

The Gospel is Radically Different from Religion and Spirituality

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[0 : 00] Father, we ask that you gently but deeply pour out your Holy Spirit upon us so that we might hear your word, understand your word, that your word might enter deeply into our lives, and that as your word enters deeply into our lives, not only will we know more of your grace and freedom, but we will bear much fruit for your glory to the ends of the earth.

And this we ask in Jesus' name, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Amen. Please be seated. Oh, sorry, I'm trained. But we're going to talk about ritual and all that in a moment, but you can see I have been trained.

If you're a guest here this morning, normally you're all standing because of the creed, and so I just instantly go into saying the same words. So here's the thing. This past Monday, this is not going to surprise people who are regular here in the church.

I was at a Starbucks. I was leaving the Starbucks. I was going to go one way, and then I thought, no, I'll go the other way. And as I go, one of the baristas that I've talked to a fair bit over the years, she's putting some cups and all there, and I'm just going to throw my cup out.

And I say, you know, how's it going? You know, how's it going? You know, you say, how's it going? What's the response? Oh, it's fine. How's it going with you? Oh, it's fine. It doesn't matter. And I ask her, how's it going? And she says, my life is terrible. My life sucks. I hate myself. I feel like killing myself. Everything is terrible.

[1 : 24] And I'm saying it with a smile, but she did not say it with a smile. She said it with seriousness. And so, you know, I'm a pastor. I should do something religious. When somebody says that, I felt like saying, let's take a collection because that's pretty religious.

But instead, you know, I try to say something hopeful, you know, or whatever. And she cuts me off after I'm trying to do my hopeful bit. And she said, you know, there's these born-again Christian types. Have you heard of them?

I said, well, that actually would probably be me. I'm one of those types. And she said, well, those born-again types, those born-again types, don't they believe that if Hitler, just before he died, if he gave his life to Jesus, he'd go to heaven?

What do you think of that? Well, I'm going to tell you roughly what I said in a few moments, but our text today talks about that.

And so it would be very helpful for me if you'd get your Bible. And if you don't have a Bible of your own and you'd like to follow, we're looking at the Book of Romans, which John just read a couple of moments ago.

[2 : 34] There's always extra Bibles here at the front. You can take them as a gift or you can bring them back afterwards. And I tried in my sputtering best, very imperfectly, you know, if somebody had been videotaping this interchange, it would not have ended up wanting to be in my great moments of conversation with people.

I stumbled through some things, but it's been on my mind all week. And it's really appropriate that this is also the same week that we're looking at Romans 1. And if you're wondering, today is the first Sunday in a sermon series.

We're going to go all the way through the Book of Romans. And, you know, maybe I'll put on the webpage this week the different texts, at least over the next few weeks that we'll be looking at. And the sermon series is called Grace-Filled Life, Grace-Filled Life.

But that's, so, so, Hitler dying just before he dies. He gives his life to Jesus. He goes to heaven. Like, what do you think about that? And so here's how the text goes.

Verse 1 of Romans, chapter 1, verse 1. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God. Now, just pause right here.

[3 : 47] This is actually the first seven verses or one long sentence in the original language. And so it's almost a little bit like once you get on it, it's almost like a water slide.

You can hardly even catch your breath, and it just sort of zooms you right down to the end. But I just want to pause here before we read any further. And, Andrew, if you could put up the first point.

Here's the first thing that we've got to see.

The gospel is good news from God. Good news. And if I should have bolded news or put it underlined or something. The gospel is good news from God to ordinary people.

That's what it says here in verse 1. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God. And the word gospel means good news.

And when it says gospel of God, it means it's good news from God. And as we're going to see that it's good news from God to ordinary people like you and me. Not just to religious people or spiritual people.

[4 : 44] It's good news to Muslims, to Jews, to Africans, to Asians, to Canadians, to rich people, to poor people, to people who have same-sex attraction, to those who don't like those who have same-sex attraction, to well-educated and poor-educated, to people who go to bars a lot and people who absolutely never go to a bar.

It's the gospel is good news from God to ordinary people. And it's really important. The reason I wanted to have news bolded is because, and the reason the sermon series, today's sermon, I wanted to try to say that the gospel is radically different than either religion or spirituality.

