

Choose Holiness

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Date: 13 July 2014

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[0 : 00] Father, you know how easy it is for us to be confused about what is right and what is wrong. You know, Father, how our consciences can be troubled by things that you don't think are wrong.

And how we can be completely untroubled by things that you think are deeply wrong. And, Father, you know how we can be confused about this. And, Father, you know how easy it is for us to see faults in other people that we have worse and we don't even see.

And, Father, you know how easy it is for us to give ourselves a pass while we're very hard on other people. Father, you know. You know.

You know at the same time, Father, how sometimes we do so strive to do that which is right and then we fail. Father, we give you thanks and praise that you know us perfectly, you see us perfectly, and that you love us perfectly and unfailingly.

We ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would gently but deeply come into our minds and our hearts and our wills, our very body. And, Father, so still us and make us pliable that we might hear your word and receive your word.

[1 : 17] And that we might hear and receive your word to our good health and our good benefit and your great glory. And this we ask in Jesus' name, your Son and our Savior.

Amen. Please be seated. Amen. So, Andrew, if you could put up the very first scripture text. The sermon title is called Choose Holiness.

But in terms of the flow of the text, we're going to, this is sort of the heart of what we're talking about today. And could you just say it with me? Abstain from every form of evil.

Now, we have lots of problems with this text in many, many different ways. First of all, you could almost see that a hipster would wear a t-shirt saying something like that, making an ironic statement.

In other words, they'd have a t-shirt like that, meaning that, yeah, definitely, like, I'm going to do that, you know. On the other hand, here's another problem with this text. A problem with this text is that for many people in our culture, when they hear abstain from every form of evil, what they hear is that we're asking them to abstain from freedom.

[2 : 33] That we're asking them to abstain from freedom. And here's another problem with this text in our culture, is that for many people in our culture, and maybe for us at a certain degree, those of us who were here this morning, we're just very conscious of the fact that different people see evil in different places, and that many, many different people have very different views on evil.

And so, if basically good and evil is fairly relative, then how could we even begin to put this verse into practice? And for many people, when they hear talk of abstaining from evil, they hear it as a type of talk about having power.

If I can convince you that something is evil, then I'm getting power over you. And that's just the beginning of a whole host of problems that we have with this text in our culture when we hear it. And so, you know, we have to try to think about that a little bit, and try to be able to hear the scripture as the scripture wants to speak to us.

So, here's the first thing which I'm going to say, okay? So, here's the first thing that I think I want to say. If you could put the first point up, Andrew. The knowledge of good and evil is present in every culture and confused in every culture.

[4 : 16] I mean, even when people say that good and evil is relative, and I'm not going to try to bash what's sort of called, in some circles, moral relativism, and in the majority of Canada would just be understood as common sense.

It just is the fact of the matter is that people live as if there are certain things which are right and wrong, and whether they think that's transferable or how transferable they think it is, it's in fact just the case that people, if you meet somebody who doesn't believe there's such a thing as right and wrong, you're meeting a sociopath if they don't act as if there's any type of right and wrong, and hopefully you'll never run into a sociopath.

But the fact of the matter is that what the Bible teaches is that the knowledge of good and evil is present in every culture and confused in every culture. And that explains, well, actually, you see, one of the problems for atheism is to explain why it is that in every culture there's a strong sense of right and wrong.

Like, why does that even exist if there is no God? And if we're just created that we just happen to exist by random processes? Why should there be an understanding of right and wrong?

That's actually sort of a, the fact that people differ over right and wrong isn't as big a problem for Christians as the mere existence of right and wrong, and the persistence of right and wrong is for atheists.

[5 : 44] But for Christians, what we would say, and I'm going to explain it more later on, is that the knowledge of good and evil is present in every culture and confused in every culture. And that means that for Christians, there's always going to be a particular dilemma about how to understand evil, which is sort of different than some of the things which I said at the very, very beginning of the sermon.

Could you put up the Venn diagram? By the way, this caused a lot of laughter in my family. Last night when I was sending these notes to Andrew, I confessed to my family that I didn't know how to do that on a computer.

I'm confessing that to you now. And that caused some laughter amongst the younger members of my family. And in fact, I was trying to describe it and then they said, oh, you mean a Venn diagram. I've forgotten the name of it. And then I said, I don't know how to, not only do I know how to draw it, I don't know how to send it on an email to Andrew, which caused other laughter.

