

The Success Trap

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[0 : 00] Father, we confess before you that we are far better at seeing sin in other people than seeing sin in ourselves. That we are far better at seeing evil motives and being cynical about others and very poor at seeing evil motives in ourselves.

But at the same time, Father, we confess before you that we often seem to go between great pride and great despair when our proud pretensions get pricked.

And so, Father, we are unstable and we give you thanks and praise that you have set it up, that your people gather once a week on your day to gather together and hear your word, to be recharged and recommitted as we hear the gospel and think about your word.

And so, Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit would very powerfully bring your word this morning home deep into our lives, that we might be disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel, learning to live day by day for your great glory.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. Some of you, I don't know how many of you have heard of David Woods in Acts 17 Apologetics Ministries.

[1 : 22] I'd heard of him and some of you know as well, I actually spent several days, 10 days with him on a tour in Israel back in October and not just him but some other people.

And I had never watched his video about his conversion. Everybody asked me on the tour, have you seen David Woods' conversion video? And I said, no, I haven't. So when I finally came back, I watched it.

I was really struck by it. It just powerfully impacted me. And I think I've shared it with you. I told my family. But I've noticed something. I don't know how many of you have watched the video since I suggested, you know, Google David Woods' conversion video.

But many people are deeply offended and troubled by the conversion video. Like deeply troubled and offended by it. And I've been thinking about that.

I just had a conversation the other day about it by people who were worried about the man. Just, you know, full disclosure. And this fits very well with the book of Judges that we're looking at.

Because the book of Judges, part of the problem we have when we read the book of Judges is that it's filled with violence and evil.

[2 : 31] Like today we're going to see a man who has sex with his slave, who murders and tortures people and produces a son who does even more murder and torture.

I mean, just like your normal uplifting thought on a Sunday morning. But one of the things in the video is that part of the step of this fellow David Woods becoming a Christian is when he tries to hammer his father to death.

I'll give you a warning up front about it. And I was thinking about, you know, why it is that I was so powerfully, I've never thought about hammering my father to death, by the way.

But why was I so powerfully affected by it? And I think the reason was, is that I became a Christian in grade 12. Continued on with my high school. Went and did a degree in sociology and philosophy in graduate school.

And, you know, to be honest, for about the next seven or eight years of my life, I would go through bouts of doubting the Christian faith and almost giving up on being a Christian. And for me, this is just saying something about me.

[3 : 31] I was never tempted by Buddhism or Hinduism. Never even for a moment was that a temptation to me. My great temptation has always been nihilism, nihilism, atheism.

That's always been my thing. And part of that is, and I just, I mean, when I talk to atheists, I try to restrain myself with this. Because I actually think when somebody says they're an atheist, I said, no, you're not.

You know, because if you're a real atheist, you're gripped by Dostoevsky's statement that if God is dead, all things are permissible. There is no meaning in life. There is no morality.

There is no better or worse. All there is is power and appetite. Right. And I don't know what that says about me, but for me, for seven or eight years, I would go through seasons.

I mean, I'm studying Marx. I'm studying Feuerbach. I'm studying Weber. I'm studying all of these. I'm studying Skinner. I'm studying all these people at school. I'm studying, you know, from a scientific point of view and an atheistic point of view.

[4 : 31] And I'd go through these periods of deep doubt. And for me, the great temptation was that. Is that true? Am I wrong to be a Christian?

And if I'm wrong to be a Christian, that is what I would believe. It would still be the case today. If I was to stop being a Christian, that is what I would believe. And that's what David Woods struggles with.

And I think that's why. If any of you, if that's your temptation, then that's the video for you. If you can't even begin to understand why somebody would even think those things, don't bother watching it.

It'll just offend you. But I mention all of this because one of the things, it's a common Christian problem and it's a common human problem. On one hand, there is a deep part of us that longs to arrive.

And when we've arrived, then life will be easier. In Christian circles, it happens because we long that if we just had that miracle, if we just had that anointing, if we just had that powerful religious experience, and after that, life would be easier and life would be better.

[5 : 41] I wouldn't have these doubts. I wouldn't have these problems. I would have this certainty. Praise the Lord. I would walk in victory. And there's many churches that teach that. I grew up in a church that often taught that type of stuff.