Because, you see, one of the things that characterizes religion and characterizes spirituality is that they're basically all about advice. They're basically about advice, about how you need to live or what you need to do, what yoga postures you need to accomplish, what mantras you've got to say, what dietary laws you've got to follow, when you can get drunk, when you should never get drunk. But whatever it is, maybe religion is sort of mean and cold and hard and means going to terrible, boring places like churches. And spirituality means that you can play golf on a Sunday morning and then go to yoga and never go to church.

And the rules are maybe very more relaxed, that you eat local and think global and all that type of stuff, as opposed to, you know, mean religion. But whatever it is, they all ultimately give you advice, tell you what to do.

[6 : 13] But the gospel means, in Greek, it means good news. And so, in fact, one of the hard parts it is, even for Christians, is that Christians want to try to keep turning the gospel into good advice.

But the gospel is about news that comes from God to ordinary people, and it's good news. And when it says that it's coming from God, and we'll talk about this more a little bit in a few moments, it means that it's not coming from my culture, my race, my sex, from a certain sexual orientation. It's not coming from an institution. It's not coming from a time which is sort of bounded, you know, like only the first century. It's good news from God to ordinary people like you and me.

Now, some of you might say, George, you don't really think that's true. Christians don't really think that's true. I bet you any money, George, that as part of, I know you didn't say let's take up a collection, okay?

Although that's a very religious thing to do, and it's sort of neat that you're making fun about it. But I bet you invited that young woman to church, didn't you? And I did.

[7 : 33] I did. Right? So, George, you're contradicting yourself. You're not being consistent, are you? Well, that's a really, really, really good question.

Well, let's look at it. Let's go back to reading. And I'll tell you, because the text talks about that. And so go back to verse 1, and then we'll go to the long water slide, and then we'll come back, and I'll sort of draw something out of it, right?

So, Paul, verse 1. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures concerning his son, who was descended from David according to the flesh, and was declared to be the son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.

Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations. That means among every single people group.

The gay people group, lost tribes in the Amazon, including you, that's you and I, who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[8 : 52] And from a literary point of view, Paul, almost all of the rest, a lot of the, he brings up all these themes he's going to develop later on in the book. But here's the thing. If you could have the second point up, Andrew, to sort of bring out like a little highlight here.

The good news from God. Remember, the first point is that the gospel is good news from God to ordinary people. The second thing is that the good news from God is about a person. Jesus, Messiah, and Lord.

It's good news about a person. Jesus, Messiah, and Lord. That's what it says here in verse 2. You see, it goes, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures concerning his son.

The gospel is concerning his son, who is descended from David, according to the flesh. In other words, he's a real human being. He's not just a disembodied person.

He's not just an idea of a person. He's not just like an archetype of a person. That this is a story. The good news is about God's son, who is also a human being.

[9 : 58] He's a person. The good news is about a person. And that means that the good news is not about the institution of the Anglican church. It's not about the church of the Messiah.

It's not about rituals. It's not about liturgies. It's not about rules. It's not about politics. It's not about culture. It's good news about a person.

That's what it's all about. Now, some of you are saying, well, George, didn't you? Okay, here's the thing. People naturally have habits and naturally create institutions.

They naturally have rhythms. You just saw it, evidence, a few moments ago when I was assuming you were all standing. I'm just sort of programmed. It's like my ritual after I ask you to pray is you all be seated.

But we all have rituals. We all have different ways that we wake up in the morning. Many of us maybe have the same thing for breakfast in the morning. But people change our rituals.

[10 : 58] I don't think John would mind me saying that. But a little while ago, for four or five years, we had a really fine administrator by the name of John. And it was very interesting.

John was, I think, in his early 30s, and he ate like a typical man in his early 30s. Crappy. And all of a sudden, he started to get interested in this young woman named Joanne.

And all of a sudden, fries consumption started to decline. Green leafy consumption started to rise. Ketchup on fries declines.

Tomatoes with the green leafy stuff starts to rise. Less fried food. More steamed food. You get the point. People change our rituals and our habits.

