

# Confused by Religion

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Date: 10 January 2016

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[ 0 : 00 ] Father, we confess before you that we often think we understand and hear your word, but we actually aren't hearing your word.

That we are projecting, Father, onto your word our fears, our vanity, our demands. Father, that we project these things onto your word, and so we do not hear your word.

Father, we ask that you would gently but deeply pour out your Holy Spirit upon us so that we might listen to your word, that your word might enter deep into our lives, and that as your word enters deep into our lives, we will bear much fruit that brings you glory.

And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. You folks know about the taping as well? Is that starting? Perfect. Perfect. A few things are going to be disorganized today.

In fact, when it comes time to do communion in a couple of minutes, well, more than a couple of minutes, there's usually a woman here who makes sure that all the right people are here. I didn't know if the reader was going to get up.

[ 1 : 08 ] I don't know if the intercessor is going to come. I don't know if there's going to be enough people to help with communion. And on top of that, the person who always does the audiovisual, they're away. So if things are a little bit more chaotic than usual, then you can just tell your friends to come to a place that does not believe in organized religion.

And it'll make our church more attractive, I suppose, to people. So we're taking a couple of weeks' break from the Book of Romans, which is what we're going through.

And I'm preaching on Psalm 1 today. Now, here's the thing about Psalm 1. I hope I haven't put you all to sleep by saying something like that right off the top. And I didn't do something here.

Now I have. Okay. But I don't know if you remember when Laurie just read Psalm 1 just a couple of moments ago. And if you have Bibles, we're going to be looking at Psalm 1. But a lot of us hear Psalm 1.

Well, here's the thing. I don't know how many of you here struggle with addictions. I don't know how many of you struggle with alcoholism or maybe some type of sexual addiction or some other type of addiction. But those of you who don't suffer from something like alcoholism or an addiction, you really don't understand the inner life of people who do struggle with those things.

[ 2 : 28 ] Because often in the inner life of those who struggle with addictions, alcohol being one, it could be sex, a whole different range of sort of compulsive types of behaviors that people return to time and time and time again.

And for those who often are either struggling with them or succumbing to them or at least profoundly drawn to them and you have to fight against it, even if you're not engaging in the behavior, there's a very, very particular way that an addict understands themselves and talks to themselves.

And one of the things in the inner life of an addict is their belief that they're doomed. And they believe, we believe, that we will be a failure.

That even though things can be going very, very well right now, that's not what is real. What is real is that things will fail. In fact, often as well what goes on in the inner life of a person who struggles with addictions is the belief that there's just basically something bad and wrong about them.

And that, in fact, at some point in time, it will be revealed to people that they're a failure. And that, in fact, as people get closer to us, rather than this being something to look forward to, it's actually something to worry about.

[ 3 : 57 ] Because as people get closer to us, they'll realize that there's something failed and wrong about us. And that's the inner life, a key part of the inner life of somebody who struggles with addictions.

And it means that when they hear... Now, all of us, of course, have times that we think that we're afraid of failure or that there's just something wrong with us. But there's a profound difference between those who just...

It's a bit of a momentary thing or a short season in your life that you believe those things. Whereas those of us who struggle with addictions, it's a far deeper thing. It's like almost always going on there.

In fact, what often drives the person towards addictive behaviors is an attempt... A belief that a particular thing, it's alcohol, drugs, or sex, you know, maybe sex with women or sex with men, that will, if you can actually have that, it numbs things long enough for you to sort of function.

And so for people who struggle with addictions and that type of behavior, when they hear a psalm like Psalm 1, you know, about the chaff that the wind drives away and the righteous not stand, you know, the wicked not stand in the day of judgment, for those of us, even though we might be Christians, we hear this psalm and say, I'm the chaff.

[ 5 : 25 ] I'm the chaff. And we might try to pump ourselves up to say, no, I'm not chaff, I'm not chaff, I'm a tree of life, I'm a tree of life, I'm a tree of life, I'm a tree of life, I'm a tree. But inwardly, we're saying all those things, but inwardly, chaff, chaff, chaff.