And eventually, one of my kids just did it for me very quickly. And so I still actually don't know how to do it. So maybe one of my summer holiday plans is to figure out how to do a simple drawing like that on the computer.

[6 : 58] But here's the thing. Remember I said that the first point of the sermon is that the knowledge of good and evil is present in every culture and confused in every culture. That in a sense, what the Bible would say is that something like this picture exists.

That there's our culture's view of evil and that would be the circle that has A and B in it. And then there's the Bible's view of evil, which is what is the circle that has B and C in it.

And even the worst imaginable culture, there will be some intersection between the biblical view of evil and the culture's view of evil.

It might be a very, very tiny sliver, but it will still be there. And of course, in some cultures, the B section might be quite large. But here's the problem that we have when our text is abstain from every form of evil.

The problem we have as Canadian Christians, to put it very bluntly, is that our culture is the primary way that we learn what good and evil is.

[8 : 04] And our culture tries to maintain a basic view of good and evil. There's been an interesting thing in the paper the last few days about sex education in Edmonton public schools.

And it made a big splash. At least in the two papers that I read, it made a big splash. And if you read some of the op-ed pieces which were written about it, it's very obvious that the paper, both the reporter and the op-ed pieces, are trying to maintain a cultural view of right and wrong.

And they use very highly emotional language and shaming type of language to try to shame people who are going to dissent or disagree with this cultural view of evil, our culture's view of evil.

In other words, they're trying to maintain all of A and B. So here's the problem for us as Christians. The problem is in many mainline churches where they see themselves as the chaplains to the culture, they basically, their understanding of evil is the same as the culture's view of evil and of good.

It's A and B. That's the constant challenge for mainline churches. In an interesting way, because one of the dynamics that's going on in Canada is that evangelical and charismatic churches in some ways want to become the new chaplains to the culture as mainline churches die.

[9 : 36] But the thing to beware of is if you become the chaplain to the culture, the culture will demand that you teach A and B.

And the problem for us as Christians is that when we're very conscious of the cultural pressure to teach A and B, that before we know it, what we want to do is only talk about B.

because, in fact, if we're only talking about that part of the Christian revelation, the biblical revelation that matches with what the culture says is right and wrong, we won't get into trouble. So that would mean that in our churches, let's say today, it would be very simple for me to talk about, probably in many places it would be easy for me to talk about pornography. It would be easy for me to talk about sex trafficking.

It would be easy for me to talk about racism. And I probably wouldn't be causing a lot of ruffled feathers. And that's always a great pressure on churches to only talk about that which is in B.

[10 : 46] But the Bible here, when it's telling us to abstain from every form of evil, it's actually challenging us to talk about B and C. And also to talk about A in a particular way.

A? Sorry, I had to do that Canadian, you know, eh? And so, you see, in our culture, and this is like a very, very telling thing for us, if those of you who haven't been part of the congregation for longer than three years, for this act, on one level, our congregation started in 1865, and in another way, our congregation started in 2011 when we walked away from our building.

and our congregation virtually unanimously believed that if the Anglican Church of Canada wanted to bless same-sex marriages, it was doing something which the Bible doesn't allow.

And ultimately, we thought it was an important enough issue that we would risk losing all of our property and that the legal leadership of the congregation would risk being sued, which is what happened to us.

The legal representatives of the congregation were sued. And eventually, we settled out of court and walked away from our property. But in our culture, to talk about certain issues around sexuality is to talk about that part of the circle which is in C, and it gets many people in our culture very, very upset.

[12 : 21] And if you're a guest here this morning, I might have made you very, very uncomfortable. Because in our culture today, C would be such things as abortion and that the taking of a human, that what is in the womb is human, it's human life, and to take that is to do something wrong.

And in C is a whole range of teaching around sexual ethics which our culture views, I mean, in fact, our culture views certain things that the Bible views as wrong, our culture views them as very, very good.

And we get shouted down by the culture if we try to maintain the teaching on C. So it's very, very common in Christian circles for there to be pressure for churches to never mention anything which is in C.