One of the hard things for me when I got married, it's a very common thing. I think it's often harder for men than it is for women. One of the hard things for me when I got married is that Louise very rightly would say, like, I don't know, I'd have my own rhythms, right?

[12 : 10] And when you're dating somebody, well, you can have your own rhythms. And you make an appointment to meet. But when you marry, the other person has a say in your 24-7 life, right?

So, therefore, if after you finish your class, you can't just go for this or just can't do that or just can't do that because the other person has a say in it. So, it's not that after you get to know your girlfriend or after I'm married that all of a sudden I move into a realm where I have no institutions, no habits, no rhythms.

It is that the person changes it. And that's why it's so significant. You see, why did I invite the young woman to church? I invited the young woman to church because I believe that what happens here on a Sunday morning is that Jesus' people get to meet Jesus in the company of each other.

That's why I'm here. I want to meet with Jesus. And I want to meet with Jesus in the presence of his people. I want to meet with Jesus in the presence of his people, in the power of his Holy Spirit.

And I want to try to introduce that person to Jesus. That's why I invited her here. That's why you should invite somebody.

[13 : 28] Don't invite them because the band is hot or the speaker is great or anything like that. Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy. Don't do that.

But it's all about a person. And the other thing which is so neat about this, you see, is that much spiritual thinking and religious thinking is impersonal. It leads us to impersonal things.

In fact, many of the images that we have is of energy and it's impersonal images. And we crave, as human beings, personal contact.

Even when we're depressed, even when we feel that no one loves us, we're depressed because we feel that no one loves us. Even when we're grieving because somebody has died, we're grieving because we miss that personal contact.

Even within a marriage, when one of the couple or both of them are feeling very, very alone and maybe even very, very trapped, they feel alone and trapped because they want to have that deeper personal contact and a real contact and it's just not happening.

[14:30] But we crave the personal. And the good news, the good news from God is about a person, Jesus, the Messiah, and the Lord.

And throughout the rest of the book of Romans, Paul is going to explain what it means that Jesus is the Messiah, the Jewish Messiah and the Lord. He's going to explain it. Now, some of you might be saying, okay, George, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa.

Good news from God. Come on. George, I bet you if you went on the internet and you Googled people who have God speaking through them, I bet you'd get millions of responses.

I bet you'd get all sorts of YouTube videos of people claiming to speak for God. Every religion does it. How on earth could you make such a claim that the gospel is good news from God to ordinary people, that it's good news about a person, Jesus?

Like, how on earth, in a world like that, with all, you know, there's like all this thing going on, how on earth could you possibly make such a claim? That's a really good question as well, isn't it? Well, Paul talks about that here.

[15:42] Remember that big, long sentence that we went through? If you go back and look here at verse 4, it's a very sort of odd type of phrase, and it's a very dense sentence, right?

So that's where we're going to pause. Actually, if you put up a point, Andrew, but I'll read this, the verse 4. And was declared or appointed or inaugurated or authenticated to be the Son of God in power, okay?

In other words, how is he appointed or authenticated to be the Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead? And then once again, he says, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Here's what Paul is saying. The good news from God is authenticated by the witness of the Holy Spirit and the resurrection of Jesus. That is how it is authenticated, that it is news from God, not from an institution, not from Paul, not from a culture, not from a time period, not by a guy who has particular brilliance in writing or anything like that.

How is it that if we know that it comes from God, that it's real, not counterfeit, it's authenticated by the witness of the Holy Spirit and the resurrection of Jesus?

[16:56] And it's very, very interesting. It shows one of the very spectacular things about the gospel, how it is that we are to respond to the good news. Because you see, if you think about that, if you think about what Paul's saying, he's saying that it involves both the intellect and our ability to ask questions and seek and try to discover, but it also is something deeply personal within that we are to receive.

So with the resurrection, that's an historical question. Did Jesus really exist? Did he really die upon the cross? Was the tomb empty? Do they have the body?

Were there witnesses to the fact not only that the tomb was empty, but that he claimed to be alive and had defeated death? Are there witnesses to this? Are there historical records? Are there historical traces?