If you just have this one spiritual, emotional breakthrough, then life is easier. And we see it all around us in the world as well. On one hand, if I just meet the right person, if I can just marry the right person, if I can just get this degree, if I can just get this job, if I can just get this house, if I can just get these kids, if I can just learn this technique of how to deal with people, if I can just have this experience, if I can have this peak, then life will be easier.

And on one hand, it's a very powerful desire and drive. And at the same time we have it, we doubt it. And in fact, often if we hear somebody else talking about this, in our hearts, we have a certain degree of despising of them because we think it's very naive.

That's not how life works. But at the same time that we see that in others, we at ourselves, we always long, could there just be this moment, this relationship, this church, this fill in the blank, and then life will be better.

We're going through the book of Judges. That's one of the things we do here at Church of the Messiah. You know, the Bible is 66 books. And other than Proverbs and maybe James and maybe 1 John, they all have a very, very particular order.

[7 : 17] They're written as books, and so we go through them as books. And we're getting up to chapter 8 and chapter 9 of Judges today. It's the longest text of Scripture I've ever tried to preach on in my life, 97 verses.

It has caused me lots of prayer and anguish all week, I will be honest. And we've come to the story of Gideon. And often what happens when people tell the story of Gideon, they tell it in such a way that they think that by the end of the story of Gideon, he lives happily ever after.

But that's, in fact, not how the story works. Like, unconsciously, we Christians tell the story or part of the story of Gideon as if it fits into this scenario. But that's literally not how the thing goes.

If we were doing a Netflix of the series, limited series of the story of Gideon, there'd be at least three episodes, maybe four, depending on how you want it to break up chapter 8 and 9.

Really, it should be together. But in chapter 6, and that's what we looked at a couple of weeks ago, for those of you who don't know what the story of Gideon is, it's a very, very powerful story.

[8 : 20] It's one that's historically, like, you know, I think to myself, you just watch the unfolding crisis in the Middle East, and every time you think it can't get worse, it seems to get worse.

Hundreds of thousands of refugees trying to get into Turkey, banned by Turkey, attacked by Russia and Syria and others. And the story in chapter 6, 7, 8, and 9 of the book of Gideon is that there's been this people group called the Midianites and the Amalekites and their other different tribal

allies.

And for seven years, they come into Israel, and they don't try to take Israel over. They don't try to annex it or occupy it. All they do is they come in, they steal all the food and eat as much food as they can carry and consume.

And then when they sort of load it up, what they do is they kill, they destroy all the other food. They try to destroy all the other food. For seven years, you have genocide. For seven years, you have what the Soviet Union tried to do and killed millions of people in the Ukraine by an artificial forced famine of stealing the food.

All the while, while the smart people in the West were saying that the Soviet Union was a socialist, communist utopia, they were forcing, they were creating forced starvation of the Ukrainian people.

[9 : 44] And so this is what's going on in Midian, and Israel can't fight against them, and they're getting diminished and diminished and diminished. And God goes and calls Gideon, and if you look at chapter 6, in the course of chapter 6, there's two very remarkable miracles that finally convince Gideon that God is calling him to go and deal with this.

The first miracle is where a large amount of food is just put on a dry rock, and the angel of the Lord representing God just touches it, and the whole thing gets consumed in fire and disappears. Just be honest, how many of us wouldn't love to have the odd miracle like that appear just to bolster our faith? Just be honest. And then the next one is the miracle around the fleeces. And then in chapter 7, it would be episode 2 if we were doing a Netflix series about it, that Gideon has to actually go and fight the Midianites.

And so he goes, the Spirit of God comes upon him, he goes and he gathers up the tribes, and he has 32,000 people who are going to go and march up to this battle. But in chapter 7, verse 2, the verse which is the key to understanding all four chapters, 6, 7, 8, and 9, is in chapter 7, verse 2. And God says to Gideon, I'm concerned that if all of those soldiers go and fight against Midian, that what will happen when I deliver, when I defeat the Midianites, you folks are going to boast over me. [11 : 06] You're going to boast over me as if it's something that you accomplished. I'm concerned about that. So it's a famous story. So Gideon goes and tells people if they're afraid, you don't have to go. 22,000 people leave, leaving 10,000 soldiers.