But if we're going to talk about things to only talk about B. But the Bible also teaches us that not only should we be trying to explain what is in B and C, that we need to also try to explain to the world why things that are in the A part of the circle aren't in fact sins at all.

So for instance, and it's a bit hard in our culture because we have lots of different moralities in our culture right now, but it could very well be the case that if I was to be in a certain type of a classroom at a university, I might have to tell the room that it's not a sin to eat meat.

[14 : 03] You shouldn't feel guilty if you like eating steak. And maybe if I'm in another part of the university, maybe the business faculty, I'd have to say it's not a sin to be poor.

It's not a sin to have low income. It's not a sin to not want to make a lot of money. And maybe in another part of the university, I would say, have to say, it's not a sin to be overweight.

It's not a sin to not be athletic and slim. Because the fact of the matter is, is that often what troubles many people in our culture are things that the Bible doesn't view as sins at all.

Completely and utterly silent. And so part of the challenge when we hear a text like abstain from every form of evil is, and many people in our culture will think that we're instantly going to go to make a whole list of rules that we have to follow, but the first thing that we have to understand is that when the Bible is calling us to abstain from every form or every kind of evil, it's opening a door on this basic teaching of the Bible in terms of what is right and wrong.

And it means that sometimes we're going to agree with our culture, and we shouldn't fall into the trap that sometimes maybe the Christian right has fallen into, that you don't want to talk about racism or something like that, because that's what the culture, the secular people talk about, and

you want to show somehow that you're more Christian by not talking about it, and that's nonsense. [15 : 55] The Bible is calling us to hold all of that B and C, which means that sometimes we have to say things in our culture which are going to get us in trouble. In the 1930s in Germany, the confessing church, which we now, virtually everybody views the confessing church as having done the right thing, and the very early thing which they upheld is that it's not a sin to be Jewish, and the initial thing which caused the confessing church to exist was a question over ordination, because the state said that if you had Jewish blood in you, even if you had become a Christian, if you had Jewish blood in you, you could not be a Lutheran pastor, and Bonhoeffer and the German and others said, that is wrong, that is wrong to say that, it is not a sin, it is not a barrier to ordination to have

Jewish blood, and that got them in lots of trouble, meant they eventually had to have underground seminaries, and so sometimes into our culture, saying that A is not a sin is going to get us in a lot of trouble, and sometimes in our culture talking about C is going to get us into lots of trouble, and so we have to resist the temptation to only talk about B, and when we're trying to hear the text as a community, and as an individual, to understand that the Bible is calling us to prayerfully, carefully read, and study the scriptures, so that the scriptures can reform and change our consciences, and our understanding of good and evil, and so one of the benefits of the gospel is that for some of us, we will realize that we are feeling guilty about things that we don't have to feel guilty about.

If you were in India, you don't have to feel guilty about being an untouchable because the Bible doesn't recognize such a category. It's not a sin to be born into a certain type of family, and at the same time, things that we have maybe taken for granted that the Bible will start to tell us that these things are wrong, and the church is to be the place where we study the Bible together and pray through the Bible together and pray for each other as God the Holy Spirit begins to move and work in our hearts and bring parts of the Bible home to us.

So if you could put the Bible passage up again, Andrew, say it with me, abstain from every form of evil. Say it again, abstain from every form of evil.

Very simple but powerful text. Now, some of you might say, George, but isn't morality relative? And isn't this, in fact, just a type of you maintaining, like, isn't just talking about evil an attempt to get, to have power over others?

[19 : 05] A couple of months ago, I've been waiting to use this as a sermon illustration. This is the first time I can use it. I was in a Starbucks, no surprise, and working on my sermon, no surprise, working on my sermon at Starbucks.

And there was this woman, maybe around 30, she had a really cute little girl, who was probably about three, and the mom had bought the girl a cookie or something like that, milk or something like that, the mom had a coffee, and the little girl was sitting there at the table, and the mom was spending her whole time texting, ignoring the little girl.

And the little girl was eating her cookie and drank her milk, and she had a little tummy, because she's just a cute little girl, and so at some point in time, she has no longer any interest in eating any more of her cookie or any more of her milk.

And this particular Starbucks was part of the chapters. So she's sitting at a table like this, and right behind her are rows and rows of books.