Are they just in Jewish literature or Christian literature or pagan literature? And you can get answers to all of those questions. You can actually say, you could say, George, I'd like to begin that search. Do you have some scholarly work that you could point me to that I could go to start to read and that I could follow the footnotes and I could ask these questions and I could start to give you that. Others in the congregation could not do it and you could use your mind to try to figure those things out.

[18:06] And if you do, you would come to the conclusion, like myself and many other people, that there actually is good historical evidence and reasons to believe that Jesus died on a Friday, that every single person that he knew believed that he had died and was discredited, and that on Easter Sunday, the grave was empty, the tomb was empty, the body was gone, and that people said they'd seen Jesus and now rather than him being discredited, they now believe that he was the Savior and the Lord, that he was the Messiah long promised by God in the scriptures of the first covenant.

And you can look for that. You can seek that out. You can use your mind. But at the same time, there's also this witness of the Holy Spirit, which is a different type of thing. It's an internal pressure. It's like I became a Christian when I was in grade 12. And let me tell you that what launched my quest for Jesus wasn't that I had come to a faith and trust in the resurrection.

It was when I'd seen people whose lives had been changed by Jesus and I had a sense of emptiness in my own life and I had a sense that there must be more. And I had a sense connected to these people who were connected to Jesus that there was something more.

And I went to events and I was with them and I heard them talk and increasingly inside of myself, there was a pressure. It was as if there was almost a person pushing on me to surrender, to humble myself, to no longer push that pressure aside, but to remove my arms which were pushing that pressure aside and to stand like this and to let it come in.

[19 : 57] The witness of the Holy Spirit. The witness of the Holy Spirit that authenticates it. And just one other thing about this.

If I was to offer you counterfeit grass, you'd go, counterfeit grass? Sorry, grass clippings. If I was to go around the suburbs and say, I have some counterfeit grass clippings, would you like to have it? I'll sell it to you real cheap. I'd go, what do you mean? Grass? I have a problem getting rid of my grass clippings. If you went around to the suburbs and say, I have counterfeit dandelions to sell you, nobody would take them.

Unless they wanted them as a joke to put on their neighbor's lawn to harass them. Counterfeits imply truth and value. I try to pass off a counterfeit \$100 US bill.

That has an attraction because there are real \$100 US bills and they're worth a lot of money, \$100 US. Some parts of the world in Kenya, they'd give you a lot more than the \$100 was worth because it had a special significance in Kenya when I was there.

[21 : 02] It's one of the things the guidebooks told you. So all the things, all of the religions, all of the people talking as if they talked from God, rather than disproving that God speaks, it probably shows that there is a God who does speak.

That there's something human to both desire it and to try to twist it. Counterfeits imply the real. Well, some of you might say, George, words from God to ordinary people.

Listen, George, you know, when you see cultures that seem to have accepted this God-speaking thing, it just seems to consume them. Like, George, look at Islam.

Look at those devout Islam. Not only does it lead them to do murderous things, it just seems to swallow up the person. And it means that they start dressing weird and doing weird things and doing murderous things.

And God always seems to swallow the ordinary. George, isn't that what happens when you think that God speaks? Don't you think that's what would happen to me if I was to take your word for it and to think that God actually speaks to me?

[22 : 24] That the gospel is good news, good words from God to ordinary people? That even though it's authenticated by the Holy Spirit and about a person, don't you think that would just swallow me up?

Well, that's one of the reasons why the next few verses are so important in Paul's letter. Because the way Paul writes this letter, and by the way, he's writing it about 20, 25 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

He's writing it to a group of people he's never met. And it's just all of a sudden he's given his sort of like his powerful, long sentence greeting. And now, before he's going to get into his letter, he turns to personal matters, ordinary matters.

Like, listen along. Verse 8. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. Oh, just pause here for a second. You know what's so cool about this word first?

When I say that the gospel is good news from God, don't make the mistake of thinking then that that somehow means that the Bible is a perfect book or that it's the best literature ever written.

[23 : 28] What makes it words from God is that ultimately the words that are here are the words that God wanted. And this is actually written in common working class Greek, not excellent Greek.

And you know what? Here's a literary mistake that Paul's make right here. If you get a letter and you say first, you're expecting later on you'll see second, third, fourth. There's no second, third, and fourth. He forgot to put them in. It's not perfect literature.