God says to Gideon, still too many people. And so then, you know, we know the famous thing about the water, and the point is there's only 300 guys left at the end of it, and then there's Gideon and 300 guys, and Gideon's still obviously afraid, and then God does another miracle, one which would have been very significant for a paganized man like Gideon, and that is that he has Gideon over here, the dream of an enemy, and how the enemy interprets the dream.

And in the ancient culture, as in most of the world today, dreams can have unbelievable importance in terms of the gods speaking or gods speaking to a human being, and Gideon now really knows that God's going to do this, and there's the thing with the trumpets, et cetera, et cetera.

The whole army of Midian is thrown into confusion. They fight each other. They kill each other. They scatter, and some of the Israelites come out of the mountains and chase some of them and hold the fords and kill many, many more, and that's how the story ends, and usually in Sunday school and in churches, you don't hear what happens next.

You assume, and they all lived happily ever after. No. I don't have time to read all of chapter 8 and 9, but I'll just start to summarize what happens immediately after.

[12 : 36] Immediately after, a very powerful tribe that had been way up in the mountains where it was hard for the Midianites to go and fight them, they come and they've actually killed the two Midianite generals, and they come and confront Gideon and said, how come you didn't call us so we could go?

What do they want to do? They basically say, we wanted to share in the glory of that victory. You robbed us of a chance to have glory. Now, Gideon, in the story, seems to give a very, very humble, et cetera, et cetera, you know, answer, but he's not humble.

They're too powerful for him to deal with. In fact, one of the interesting things about this, it's a very, very common biblical lesson. Friends, how you treat very, very weak people shows you who you really are.

If you meet somebody very powerful or very rich or very famous and you're nice to them, that doesn't show you who you are. It's when you meet somebody that nobody likes.

If you're in an office or if you're in a school and there's the awkward, socially awkward, irritating person that absolutely nobody likes, and if you join in, that reveals what you really like.

[13:55] That reveals what you really like. Because we see this very next, after this, Gideon's going to try to kill the two kings of Midian that have escaped, and he comes up to a smaller city and asks for some help, and they won't give him any help.

And he says, listen, when I come back successful, I'm going to torture all the leaders. And he goes to another little village that he could easily handle, and they don't give him any help as well.

And he says, listen, when I come back victorious, I'm going to kill you all. I'm going to kill you all. And he gets the two kings, and he goes back, and he does torture, torture, torture, all of the elders of the first city.

And he does murder all of the people of the second city. How many of you hear this in Sunday school? How many of you hear this in character studies of Gideon?

And then you discover that the reason he went to capture the two kings wasn't because he was concerned for fulfilling God's will. It was a private quest for revenge because they had killed his brothers.

[15:07] And he actually tries to get his very young child to pick up a sword to kill them. But the child can't, so Gideon kills them. And now, we'll get to the part that we're going to read.

Verse 22 of chapter 8. If you have your Bibles, you can follow along. Chapter 8, verse 22. And here's what happens. Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, because, you know, now obviously Midian's completely and utterly crushed.

The men of Israel said to Gideon, rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also, for you have saved us from the hand of Midian. Don't say God did it. 300 huge army, but it's, Gideon's getting the credit.

Now Gideon seems to give, in verse 23, a theologically precise and perfect response. And it is a theologically precise and perfect response.

He says, I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you. The Lord will rule over you. And we're just going to stop here.

[16:23] Now, what happens now, we need to, I forgot to bring it. So just imagine for a second that I don't have a Bible here. This is like a fitness thing. I'm a fitness star, and I'm a YouTube influencer on fitness and on diet, and hundreds and hundreds of thousands of followers, and I'm now standing here talking to you.

And I have a bowl here. And as I start to talk to you about what I, you know, my secrets and what I'm sharing with you, my secrets to success and perfect health, as I begin to talk to you, I open a bag of barbecue potato chips.

Kettle. Southwest barbecue. Potato chips. The best tasting barbecue potato chips in the world.