Not stand, not stand, not stand. And for those who don't struggle with those types of addictive behaviors and stuff like that, when we read the psalms, in fact, it can be very easy to think, yeah, I'm going to stand in the day of judgment, I'll stand with the assembly of the righteous, I'm a tree of life.

I mean, there might be times you sort of don't feel that way, but it's just, it's far easier to believe those types of things. Those of us who struggle with believing that we're chaff, we wish that we could believe it, but it's sort of hard, it's not in our bones, it's not sort of somehow in our DNA. It got robbed from us at some point in time in our life, and then our subsequent actions have made it even worse. And so it's very easy, then, for a room like this, even a room where probably the majority of us are Christians, to hear a psalm like Psalm 1, and in a sense to hear the common words, but to experience the words in a radically different way.

I'm going to read the psalm again, just sort of now that you've been mindful of it, that it might be very much the case that the person you sit beside, or the person who's sitting across from you, is going to have a very different experience of this psalm, as I read it again, or as you read along with me.

[ 6 : 50 ] It's Psalm 1. Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. Now, it's interesting, not only to some of us, those of us who struggle with addictions, just it's very easy for us to believe that, you know, at the end of the day, I know and I believe that I'm going to go to heaven, and I'm thankful for it, but in our lived experience, we just believe that we will perish, that we are chaffed, that we are the wind that will be driven away, that we will be, that that's just, it's a very, and in fact, actually, those of us who are Christian addicts might actually think that these addictive types of thoughts are a sign of humility, and our knowledge of our sinfulness.

It can play in very, very deeply in Pentecostal, or Presbyterian, or Baptist, Methodist types of circles. But our self-attacking is not actually coming from the Bible, it's coming from this type of addictive lens by which we understand and see the world.

[ 8 : 30 ] Now, I'm not saying that religious people and spiritual people are all addicts, but it's also very interesting that from a religious perspective and a spiritual perspective, we'll hear this psalm in a very, very different type of way.

Like, we'll hear this psalm as if, well, this is just, this is very, very good. God has given his laws. And wise people who are going to succeed in life, they learn the laws of God, and they do the laws of God, and they don't spend time hanging around with people who are bad and going to give them bad advice.

And you stay away from people who give you bad advice who are going to get you into trouble, and you follow God's laws, and you will succeed. And, in fact, you know, that might take the form of, you know, maybe very, very formal churches or traditional type churches which really emphasize the law and the thou shalt's and thou shalt not's.

Or maybe it's a more modern or postmodern church where what they talk about more are, you know, the ten laws about how to have successful children or the five laws for successful marriages or how to have favor with your boss.

And there's a whole pile of how-to things. But it's easy for us to hear this psalm and think, oh yeah, this psalm is really, really wise. It's just reminding us that there's these rules or techniques or advice that we need to follow.

[ 9 : 53 ] And if we follow these advice and these steps, then we're going to be successful. And we're going to go to heaven. And we just stay away from bad people. And bad people ignore what's going on with God and ignore these rules or these principles or this advice.

And they're going to go to the bad place. And interestingly enough, not only then, from a very religious perspective, can we read this psalm and think we agree with it, but with very little changes in it, a devout Muslim could like this psalm.

Now, the devout Muslim will understand that there's different things to do than a Christian will think there is to do. If you come from a very, you know, Christian thing, you might be thinking of, you might be thinking of the Ten Commandments.

If it's a very old-fashioned type of church or in a new church, it might be the Beatitudes. How to be. But in a Muslim, it might be that you make your trip to Mecca, that you fast during Ramadan, that you give to the poor, you do the normal things.

And if, in fact, actually in traditional Buddhism or Hinduism, you could read Psalm 1 and you would also think that this actually is just talking about the fact that you're either going to go towards reincarnation or you're going to finally achieve nirvana and you just do the, you know, you do the alms, you do the sacrifices, you do the meditation, you do the yoga, you do these different techniques and you follow these techniques that come from God somehow or another and good things will happen and you don't do them and bad things will happen.