We don't listen to this because it's perfect. We listen to it ultimately because we believe that it comes from God. It's authenticated by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and the witness of the Holy Spirit within.

But that was a digression. Back to this. Verse eight again. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. For God is my witness whom I serve with my spirit and the gospel of his son that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you for I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you that is that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith both yours and mine.

I want you to know brothers and sisters that I have often intended to come to you but thus far have been prevented in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the pagans.

[24 : 53] I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians both to the wise and to the foolish so I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

Don't you get this just sense of this personal and thankfulness and mutual encouragement? Paul is not swallowed up obliterated by God not even remotely.

You see the ordinariness of it of just being thankful and of gratitude and this idea that they can spend time together and as a result of just spending time together that both will end up being encouraged that both will be stronger and better off for it and it's really interesting here.

One other thing here do you notice he says here in verse 14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to the barbarians? Actually literally it's debtor that he's in debt to Greeks and to barbarians. so what on earth does Paul mean by saying that he's in debt to them? Here's a very important thing for those of us who are Christians to understand. I'm going to get back in a few moments to my friend and her question about could Hitler have gone to heaven?

[26 : 08] And I've already shared with you that we talked for about 10-15 minutes I tried to share the gospel with her. I probably did a very very poor job. I really it really struck me afterwards that you know it's not about you George and maybe the point of the conversation wasn't that I would do such a spectacular job but that afterwards I realized I hadn't done a good job and I would pray for her.

And you know so I have been every day I've been praying for her and that's maybe the witness of the Holy Spirit not the witness of George but I made my stumbling attempts but here's the thing how on earth is Paul in debt?

What this is saying here is that I actually owe it to her I actually owe it to her to tell the gospel. How is it that I could be in debt to her?

Well there's two different ways that you can be in debt to another person. One way that you could be in debt to another person is I could lend them that they could lend me \$10,000 make it more they could lend me \$25,000 even for rich people that's serious change.

Donald Trump didn't become Donald Trump by ignoring 25k okay counts them up. So let's say this other person gave me lend me 25k now I'm in debt to them to pay them back the 25k but there's another way that I could be in debt to the other person it could be that one of you gives me 25k to carry and to give to another person and now I am under obligation to pass on that \$25,000 to the other person and wouldn't you all be upset if I kept that \$25,000 and didn't pass it on to another person?

[27 : 58] Doesn't every single one of these people of us in the room and probably wouldn't every one of our neighbors appreciate \$25,000? Wouldn't that's what Paul is saying here that God desires the great gift worth an unbelievable amount of money to be told to offered to your next door neighbors your co-workers the baristas who serve you the gay man or the gay woman who's your doctor or your dentist or cleans your house or whatever that you actually from God have an obligation to with faltering lips and maybe with spectacular failure attempt to share the gospel with them.

That's what Paul's saying here. Friends, brothers and sisters, when that first struck me, that has been haunting me ever since it struck me. that that's how I am to view my neighbors and the people around me because it's so easy to be ashamed and intimidated of the gospel, ashamed of the gospel, ashamed of Jesus and it's so easy to be intimidated by the culture.

That's exactly what Paul's going to go into. He's going to go into the whole problem of our being intimidated by our culture. I haven't seen the movie, I think this weekend in Canada the movie The

War Room just started and it was reviewed in the secular papers of Ottawa and I haven't seen the movie, I don't know if it's a good movie or a bad movie, four people, I know five people who've seen it and they really liked it and I'm going to encourage you to go because it's done by brothers and sisters in Christ so I'm going to stand with them and encourage you to go but it was reviewed and this is why we often in our culture can feel even though we have freedom but we can often feel so intimidated.