Mom, looking at her phone, not paying any attention to her, books. books. So what would a little three-year-old girl do? She'd get off the chair and go to the books to take them down, right?

[20 : 22] It's very easy for me to say, because I'm just sitting there by myself, not having to look with her, and the moms look very frazzled. But here's the interesting thing about this. The mom and the little girl had about a 20-minute battle over the control of whether the mom would text or whether the little girl would play with the books.

And eventually the mom, in great exasperation, picked up the little girl and walked out. But every time the little girl wandered away from the chair, what the mom said, she didn't say, it's wrong to take books down.

It's wrong to damage books. She said, you're making me unhappy. You're making me unhappy. happy. In a very, very odd way, in our culture, as we believe that all things are relative, and as we believe that how you understand right and wrong is really a matter of, at the same time that we say that things are relative, we also say that what's wrong is actually hurting anybody.

And so that means you sort of have to balance, if you do something, how much you're hurting somebody and how much you're doing things which are neutral and how much you're just yourself.

And in that whole dynamic, what happens is, as the gospel text tells us today, what we don't realize is that we always weight ourselves more than other people.

people. And so it's very, very hard for us to actually, we end up actually always wanting to have power and always want to be the center.

[22 : 01] And that mom was teaching her kid, not that there was this type of right and wrong, which is outside of both the little girl and the mother, and that both of them had to listen to. The mother was teaching the little girl that she, the mother, was the center of what was right and wrong and the center of the universe, and the little girl shouldn't make the mother unhappy.

In an odd way, in a culture where you talk about relativism, what you end up doing is actually giving power to the loudest voice.

But what the Bible teaches is, if you put up the next point, is this. Evil is not a mere opinion. It is a power power, and it has dominion.

You see, here's the problem with relativism. On one hand, it ends up giving power to whoever has the loudest voice, which is the mom in this particular story.

But on the other hand, what relativism ends up just doing is it just ends up thinking that right and wrong is just my opinion. opinion. And if I'm able to sort of, you know, certain things I don't care about, I have no opinion on.

[23 : 21] But when I have a really strong opinion on it, I try to convince you of it. But this whole thing of right and wrong just being an opinion, it doesn't actually match up with our real experience of right and wrong.

wrong. Those of you, those of us, who have a problem telling the truth, we understand that when we try to tell the truth, but lies look so attractive that telling lies has a power over us.

Those of us who have problems with anger know that it's not just having an opinion about anger being wrong that matters, but that anger has a type of power over us.

It has a hold in us. It has dominion in us. Those of us who struggle with feelings of jealousy know that it's not just us saying that jealousy is wrong, but that jealousy has a type of power and dominion over us.

And so in our culture, when we tell people that right and wrong is just an opinion, that it's just, you know, whether it's relative, that, you know, whether we use the language of it's a social construct or whatever, it's doing two types of things, it's actually giving power to human beings and saying that really it is just a matter of a power struggle, whether it's between a mother and a daughter, but ironically, it's ignoring the real power of evil.

[24 : 46] That evil is not just having an opinion about something, but that there's an actual power of evil and that that power of evil has a hold, has dominion over us.

And so the language of relativism ends up making it hard for us to understand our own experience of right and wrong, our own experience of trying to change when we can't change.

It makes it hard for us to understand even things in the culture where certain things in the culture seem to be intractable in terms of something which is wrong, having a powerful hold in our culture.

And if it's just a matter of opinion, then why is that that it has such a hold in our culture? But the Bible doesn't understand right and wrong as just being a matter of opinions.

The Bible, one of the ways that the Bible understands evil is that evil has a power and it has dominion. And that's one of the ways, that's a fundamental way for us to understand what evil is, what sin is.

[25 : 51] And so the question is, let's put up the Bible text again for us, let's say it together. Abstain from every form of evil.

Let's say it together again. Abstain from every form of evil. On one hand, it sounds as if the Bible is just telling us that we have to have certain opinions about right and wrong and we have to make sure we have the right opinions about right and wrong and we have to understand that there's the B and C in that circle and that those are the right opinions to have about right and wrong and then we just have to do that which is right and stop doing that which is wrong.

