transformation of who we are that is still in the future and that describes us we have been given new life in Jesus when we put our faith and trust in him he is the one who's made it right he's done that completely and utterly and it's very very important to be gripped in the gospel by this because you see when we're gripped by how we justify ourselves or how we make ourselves righteous it's as if you have to fix the eaves on the third floor of a house and your ladder is not long enough so you put the ladder on a trampoline do not try this and you put the ladder on a trampoline and then you go and try to fix stuff in the eaves on the third floor it's inherently unstable and that's why when we base our lives on our own righteousness and our own justification it's very hard young woman's life when I walked out

the door because she remembered the terrible things that I did to her and if you entirely are trying to justify yourself and make yourself righteous how can you look at the black hole within but when we're gripped by the gospel when we realize that when

[42 : 42] I it is God through the person of his son he did everything with nothing left over to make me right with himself that it's Jesus his death upon the cross his resurrection the point out of the Holy Spirit that's what gives me new life God gives me that new life I didn't evolve into new life I didn't invent or create this God does it that God adopts me as his child that no amount of good things that I can ever possibly do can add to God being my father who has taken me as his child but nothing that I can do can add to that that it's all been dealt with by the person of Jesus and as the gospel grips us in my day-to-day life I can look at the fact of how I hate another person I have to deal with that where a person hates me I have to deal with that I can look at that I am not trying to fix something on the third floor of a shaky ladder on a trampoline and you see that's why in this entire thing there's this surprising reversal you don't show courtesy to perfect courtesy to everyone to make

God love you and to look righteous but as you are gripped by what Jesus did for you on the cross as you are grounded on that and begin to have the ability to look at those parts of who you are that are very bad as you consider the courtesy that God showed to you to save you you start to want to show courtesy courtesy makes sense even to a person who's wronged you courtesy begins to make sense when you realize how gently God has dealt with you gentleness makes sense that's why virtue emerges out of being gripped by the gospel whereas if you try to make yourself right with God through virtue you will always be anxious and insecure but when your identity is rooted in verses 3 to 7 of

Titus you start to have the type of security and wholeness to deal with hatred and being led astray and to apologize and to be gentle life transformation comes from being gripped by the gospel could you put the final point up Andrew could you all stand please I don't know where you are with God and you're here today but you know there's an old way about how do you become a Christian there's the ABCD method I'm a very simple minded man my wife will tell you that I'm very simple minded some of you say George you aren't simple minded no I really I'm very simple minded and how do you become a Christian ABCD there's something to acknowledge that's verse three you can't save yourself you have to have God save you there's something to believe that God has done something in the person of his son that will make you right with him and there's

C something to consider to consider that if you put your hands in the hands of Jesus your life will start to change you will have to start dealing God the gospel will start to lead you to deal with people who hate you you might have to make amends that people whom you hate you might have to begin a journey of forgiveness but then there's something to decide that it's worth it and there's no better time than right now if you haven't put your hands in the hands of Jesus there is no time better what's keeping you from doing it right now what's stopping you from putting your hands in the hands of Jesus who knowing every single thing there is to know about you not as an abstraction but knowing you really and yet he died on the cross for you and God knowing you perfectly will pour out his

Holy Spirit upon you in such a way that you have given new life that God will make you right with himself what is stopping you from doing this right now for some this is a conversion prayer and for the rest of us it's a sanctification prayer to realize our need to be gripped by the gospel to face the things in our lives which are good and bad and live in a way that is both wise and good for others and brings glory for God would you please pray it with me dear Lord please make me a disciple of Jesus gripped by the gospel and then grow in me godly and God glorifying civic virtues and a life of good works done well for you in Jesus name amen father pour out your holy spirit upon us make us disciples of Jesus gripped by the gospel who are living for your glory and if there is any here who for the first time gave their life to

[48 : 16] Jesus father pour out your holy spirit upon them grant them the courage to share with another person what they have done to help seal it in their lives father thank you for what you've done for us in Jesus in all this we ask in Jesus name amen the at