[ 11 : 16 ] And in fact, it's very, very interesting that religious people and even spiritual people where the rules might be very, very different for spiritual people because spiritual people have sort of made up their own principles or discovered their own principles and mixed and matched and it might be that for spiritual people that I don't know, you vote green or you vote NDP at least but you definitely don't vote for Harper and you know, you do some yoga and you do a bit of this and you know, and a whole range of types of things.

You show some kindness and generosity, you pay it forward, et cetera. But at the end of the day, whether it's spiritual or religious, whether it's a Christian form or a Muslim form or a Hindu or Buddhist form, we can all end up reading this psalm and actually agreeing with it.

And once you think about that, you think to yourself, one moment, there's something wrong here. There's something wrong here with this.

And there's two different types of wrongness. It's the religious, spiritual way of reading it and there's the addict and non-addict way of reading it which sort of gets mixed into that other type of thing but it still just sort of doesn't, that really can't be what's going on with the Bible and we don't really realize it because it's just so easy for us maybe in our circle and that we know that it's, I don't know, using the prayer book or singing praise music or having a choir or whatever it is and we just think we know what the different rules and the processes and steps are but you take a step back and all of a sudden you say, I don't know if this can actually be really what the Bible is all about.

Now some of you might be wondering why on earth did I come to this church where George is just going to say all these really boring and depressing things and it makes it sound as if we can't read the Bible. Doesn't George believe the Bible?

[ 13 : 00 ] I believe that the Bible is God's word written. I believe that every word in the Bible is the word that God wanted to have there and I believe that because I believe and trust Jesus and that's what Jesus taught and it's what the Bible teaches about itself.

And but just just because in fact actually if we believe that ultimately the Bible is God's word written then we have to be careful about replacing God's words with our words unwittingly and not actually trying to hear what God is saying but assuming that from our addictive perspective or religious perspective or spiritual perspective that we understand what he's saying but we don't actually

spend time trying to actually listen to it.

And here's the thing I believe that in the heart of this text not only what I've just done can show that it's possible to misread it but the very very heart of this text there's a riddle and that if we read the text carefully we realize that there's a riddle in the very heart of the text a riddle which in fact is very very revelatory.

So let's read it again follow along with me and now that I've said that there's a riddle in the text just try to hear if you can sort of have a bit of a sense about where this riddle is in the heart of the text a riddle that goes you see the thing about the Bible is the Bible is not cynical but and the Bible is not hip and the Bible is not just a whole pile of series of rules and techniques that we can just use for our own advantage but the Bible isn't cynical but the Bible is God's word addressed to our human heart like it addresses our heart the center of who we are and how we understand things and how we make decisions the center of our allegiances and the Bible always confronts our heart in the context of the reality of the fact that there is a God who's created all things that's how the Bible speaks to us so listen try to listen the second time as we read the psalm and see if you can notice the riddle in the psalm blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked nor stands in the way of sinners nor sits in the seat of scoffers but his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night he is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither in all that he does he prospers the wicked are not so but are like chaff that the wind drives away therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous for the Lord knows the way of the righteous but the way of the wicked will perish and we're not going to be able to have

I have points but just due to some of our technical problems we're not going to be able to be up on the screen those of you who are interested and can't write them down they'll be on online on Monday or whatever but here's here's the first thing Psalm 1 contains a revealing riddle how can chaff become a tree planted by streams of water Psalm 1 contains a revealing riddle how can chaff become a tree planted by streams of water in other words how do verse 3 and 4 work how is it that you can be in verse 3 he is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither in all that he does he prospers the wicked are not so but are like chaff that the wind drives away and many of us probably don't have much of an experience of chaff hopefully you all have experience with onions and so if you've ever bought a bag of onions a 3 or 5 or 10 or 20 pound bag of onions and just think of those onion skins that when you pick up the bag there's all these little flaky skin type things of onion that's chaff okay so how is it that a tree and an onion skin like how is it that onion skin can become chaff