We'll have to make sure that's not on the, unless they want to give us an advertising dollars, Andrew.

And I pour the bag of potato chips, the whole bag in there, and I have this bag. As I'm talking to you, eating potato chips, I say, I treat my body as a temple. Chomp, chomp, chomp.

I never eat potato chips. Chomp, chomp, chomp. Potato chips are bad for you. You should never eat them. Chomp, chomp, chomp. I never have saturated fats. Chomp, chomp, chomp.

[17:33] They're going to cause you all these problems. Chomp, chomp, chomp. You get the picture. Chomp, chomp. So, Gideon says, Oh, I'm not going to rule. My sons aren't going to rule.

Only the Lord will rule over you. And then look what happens in the very next verse. And Gideon said to them, verse 24, Let me make a request of you, every one of you, give me the earrings from his spoil.

For they had golden earrings because they were Ishmaelites, the people that they defeated. And the people answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a cloak and every man threw in it the earrings of his spoil.

And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested were 1,700 shekels, about 20 kilos of gold. 20 kilos of gold.

Because the crescent ornaments and the pendants and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian. So, in other words, not only does he get 20 kilos of gold, he also gets some other ornaments. Earlier, I forgot to tell you, he takes the royal ornaments from the battle horses of the Midianite kings and he keeps them for himself.

[18:40] And then look at this. And he also takes the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian beside the collars that were around the necks of their camels. Now, we'll get to the next bit in a bit

here.

Now, just look at what happens. So he said, No, no, no, the Lord... So there's several things going on here. Imagine this. I hope I'm not offending anybody here.

But I... And maybe afterwards you can just pray that, George, you're very cynical and you're lacking of faith. And I do know I lack faith. But when I see people saying there's going to be a miracle service at a certain time in a certain place, I think to myself, how on earth could you ever possibly know that God is going to do a miracle at that time?

Like, I'm sorry, it just seems very presumptuous. Like, God does a miracle when he's going to do a miracle. How can you advertise in advance a miracle? I don't know. Like, I just find that presumptuous.

But let's say, having preached on that, all of a sudden we hear some shots outside and some yelling and a guy comes walking in, stumbling in, and you can see three bullet holes in his chest, blood pouring out of it.

[19:55] And he comes and he falls, white-faced, right over there. We're all completely and utterly in shock. I run over and I pray, Lord, heal this man.

Father, you can do this. We believe, you know, if you don't heal him, help him to be prepared to meet Jesus. But Father, we ask that you would heal this man. And in front of all of our eyes, the blood stops.

The wounds are healed. Color returns to his face and he stands up and thanks me. Now, that would be a church service for the ages.

But then imagine, I turn and say to you, folks, I'd like to pass the plate right now because I would really, I really, really, really would like a Porsche SUV.

And it's not a donation to the church, it's a donation to me. You just saw the miracle I did, didn't you? So if you could just pass the plate, I want to keep passing and passing and passing until there's enough money in the plate for me to buy a Porsche SUV.

[21:03] I have a color in mind as well and I want all the features. Don't be cheap. Now you laugh, but that would be just so wrong and so offensive. Right?

So here's Gideon, 300 men and I'm sure when they were holding the torches, they weren't holding them like this, they were holding them like this because their knees were going like this.

And God does this remarkable thing and God does this whole miracle and then after God has done the whole miracle, Gideon asked for 20 pounds of gold and 20 kilos of gold.

That's 44 pounds. That's a lot of gold. So, and it even gets worse.

Look at what happens in 27 and 28. And Gideon made an ephod, ephod of it, some of the gold and put it in a city in Ophrah and all Israel hoarded or prostituted themselves after it there and it became a snare to Gideon and to his family.

[22:13] So Midian was subdued before the people of Israel and they raised their heads no more and the land had rest for 40 years in the days of Gideon. So what he does as well is this. He makes an ephod and an ephod was something that was used in connection with worship.

Only the high priest could wear it. It would be connected to going to the Ark of the Covenant and going into the tent and part of the ephod was that there was something right here that contained the umim and the thumim and in times of crisis in the context of worship of the Lord the high priest could take the umim and thumim and ask God to give them an answer and direction and that would be provided by God.