The reviewer said he pointed out all of the ridiculous things in the movie from his point of view and he said he spent almost the entire movie doubled over with laughter at how ridiculous every single thing in the movie was until he got to the end and then he sat up because he realized it was unbelievably scary in a bad way like a type of crazy religiousness that's only going to ruin your life and he worried that anybody would take its advice and we all know in our spirit that even though most people that many people that we know wouldn't actually say that to our face that's what's going on in their heads and their hearts and so it's very easy to be intimidated by our culture and not have a sense that there is a debt that I have an obligation to share the gospel but to feel intimidated by my culture and when I'm intimidated by my culture I am ashamed and it's made worse because it seems so weak humanly speaking but what does Paul say he does is that Andrew could you put it up

I'd like you to all say these next two verses the last two verses of our sermon today could you say this with me actually I can't see it I'll use it say it with me for I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek for in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith as it is written the righteous shall live by faith friends every Sunday while we're going through Romans we're going to say that verse because this these two verses tell you what the whole book is about it tells you what the gospel is and we're going to look at that every week when we're looking at the weird things why on earth is Paul talking about Israel why is Paul being so mean to gay people why is Paul being so insulting to other people and why is he talking about blood and why is he talking about Adam and every week I'm going to come back because at a literary level anybody you study talks about the book at a literary level

[32 : 08] Paul in verses 16 and 17 right here he tells you what the whole book is about and everything in the book is going to be trying to unpack these two verses and so every week we're going to say it together at least once and I hope by the end it's not that you're sick of the verses but that you love the verses you have it memorized that it's changing your life it's changing the life of our church so just we're going to say it one more time in a moment but just Andrew if you could put up the point just to sort of what try to be our initial thought about what's going on in that text when he says for I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek for in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith from faith to faith as it is written the righteous shall live by faith here's the sort of the idea you can get away for today the gospel is the power of God which justifies sanctifies and glorifies all who believe the gospel the good news from God to ordinary people the good news from God to ordinary people that's about a person the person of Jesus who's the Messiah and the Lord the good news from God which is authenticated by the witness of the Holy Spirit and by the resurrection of Jesus this good news which is the gospel is a power the power of God which justifies sanctifies and glorifies every person who believes gay and straight rich and poor

Arab Jew Gentile mentally handicapped mentally genius every person who believes religious and irreligious spiritual and completely and utterly unspiritual back to my friend one of the reasons I think I mean remember I told you she my life sucks my life is horrible I feel like killing myself I'm not sure if I should kill myself or kill all the people who are around me and she said it not with a smile but with real emotion and you know one of the reasons I think she said that is because she is being beaten up and bent over by massive unfairness in her life unfairness at work unfairness from her family unfairness from boyfriends unfairness from significant from her friends just really really really undeservedly bent broken and being crushed by unfairness and you gotta see where she's coming from if you're being bent and broken by all the significant relationships in your life or many of the significant relationships in your life and you've been broken and been broken by not just an unfairness in a day but an unfairness which seems to just be a pattern of your life that goes on for a while to hear that Hitler could just say a prayer and then go to heaven seems unfair doesn't it it seems unfair and so these born again

Christians my co-workers are unfair the institution is unfair my family is unfair my friends are unfair boyfriends were unfair and now you're telling me God's unfair well whoop-de-doo for you what does it mean when it says that there's a righteousness from God what this text is saying is that God does what no human being cannot do he acts he acts it's a power he acts in a way which is right to make us right with himself that God does what no human being can do he acts in a way which is right to make us right with himself that's what the

Bible is saying the gospel that in this this you know if you go back and read Genesis chapter one God speaks and it is God's God can do things his very word is power he can create things and all the way through the rest of the book of Romans I'm not going to try to justify God right now but that's what the rest of the book of Romans is going to do he's going to start to deal with a whole pile of moral and other problems and at the end of it he's going to say that when you understand what God is doing how he's acting to make you right with himself that he you can't make yourself right with him but he can make you right with himself that when you see how he does it and what he has done you're going to say God did it right he's not unfair it's the opposite of unfair that God has done something which blows your mind he's been completely massively just and completely and massively full of grace in Islam people go to heaven most people don't but people go to heaven but it's just

God just chooses it's just like you're going to heaven you're going to heaven you're going to heaven you're going to heaven the rest of you hell what's next on my agenda we'll see that that's not what happens with the gospel that after you understand what it is that Jesus has done for you and his death upon the cross his life his death upon the cross and his resurrection you will say God did it it's right and it's a relationship word righteousness it doesn't mean that all of a sudden you become perfect that you become the elite that you become the wise person that you go around and you always know the right answer and you always know the right thing to order on the menu and you always know the right interest rate and you always know how to buy the right car and you always have the right perfect person it's not about like that at all it's about God making him right with himself and ultimately with the entire recreated created order that God does this and we can't do it ourselves and this word salvation it's a word that has three tenses it means that