[17:18] I mean how can an onion skin become a tree like how on earth can that be like how can that be you see religion our temperament will just sort of make us read this text thinking well that George all the text is just saying is that you know some people are just born doomed they're just born to perish George they're just they're not the elect they're just born to you know some forms of Islam understands that your destiny is written on you in the womb and in some ways it doesn't even really matter whether you do anything at all any of the things in the Quran you're going to go to heaven some people are going to go to hell that's just the way it is and in religion and spirituality there's in a sense a type of proud assertion that of course by our way by our church if you're part of our church and you follow our way and you follow our rules then you will be a tree of life because you're part of us and we are tree of life people and if you don't do those things you're on the outside but surely

I mean this Psalm 1 is recognized by Jewish people and by Christians right back from the early days of the Christian faith to today as the entrance into the Psalter is God just trying to write something so that at the end of the day we read this and we say you know what I'm reading this I think I'm chaff I guess I should stop reading the book like isn't obviously if this is the entrance way into the Psalter isn't it isn't there some type of encouragement to be a type of tree of life but how on earth can chaff how on earth can an onion skin how can an onion skin become tree of life that just doesn't make any sense and so I think what this Psalm wants to do when you sort of are gripped gripped with this and the fact of the matter is is that unless you're unbelievably self-centered we all know that there's times in our life that we are like chaff even the most unbelievably constantly positive person has times that they're down so at some point in time it has to hit them now I have to remember

I do this from your point of view okay your point of view so I think for Christians for people in David's day or whoever wrote the Psalm it wasn't David and they didn't know anything at all about the cross or anything like that I think the only response that they could have with reading this that would have to set them up for the rest of the of the Psalter is a is a profound sense that God has to do something otherwise they have no hope in fact my second point would be that only God by his grace can turn chaff into a tree planted by streams of water only God by his grace can turn chaff into a tree planted by streams of water and so if you were a believing Jew and you were reading this text and you come to Psalm 1 and it one day strikes you that how can chaff become a tree it will make you realize that all the way through the Psalter as you're reading the other Psalms even as you're praying them that God wants you to come to this view that it's not a matter about you justifying yourself it's not a matter about me making myself righteous or declaring that I'm righteous or forcing people to understand that I'm righteous or forcing people to understand that I'm justified or that I can just that I can somehow by my willpower by my religious acts or by my prayer life or my praise songs or something or other try to force myself or force others into recognizing me as not chaff never chaff never perishing always tree of life always always always that if we can't do that I read the