And what Gideon has done is not in connection in fact in the original thing it's probably in connection to an idol that he made with some of the gold as well. And so what God what Gideon has done is said in connection with worshiping this idol I am going to have my own ephod and if you want God to speak to you if you want to hear what God has to say about your business deal your marriage your trip you come to me and I will use my ephod because I'm the one who had all these miracles happen to me and look at all the wonderful things I've done and you come to me to hear the voice of God.

And needless to say it became a snare to the people. Now if you could put up the first point Andrew so one of the things we see in this text is success can be your downfall.

It teaches you to boast over God and exalt yourself. success can be your downfall. It tempts you to boast over God and exalt yourself.

[24 : 09] Now let's be honest about this. If I got 300 people and there were 120 some odd thousand Soviet and Syrian and Iranian troops that were going to be coming against a particular place and I went off with 300 of you and not 300 of you here but our congregation a couple of others and the 300 of us go and God does a mighty miracle and the 120,000 Russian, Syrian and Iranian troops are all defeated.

I'd have a hard time not bringing that up in conversation occasionally. You know somebody's asking me for some advice and I'd say well it makes me think about that time when I defeated 120,000 Russians and Syrians and Iranians with 300 people.

Did I tell you about the time? Maybe I'm the only one because I'm probably a worse sinner than most of you but it'd be pretty hard not to be tempted to do something like that on a regular basis.

So regular you'd be sick and tired of hearing it. Now here's the thing that's going on in this text.

Remember I said that we long for some type of experience that's going to just make things all right. Like many of us sort of wish that if God could just do a mighty miracle that we could see that would be undisputed that that would be fine. We would live with that. Life would be better after that.

[25 : 48] If only God would speak to us or communicate to us in a very powerful powerful unmistakable way then that would be fine. If only God would do something just to vindicate us and to show that he's with us and if he could do it in a very very powerful way then life would be fine.

But all of those things happen to Gideon and it hasn't changed his heart. In fact what is getting pointed at here and touched on here is something which is a very very very deep human problem and it's a deep human problem.

It doesn't matter if you claim to practice Buddhism or Islam or you're an atheist or completely and utterly just indifferent to the whole topic that there's this very very very deep human bias and prejudice that makes it hard for us to imagine that if the universe is going in its proper direction or if God is going to work in a way that brings him glory then obviously it has to include me.

Like it's impossible for God to be glorified and for me to do poorly because we have a very very hard time. We very very quickly blur the line between us I quickly blur the line between God and me upon God's glory and my glory God's success and my success my success and God's success it very very quickly comes that I blur those things things it's hard to imagine that I could take a stand for God or take a stand for justice and I don't get any recognition for it and I get fired and I end up having to be on welfare and I lose my house and I have to live in subsidized housing and we all in our culture think that that is a very very good argument that God doesn't exist that there's something wrong with the universe because it is just so deeply a part of our imagination that it is impossible for me to not have for the world not to be right and for me not to be able to have success but for me not it's just it's a deep thing in us

I don't have time to read the rest of the story I want to unpack a couple of things but the thing if you go back and you read the book of chapter nine it even gets worse because you know it's a very very common thing in television and movies and stories the sin of the mother or the father the way that somebody has treated you and how that has consequences that go down for years and years and decades and decades afterwards and Gideon by the way one of his he ends up having many many wives he has a slave and he makes one of his slaves a concubine which means he can have sex with her and she has a kid and he names the kid my dad is king that's what Abimelech means my dad is king at the same times that he said he's not a king he names his kid my dad is king and Abimelech goes and seizes the kingdom he murders his brothers he ends up causing he ends up being responsible for the murder of whole region of Israel and the sins of Gideon and the consequences of Gideon's life and his pride and his vanity and his arrogance have reverberations throughout the whole about the generation that comes even after he's died if you could put up the next point