But the Bible, and I'm going to show you from this text, talks about evil not just as having an opinion, not just about knowing a matter of rules, but there's in fact a type of power of evil and that evil then not only has power but it has a type of dominion so that those who start to come underneath the spell or the sphere or the realm of that which is wrong understand it has a power and a hold within us.

So the question might be then, and the question might be then is, well, how does the Bible going to deal with this or how do we start to deal with it? Here's the third point.

If you put it up, Andrew. God is good and his very nature is the source of all goodness in the physical, spiritual, intellectual, emotional and moral realms.

[27 : 25] God is good and his very nature is the source of all goodness in the physical, spiritual, intellectual, emotional and moral realms.

realms. From the Bible, evil is a negation or an emptiness. Where there should be the good, evil is trying to get rid of it altogether to create an emptiness where there should be this positive presence of God. Where evil is a bending of that positive presence of the good and bending it so that it's no longer the way that God intended. And there's often an interplay behind that.

And you see, that's why evil, there's a type of power to evil. Because it's an attempt to remove that which is the good and which really exists, or bend that which is good and the good really exists. And so evil, by either, you know, it's like, you know, since water really exists, and if you try to have, like, I don't know, like a ball that has air in it, and you push it down into the water, that if you, you're having to push it down in the water and you're having to hold the ball in, and if you let the ball go, it jumps out. There's this, there's this real existence and reality of God. And the God who really does exist is good. He is the good.

And he is good in his very nature. And he's created all things, and he sustains all things. And he's always present. He's never absent. And so if by evil we try to make where God is not there, it's like trying to push this balloon or this ball with air into water, and there's a power which is there, because it keeps wanting to be pushed away. And you have to, you can only maintain that ball there by force, by power. And if you're trying to bend it, different analogy from water, there's, you're bending something which is real. So to understand evil as just merely an opinion, will never understand our moral experience, because God exists, and he's real, and he's created all things. And he's created the physical things, and the intellectual matters, and he's created moral, the moral universe, and he's created a spiritual universe, and he's created the entire inside of human beings, which is imagination, and emotion, and will, and heart, and everything which is inside a human being that God creates and God sustains. And when any part of his creation, we try to push him away and make it like it's a vacuum, or bend it or break it, there's going to be a type of a power there, not a power that comes from God. And so to try to abstain from evil, merely thinking it means that we just do something by our will, or by our rules, or by our knowledge, is always going to be insufficient. Because evil is a power that has dominion.

And it comes because of the very, very nature of God, which, let's say the, let's say the, the scripture text, well actually we're going to switch to another one. Here's what I'm going to show you how the whole text helps us to understand how abstain from every form of evil.

[31 : 03] We have to hear it in the scripture which surrounds it to understand what it is that the Bible is asking us to do when it says to abstain from evil. So if you could say this with me, that would be very helpful. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything. Hold fast what is good.

Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. Here's what the Bible is teaching us. The Bible is not teaching us that we should just have more rules. In fact, the hard part consistently for Christians is that on one hand, people want to say, you know, all, if we, they understand that there's this power of evil and that there's evil in the world. And so the, the very, very first thing that pops into their mind is that we need to have more rules. That's how we're going to deal with evil. Have more rules. Have, you know, if, if the Bible only gives you a couple of things on a page, let's, let's turn that into a massive book filled with rules and we'll teach everybody all of the rules. And if they learn all of the rules, then they'll be able to abstain from every form of evil. And many people reacting against that says, let's get rid of the rules. Not only get rid of all of these other rules that people have added, but even get rid of the biblical rules. And that's the place of freedom. And the Bible is doing something completely and utterly different. It's going to tell us this, if you could put up point number four, Andrew, only God can break the power and dominion of evil. He did this in the death of Jesus Messiah for us. Only God can break the power and dominion of evil. He did this in the death of Jesus Messiah for us. If you have your Bibles, the way this whole text, the reading which I began with this morning, it begins in verses nine and 10. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep, we might live with him. This whole language of being destined to be separate from God is the language of power. That we are under

the power and dominion of a type of evil, which will continue by the force of the current to keep us going far away from God.

But in the face of this powerful current of rejection against God that will keep us completely and utterly going away from God, God says, I am going to come in such a way so that that power is broken in such a way that people can be redeemed, they can be rescued, they can be saved, they can be delivered from this power which will continue to keep them away from God. Excuse me. And he does it by the sending of his son into the current, so to speak, into the very power of the river. And he does it to, in a sense, take upon himself in the person of his son, the full power of the river, the full power of that which separates us from God.