Psalter saying only God only God can deal with this that in fact the opening Psalm if we actually try to read it and aren't just reading it from an addictive or non-addictive personality or religious where those who just like people who just give up on religion altogether or any type of rules or any type of following God or any just give up and all it's just all a whole pile of crap you know religious people and spiritual people they're just people who think that their poop smells better than other people's in fact it doesn't even smell at all smells like roses but they're just diluting themselves because their poop just smells as bad as everybody else's poop they're just diluted we're just being realistic and honest we just sleep in and then we just go to a bar and then we watch football or we do whatever we feel like and life is just a lot better if you just that this Psalm is saying that all of that type of dividing the world into this it's going to have only God only God if he is real only God can change chaff into a tree of life and only God can stop me from perishing and only God can put me in the assembly of the righteous and only God can cause me to flourish only God we start to read the Psalm in a new light and but for those of us you know who are now reading this Psalm on this side of the cross the cross is now for us in the past we see that not only does the Psalm have a riddle that's forcing us to recognize that only God it actually also gives us a bit of an understanding about what it is that God is going to have to do to answer the riddle listen to the Psalm again in fact I'll tell you what it is and then we'll read the Psalm in love and grace Jesus became chaff driven away by wind so by faith in him God will make me into a tree planted by streams of water in love and grace Jesus became chaff driven away by wind so by faith in him God will make me into a tree planted by streams of water let's listen to the psalm again I'll start at verse 1 blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked nor stands in the way of sinners nor sits in the seat of scoffers but his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night he is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither in all that he does he prospers the wicked are not so but are like chaff that the wind drives away just sort of pause there the heart of the gospel is this idea that God looking down at human beings who cannot make themselves into trees planted by streams of water by their own efforts that if they think they're doing that they are just in a sense suffering under some type of a type of of of sad delusion but it's they can't do it and and God the son of God the second person of the Trinity out of love for human beings and out of grace and mercy and out of love for the father love for his creatures and love for the creation he steps down from heaven he sets aside his appearance as God his glory as God his majesty as God his power as God he sets aside his his position at the right hand of the father he sets aside all of those appearances as God and he humbles himself he still is God but he ends up being born in as a single cell in the womb of Mary and he suffers not suffers he lives a normal human life but then on the cross he empties himself and becomes chaff like even more the image of chaff driven away by the wind is a is an image of judgment and Christians believe that on the cross when Jesus dies upon the cross that he is suffering the judgment that you and I deserve that he suffers that for us that he in a sense becomes chaff for us he takes upon himself the punishment we deserve and he even on the cross experiences God's judgment that he experiences that he's driven away from God when he cries out my God my God why hast thou forsaken me and out of love for you and me Jesus becomes Jesus who in a sense was life was the tree of life was verse 3 becomes verse 4 for you and me in fact if we go on and read therefore the wicked will not stand in

the judgment Jesus stands for the wicked and stands in our place in the judgment nor sinners in the congregation of the of the of the righteous for the Lord knows the way of the righteous but the way of the wicked will perish in my place condemned he stood in my place he perishes for me in my place

[ 26 : 55 ] he becomes chaff driven away by the wind and in the gospel when we put our faith and trust in Jesus it's not just that in my place condemned he stood but he he trades places with me like everything about the cross is not only an act of substitution but it's an act of exchange his life given for me his life given to me my chaff driven away by the wind taken upon him given to him and taken by him and that's what he does in the cross there's a very very well known part in the Bible in Revelation 3 where it says behold I stand at the door and knock and in fact here I'll just read it it's Revelation 3 16 I think it's Revelation 3 16 and it's a very very famous image it's verse 20 behold I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come into him and eat with him and he with me say it again behold I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come into him and eat with him and he with me see here's the thing about the shamelessness of God only God most people they're probably a little bit like myself I had given up on religion I wanted to be part of the counterculture I wanted to do all sorts of types of things I didn't I didn't I found religion I found Christianity boring I found it irrelevant and then I this this God started to get my attention and then as I as I start to get in the lives of different Christians whose lives have just been completely and utterly transformed and being in in in Christian congregations and groups that just somehow it was able to break through my force field and I was able to just sense that there was this that Jesus was there that he loved me that there was a type of a longing for him that I had that could not be satisfied by anything else and it started to be as if I I recognized that Jesus was standing the door of my heart and knocking and the Christian life begins when you stop just sensing that Jesus is trying to get your attention but you in a sense if you visualize you just open the door of your life the inner door of your life and you open it up and there's Jesus standing on the other side and you say to Jesus