[29 : 42] Andrew just to try to bring this home you know I said that on one hand there's this very very powerful sense of us as human beings that there must be some way that we can arrive some way that we can turn a corner and our life will always be better whether it's the degree the amount of money in the bank the academic accomplishment the artistic accomplishment the business success the marital success the success in children the success in terms of learning how to practice mindfulness so that we can manage our emotions some other technique for managing our emotions some type of yoga breakthrough so that we have some type of ongoing and merging peace and we have this very very profound sense in so many different ways secular and religious and spiritual and even Christian versions of it and we have this deep sense that there should be

something like that but at the same time we know that that is not true and we make fun of other people who have their own way of doing that and we make fun of them and what the story in Judges is teaching us is this if both success and failure keeps you from the triune God then only he can act to save you see that's what happening in the story the story is posing riddles to us you think a miracle will change your life we'll do a miracle of the food we'll do a miracle of the fleece we'll do a miracle of the dream we'll do a miracle of the battle and Gideon's heart is not changed and obviously his failures don't endear him to the triune God nobody thinks that his failures makes him closer to God and so in Gideon's life you see both this mixture of success and failure and if both success and failure keep you from the triune God well then maybe the nihilism the nihilism that I talked about at the beginning of the service is completely and utterly correct and Dostoevsky is completely and utterly correct if God is dead all things are permissible all that is left is my power and my appetite and my desires and my comfort and that is all that is left and there is nothing no social claim no religious or spiritual claim can make any difference to me all that matters is my calculations to maximize myself or maybe there is a God that's just completely and utterly abandoned us because the fact of the matter is is if both success and failure do not work then unless God has mercy and does something for us we have no hope we have no hope only God only God God now if you could put up the next point just very briefly you will always have to struggle with the world the flesh and the devil until you die that's one of the messages of the Bible that there is no sense of arriving in that sense that we're often looking for but if you could put up the next point Andrew by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone you have both the certainty of eternal security and the certainty of help for the daily struggle against the world the flesh and the devil so let me unpack all of this see if only God if we have this basic problem and you know one of the things which is so powerful about the Bible if you if you listen to the stories is that the the Bible regularly surprises us because if we're honest about the longings and the yearnings and our doubts and our uncertainties time and time and time again we see that only the Bible fulfills in its own way in a deeper and wiser and truer way the longings and the yearnings of our hearts and can speak to the cynicism and the skepticism that we bring against our own longings and our yearnings you see if we're honest success and failure don't seem to work because it doesn't change this fundamental desire I have for glory and to be the center and so what this is preparing us for in the book of Judges is what's going to happen in the cross you see at the very very heart of reality as is revealed in the cross isn't a solitary God who is lonely who had to create human beings because he had nobody to love or she had nobody to love and unlike in the stories of the east and in paganism it isn't as if there was some type of God and there was some cosmic catastrophe as if for a moment God forgot that he was God and lost control and some catastrophe happened it happened somewhere else and and now he might or might not deal with and get around to dealing with it no the very heart as is revealed in Jesus and as he unlocks the true meaning of the Old Testament the very heart of who God is is that from all eternity the father is love the son and the Holy Spirit is both the means by which that love is communicated and his love himself and the son has received the father's love and his love the father back and the Holy Spirit is both the very means by which that is communicated and carried and his love himself as well and from all eternity the father has revealed himself to the son communicated and carried by the Holy Spirit and the son has revealed himself back to the father in delight and in love and it is out of the overflow of who God is that the triune God created human beings and when we decided that we would be like God ourselves and we bent and warped and twist our nature God did not despise us or abandon us because it is the very nature of God that he is love an overflow of love an overflow of goodness and so in the fullness of time through stories like this posing riddles to us about how is it that we have longings for having arrived but at the same time doubt that we could ever arrive and how is it that both success can ruin us and failure ruins us and if both success and failure ruins us and we have a longing to be whole how can that ever be and so the story is posing these riddles for us to read and enter into so that when we come to [36 : 45] Jesus and we learn of the father's eternal love of the son and the son's eternal love of the father and the Holy Spirit both God himself but also the love that flows between and the creation of all things out of the overflow of love and God never stopping being loving and seeing you and me and our profound unfixable need that Jesus does the exact God the son of God does the exact opposite of our condition if our condition is to be so bent that we somehow think we could be like