And he takes it upon himself in his very person, and in his death upon the cross, he, in a sense, allows all of that to come and fall upon him. And he takes all that there is to taste of it, and then on the third day he rises triumphant over that river, over sin, over death, over hostile spiritual powers, over anything which has a power which pushes us away from God. Jesus enters it, tastes it fully, and triumphs it over it in his death and in his resurrection. And then offers to share it to a person who merely calls out for him, that he would be, that he would share that great triumph and victory which he has won on the cross, that he would share it with him. And that's why in the text, can you put the scripture text back up, Andrew? It's a very, very, like last week we talked about, do not despise prophecies. That means continue to listen to God. God's calling you all the time.

[35 : 24] He calls you to become his own through the person of Jesus when you put your faith and trust in him, and he's always calling you. He knows that even after you've come to Jesus, that there's still going to be parts of you which are very, very prone to different types of evil, and Jesus is always calling us and speaking to us. And so the text says, don't stop listening for Jesus. Don't stop listening for God. But when you hear what he says, test it. And test it means, one of the best examples is in the book of Malachi, where God says to the people of Israel, listen, I want you to tithe.

Test my word. Tithe for a while and see if your needs will be met or if you will be completely and utterly impoverished. Test me. The Bible speaks countercultural things about sexuality. Test it. Will it make you repressed, anxious, lonely? Far more repressed and anxious and lonely than those around us? Test my word. To reject the lie and believe in the truth? To reject death and believe in life? Test my word. Listen to God. Test it. And in the original language, it's not grammatical, but there should be the word the before good. It says, hold fast. What is the good? So as you learn and hear from God, what is the good? Hold fast to it. And as you're holding fast to the good, it's in that context that you abstain from evil because you're holding fast to that which is good.

You're desiring to come under the dominion and the power of Jesus. It's not just a matter of running from bad things, but of running to Jesus. And then the text reminds us that you're not just doing this by yourself. Why? The God of peace himself sanctifies you. God is in it. That's why it's, if you could put up the next point, Andrew, that would be great. When I become Christ's own, I come under the power and dominion of the good. So I seek to draw closer to Jesus and abstain from evil.

When I become Christ's own, I come under the power and dominion of the good. So I seek to draw closer to Jesus and abstain from evil. So abstaining from evil isn't just to be understood in a religious sense as an invitation to write lots of rules and lots of regulations. And to have a grim-faced person standing there over the congregation making a note of all of the ways that you break and don't keep all of the different tiny little rules ever more tiny. It's not like that at all. There is an abstaining, a fleeing, a running from evil, but it's never a mere running from evil. I mean, for many of us in our culture, all they know is that there's certain things that they have to flee. When I was in university, one day I was saying to this friend of mine, and I said to her, I love the dusk.

[38 : 38] I love the dusk. I love that time when the shadows are lengthening and you can tell the evening is about to come. And I love the quiet and the stillness of it. And she gave a shudder and said, I hate the dusk. That's when the scary things come out. I discovered that she'd been deeply involved in witchcraft. She'd had a very powerful experience of something that so deeply frightened her that she stopped doing it. She ran from that, but she didn't know that the Bible doesn't call us just merely to run from something, but to run to someone. Not a new set of rules, but to a person, a person who is conquered, a person who's ultimately the one who wrote the scriptures. And so that even when we read the Bible and we come face to face upon things that the Bible says are wrong that we did, the Bible's not saying that to us to silence us, to hurt us, to condemn us, to belittle us, to shut us up forever. It's saying that so that we can understand that we can turn to Jesus and receive

forgiveness and receive forgiveness and freedom because Jesus dies for us to break the oppressive power of the flow of evil so that we might live with him.

That in fact, evil brings bondage to us because it has a power and a dominion. And that when we give our lives to the person of Jesus, we're giving our lives to the one who died for us out of love for us, who desires that we will live in freedom and in wholeness, that we will live in keeping with how God created us as human beings to be, that we will be in a covenant with the living God who loves us, to be in a covenant with the living God who loves us, changes everything.