Jesus will you come into my life will you come into me and not only come into me but do just live in me just have your way with me come in not just as a as a guest that I serve you but that you might come in as savior and you might come in as lord and for every person we don't have to wait to figure out whether we're part of the elect we don't have to wait for a particular religious experience for every person who does that Jesus comes in and I only had a hazy notion of the cross I only had a hazy notion of all of these things I just sort of understood that I was chaff and if I ever wanted to be at all connected to life I had to let Jesus into my life but then God is so shameless he comes in not expecting us to know perfect theology but then as as Jesus comes into our lives and we start to read the word and start to think about things in it we start to realize what it is actually that Jesus has done for us on the cross that he set aside his life he offers his life to me and takes for himself my chaff driven away by the wind he offers his life that will never perish and takes upon himself my life that will perish that it is not just an act of substitution but an act of exchange freely and utterly given and that when he comes in by this act of grace he turns chaff like me into a tree planted by streams of water not because of my beauty not because of my power not because of my religion not because of my affections not because of my accomplishments not because of my IQ not because I'm Canadian but all because of him all because of him and so as we're gripped first by the riddle and then by Jesus and then by the gospel as we're gripped by the gospel it starts to do its work of changing how we read changing our experience of God my fourth point we're going to read this psalm again in light of this but as I am gripped by the gospel I will humbly and hungrily read all of God's word and think on it as I am gripped by the gospel I will humbly and hungrily read all of God's word and think on it as as the riddle of the text about how it is even though I might suffer from addictive thoughts even though I suffer from all sorts of idolatries even though at times my default position is religion or spirituality because at the heart of all religion and spirituality is self-justification and self-righteousness and the gospel as I'm gripped by what Jesus does for me on the cross as I'm gripped by it it undermines my self-justification it undermines my self-righteousness it undermines my idolatry it undermines my self-perception of myself and it's and all of those things are rooted in what Jesus has done for me and so listen to the psalm again as we read it blessed is the man one moment only God can do that can't he like only God can bless only God can do it like even the very opening words of the psalm are teaching us that there's to be this mystery at the heart of it that it's not about my righteousness and and my accomplishment so I know that I am part

of the elect that it's going to have to be God doing a miracle because it says blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked nor stands in the way of sinners nor sits in the seat of scoffers and at the heart of the gospel that at first might begin with a whole pile of fear about things it's not

I'm not at all trying to undermine the fact that that we should that we should be a flee evil but that as the gospel grips us as the gospel grips us it it provides a a different ground for seeing and understanding things and even understanding the Bible it provides a shape and it starts to shape us as it grounds us and it nudges us into things and draws us into things so that we see evil and wicked and all of those things in very very different ways and that we even start to understand that it doesn't mean wicked and sinful it doesn't mean just people who I don't know they they they do pornography they're involved in this in the sex trade and and and slavery and in violence and all but it also it just includes anybody and everybody whose life is organized around the claim and the desire that they will be like God and they do not need God the soccer mom in Kanata who does not need God because she has her life completely under control but those of us who've been humbled by the riddle know we are all beggars and all we can do is tell other beggars where to find life and that's what God offers us in his son his life verse 2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night and law of the Lord here's this really interesting law of the Lord in the Hebrew it's Torah and what does Torah mean?

Torah means instruction in the context of a covenant it doesn't just mean some impersonal principles it means instruction by God himself by Jesus who becomes chaff for us and gives us his life it's his instruction in the context of the fact that in his death and resurrection he now lives within me that he knows my chaff likeness he knows that I cannot become a tree by my own power and it is in that context that he instructs me it's within this context that I am a beggar that it is in this context that in my place condemned he stood that I hear his instruction and even the word God or Lord here is very very interesting because in the Hebrew and there is no way we can capture this in English in Hebrew the word Lord for God is a verb in the Old Testament the covenant name for God is not a noun an object out there amongst other objects that I can control

[ 37 : 04 ] God is a verb an action an action towards me not something that I can capture and manipulate or put in my debt but Lord as a verb and then just pause before I read verse 3 and here is sort of my final point in closing we read this next description as we understand that in light of the cross we are listening to God's a verb that cannot be controlled him he's wild and untamed but completely and utterly good and he who is now within me because he has died to be my savior and he knows me deeply because he's inside of me and he instructs me and he instructs me knowing that I can never by my own power accomplish these things that I am always completely and utterly dependent upon grace and as he speaks to me in his instruction and I listen to his instruction then verse 3 begins to be true of you and me and as we read it keep in mind this