God God the son of God remaining in nature God strips himself of his appearance of God of his power as God and becomes no human being is more weak than they are when then than when they are a zygote in their mother's womb no human being is weaker than when they are a zygote in their mother's womb and God the son of God takes into himself our human nature becomes one person and enters our human race as a zygote in the womb of

Mary and the only thing that can be lower than that is what happens at the end of his life when he dies because you can't be poorer than dead that's something Flannery O'Connor said you can't be poorer than dead and on the cross we see this wonderful offer that God makes to us to solve the riddle of our longings and our yearnings and the riddles posed by our cynicisms and our doubts that God the son of God says I will die a death in your place and you know George after you're dead and gone and your kids talk freely about the different ways that you weren't a perfect dad and you bent their life out of shape and your grandkids and you know the ministry interns in your congregations and your neighbors and all those other people and not only all the things the ways that your pride bent you out of shape and bent other people out of shape and hurt them and helped to bend them out of shape and all the things that they could say against you and all the things that they wish that could be said to you and the ways that you should be punished because of the different ways they hurt you hurt them all of those will be on me George that will unmake you and I offer to take your place and have all of that come on me because I love you and George your inability whether through success or failure to live a life that is in harmony with God the Father and the Holy Spirit and that love and that truth and that the beauty and that that wonder that's been eternally communicated between the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit and by the Holy Spirit and your inability to ever even remotely be at home with that and my perfect at homeness in that I will offer that to you I will trade places with you George I will bear the consequence of your pride and I will offer you the destiny of my great humility and love to clothe you and there is nothing you can do by success or failure George all you can do is receive it by faith and here's the wonderful thing about this you see when you put your faith and trust in Jesus the Bible has this constant message of eternal security it means that after today if I have done before I came into this church God does not love me any more if I've done a good job in the sermon than he will if I've done a bad job in the sermon I standing with him does not depend upon my ability to accomplish these things when I put my faith and trust in Jesus and I know that he has done everything that my pride doesn't demands to be punished and he has taken that upon himself and all that my success and failure cannot accomplish because of my bended knee that he clothes him with his own he closed me with his destiny and I receive both by faith when I put my faith and trust in him it means that the moment after I die it does not matter how the world has evaluated me or how the world has evaluated you but the moment after I die or you die in Jesus the words of the triune God to you will be welcome home you are mine and I am yours welcome home so on one hand through the gospel I have an eternal security not based on my accomplishment or my failure and at the same time as we are gripped by the gospel and it begins to soften our heart towards gratitude and soften our heart towards humility as this story of the gospel becomes that upon which we stand and that by which we begin to see the world and begin to see ourselves it means that week by week and day by day but week by week in particular when we gather together with other people who are followers of Jesus on the Lord's day to be reminded of this it gives me and gives you as the gospel grips us more and more a firm place to stand and say

Lord my pride has really had a field day of wrecking my life this week my arrogance my selfishness thank you so much for what you did for me on the cross I give these things before you Lord help me to amend my life that I might be more like Jesus it gives us the certainty without the cynicism to live with Jesus by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone you have both the certainty of eternal security and the certainty of help for the daily struggle against the world the flesh and the devil until you see God face to face and he says welcome home my beloved invite you to stand just bow our heads in prayer father just as we go into this prayer you know the state of all of our hearts and father if there is one here or more that have not yet at this time given their lives to Jesus we ask father those of us who know the the wonder of grace we ask father that you would move in a powerful way in their lives and help them even now at this time to say Jesus be my savior Jesus be my savior father save me through Jesus and father for all of us you know our hearts you know how our wake week has been you know those of us who can't forgive you know those of us who are filled with revenge you know those of us who are consumed with envy those of us who are

consumed with pride with gluttony with greed with anger father you know those of us who struggle with this all this week we you're children but we still struggle with it and father we thank you that we can be reminded in your word of the gospel and we ask father that you would make us disciples of Jesus gripped by the gospel learning to live for your glory that you would grip us with this eternal security and in the power of the Holy Spirit that we can look at our day in our week in our lives with realism but without cynicism without despair but with hope and that you would bring those things to our mind that we can lay at your feet and ask for your help and your strength that we might be disciples of

[45 : 29] Jesus gripped by the gospel learning to live for your glory and all God's people said amen