[38 : 53] God has done something to make us right with himself in the past in the present in the future that he justifies that he sanctifies and that he glorifies and that that's what the gospel does that's the good news about what Jesus has done for us on the cross and in his resurrection that as we hear this we understand that he justifies us it means in a sense that if you have lived your life and you have been completely and utterly broken by unfairness and maybe you have been unfair with others that there is something that God does which makes you completely and utterly new which deals with all that which is past and at the same time that what he's going to do through the person of his son is something that sanctifies you that it becomes something that starts to change your life in terms of how you live but it doesn't do it out of guilt it doesn't do it out of rules and it doesn't do it out of obligation that it comes out of being gripped by the gospel and what God has done for you in the person of his son that he does freely out of love for you that he does it because you cannot do it for yourself and as you're gripped by the gospel all of a sudden you are starting to be able to be nudged into new ways of living new ways of living start to become reasonable to you and you are drawn from the future that making these types of changes that it's worth it because the end is glory as you are gripped by the gospel and not just gripped by the gospel but the story but the idea as you'll see in the

Romans as it unfolds that Jesus actually walks with you that the Holy Spirit actually who's also a person actually indwells you and that it's God at work in his power and then for anybody who labors under unfairness don't you want to have the sense and for any single human being that even though there'll be things that are really really hard in life and you deal with failure don't you want to have this sense that the final word about you will be one of welcome and acceptance and that's what glorification is that's that's what comes as Paul is going to unfold in the book of Romans that you can know today not based on how you've performed in the past or you are performing today that you can know today God's final word about you spoken over your life and you can begin to live your life day by day moment by moment in light of God's final word about you accomplished by his work and his action for you for your good what did I tell to the young woman

I said if Hitler had not died in the bunker but he'd been captured by the soldiers and he was put in jail waiting execution a chaplain should go and visit him and share the gospel with him and even

after the death of six million Jews of gays and gypsies and of many Christians if he hears the news of the gospel and believes and gives his life to Jesus God will make what have made him right with himself and then Hitler should have been executed for the horrible things he did because being a Christian does not make you part of the Illuminati it does not make you now a ruler of the earth it does not mean that you can then somehow get a free pass from all of the terrible things you've done in your life but it means you can be reconciled to God we don't enter the elite we're made right with God the Christian faith is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread it's not about how you should rule over others could you please stand Andrew could you put Romans 1 16 17 up again could you all as you stand say this with me one more time for I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek for in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith as it is written the righteous shall live by faith just going to close my words in in prayer but

I want to tell you right now if you have been coming to this church where maybe you've just wandered in and you there might be people here today who like I did many years ago feel a pressure a pressure to let Jesus come into your life and be your Savior and Lord and there is no better time than right now to put your arm down put your hands like this and don't push them away but let them come in and I'm not going to risk telling you some magic formula or words I just want to challenge you if that's happening to you right now all I want you to do is look at the screen and say Jesus I want that God doesn't listen to magic formulas he wants to hear you say that I want that for the rest of my life say it in your own words no better time than today to give your life to Jesus let the witness of the Holy Spirit flood in your life bow our heads in prayer father thank you for Jesus thank you for sending him to walk amongst us thank you that he is the fulfillment of your centuries of promises to the Jewish people thank you that you kept your word thank you that you love us thank you that in Jesus you do for me and for other people what I cannot do for myself thank you that in Jesus and through Jesus you make me right with yourself in the past in the present and into the eternity and thank you father that you do it in Jesus I don't understand how you do it I'm looking forward to knowing more but I thank you I believe that you've done it and can do it and will do it in my life and whatever that says in Romans 1 16 and 17 father I want that to be me I want that in my life I want that to be how

[45 : 30] I live I want to that father I I want to have that good news change me Jesus make me a disciple gripped by the gospel who lives for your glory make us disciples of Jesus gripped by the gospel who live for your glory we ask this in Jesus's name on them get you and