And so it is that the mission of this church is to make disciples of Jesus gripped by the gospel, living for his glory, and we could add in freedom. In freedom.

I just want to say two things in closing. The first thing is this, what is faith in Jesus? If you could put that up, Andrew, please. Very simple.

Sometimes you might want to remember it as TIP, T-I-P. Faith in Jesus is turning to him, the T, inviting him into your life as the Savior and Lord, and then giving him permission.

[41 : 24] That would be the P, not the G, giving, but the P, permission. Giving him permission to be the Savior and Lord of every nook and cranny of who you are. That's what faith is. It's not an emotion, although often emotion comes with such a turning.

Comes with such an invitation. And it's not just an opinion. Faith in Jesus. God does everything that has to be done for us in the person with his son.

And God, on one hand, of course, delights when we turn and we flee from evil and we abstain from evil, but it brings him no pleasure if we merely abstain from maybe a greater evil by giving ourselves to a lesser evil.

He wants us to turn from evil and turn to his son. And so faith in Jesus is first turning to Jesus. And then as we turn to Jesus, we invite him into our life as the Savior and as the Lord.

Not in any other role, but just Jesus come in and do what only you can do. And it's involved permission, giving him permission to come into every nook and cranny of our lives. I'll just close with an analogy.

[42 : 28] Maybe it's a bit of a guy-centered analogy, but just bear with me. Some of you have heard a form of it before. You know, you see those movies of those old medieval castles with a fortress and a moat and a drawbridge.

And in some ways, the human condition is I stand on the ramparts of my fortress. And I have the armor on with which I trust. And I have my sword and my shield.

And the drawbridge is up and the gate is closed. And originally I thought I was just the lord of my own fortress. But over time, evil has come into my life.

And at some times, evil is my master. I master over evil and I seem to have some type of power over it. But over time, there's evil which is there in my fortress with me.

And sometimes I can only do its bidding. I don't want to say that unkind word to my friend. I don't want to lie needlessly to my boss. I don't want to take that thing in the store which doesn't belong to me.

[43 : 31] I don't want to do these types of things. But I can't stop doing it. But I stand in my fortress. And in my fortress are now other fell things. And I still have my armor and my sword and my shield.

And the gate is up. And the drawbridge is up. And across the moat, I see Jesus. And sometimes when I look at Jesus, I just see a man standing there.

Sometimes I see a lamb that looks as if it was slain. Sometimes I see a man who was upon the cross. Sometimes I see a humble man merely on a donkey. But I know that it's Jesus. And sometimes I call to him from my ramparts, wearing my armor, having my sword and my shield, and I talk to him.

But Jesus keeps saying to me in his humility, let me in. And the Christian life begins when despite the fact that all sorts of things within my fortress say, don't put down your armor.

Don't put down your sword and shield. Don't open the gate. Don't let down the drawbridge. He's only going to hurt you. And with those voices in your ear, you silence them.

[44 : 40] And you walk down from the rampart. And you let down the drawbridge. And you open the gates. And you lay down your sword and shield. And you take off your armor.

And you kneel and look at Jesus and say, Jesus, please come into my fortress. And be my savior and be my lord. Be my sword and be my shield.

Be my armor. Be my deliverance. And not only come into my fortress, but it's all yours with nothing held back.

And the Christian life begins when we lay down our sword and shield and take off the armor and open that gate and ask the Savior and the Lord to come in.

The whole Christian life is never just about abstaining from evil, but turning to Jesus and allowing his power and dominion to come into your life.

[45 : 41] Please stand. I don't have them printed up on the screen, but if to maybe recommit your life to Jesus or maybe for the first time you would like to ask Jesus to come into the fortress that is you, I will say a prayer short, a prayer with pauses.

And if that speaks to your heart, the Holy Spirit is putting pressure on you, not just to merely run from evil, but to turn to Jesus, then in the silence, please make the prayer your own.

And do it silently. There's no way not to impress people who are around you. And I'm just going to use the words of that image which I just shared. Jesus, I turn to you.

I lay down my sword and my shield. I take off my armor. I open the door to my life.

I kneel before you. Please come into my life as the Savior and the Lord.

[47 : 05] I hold nothing back.

Thank you. Thank you for entering. Thank you that you will never leave me or forsake me.

Amen.