God graciously makes trees not pipes God graciously makes trees not pipes listen to this verse 3 but he is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither a pipe for water takes water from here to there or wherever it is and a proper pipe lets none of the water out all of the land or whatever it is around it stays completely and utterly dry but God doesn't say here that he turns us into pipes he turns us into trees planted by streams of water and a tree also in a sense moves water the tree takes the water in but as the tree takes the water in in the context of the other things that give it life it turns into leaves it turns into fruit it turns into a place where birds and small critters can take their shade it turns into a place where our neighbors and our friends can come and have a picnic underneath it in the shade and the cover that it gives a tree with its roots helps to stop the soil from falling apart and going into the stream and being washed away and the tree provides helps to provide oxygen for us to breathe and it isn't just that as we meditate upon the God who is in covenant with us that all of a sudden through us just flows these spiritual things that pop out of our head or come out here and in here and pop out of our feet and it's not just all of a sudden all we do is that we sprout out

Bible verses but as our Savior as we are gripped by the gospel and as the gospel shapes us and grounds us and nudges us and draws and pulls us and we start to listen to the instruction and the words of the one who died for us because he loves us well out of that comes businesses that we can start that will bless the city out of that comes poetry and out of that comes music and out of that comes art and out of that comes dance and out of that comes families out of that comes mothers and fathers and children out of that comes neighborhoods out of that comes different ways of

handling money and using money out of that comes a whole range of fruit and other creational consequences all not for our glory but for God's glory it comes in as words carried by the Holy Spirit it goes out well we're trees not pipes it doesn't come into us and leave us unchanged it changes us that's why it's so important for those of us who are gripped by the gospel that we call out to God to ask him to help us to hear his instruction and to read his word and to read not just little bits and pieces of his word but to read all of his word there's some things in the blog there'll be some more things in the blog over the next coming weeks to encourage us to be Christians who read the word and read all of the word and read the word every day as it says here but his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night please stand I want to challenge you if you haven't given your life to

Jesus if you sense you're here this morning and you sense that Jesus is knocking on the door of your life I want to exhort you to not be afraid he's the one who left heaven's glory to become chaff driven away by the wind for you but there's no better time than today and maybe you're an imagine a person uses imagination maybe it's words but imagine just opening the door that's inside of you and seeing Jesus who is there who's been knocking on the door of your life and say Jesus please come in please come in and be my savior and my lord thank you for dying on the cross for me please come in I give you permission I invite you to come in there's no better time than today if you are here and you've never done it and you sense that knocking answer the knock open the door I urge you and for those of us who have opened the door and we're reading the word I just want to encourage you to be regular in the word and to be regular in reading the word from cover to cover and for those of us who maybe not understood that God wants to continue in the context of a covenant of love and security in the context of the gospel to speak into your life to call out to him and ask him that you would help he would help you to start to read the

[ 43 : 45 ] Bible every day and to start to read it cover to cover and then take action on it I encourage you to make that commitment before God let's just bow our heads in prayer father for those of us who suffer from addictions father we ask that you would just continue to pour out your holy spirit upon us that you would make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel that understand that even though we might believe that we are chaff driven away by the wind that you father desire to heal that by the ministry of your holy spirit by the instruction of your word that we might understand that in Jesus you are turning us who are chaff into trees of life out of your love and for your glory and father for those of us who even though we've opened the door of our hearts to Jesus have slipped back into religious understandings of the text believing that we can manipulate you and control you that we can manipulate and control others to see us as righteous and justified all by our own action and by our own effort and for our own glory and to keep you at a distance and people at a distance father we ask that you would continue that work of grace that you would pour out your holy spirit upon us and help us to die to self-righteousness and self-justification to be gripped by the gospel and what your son did for us on the cross father pour out your holy spirit upon us make us disciples of

Jesus gripped by the gospel who live for your glory and father for all of us who are your people help us to be people of your word to listen to your instruction every day and to think upon it in light of the gospel and this we ask in the name of Jesus your son and our savior amen for you to think upon it to think upon Some of us who have givenly you have given terrorists our before■■■■■ together o a home a■ a the wegen