

Easter 2022 - Christ: Dead, Buried, Resurrected, Seen

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Date: 17 April 2022

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[0 : 01] Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit would fall with gentle power upon us, not just at this time as we open your word, but throughout the rest of the service, and in fact, Father, for the rest of the day and the rest of our life.

We ask that the Holy Spirit would fall with deep but gentle and penetrating power, and that your Holy Spirit would bring these profound truths of the person and work of Jesus into our hearts, and that your Holy Spirit would make Jesus more real to us, so that we might stand, in a sense, in who Jesus is, in his presence with us, what he has accomplished for us, and what he will accomplish for us, and in us, day by day, until we see him face to face.

And we ask this in Jesus' name, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So I don't know what led you here.

Some of you maybe were dragged here by your parents, or a boyfriend, or a girlfriend, or a husband, or a wife. I don't know why you were here, but you are very welcome. And for those who are joining online, either right immediately live as we're doing it, or later in the day, or later in the week, we welcome you.

I know that Christianity is not very popular right now. And in fact, actually saying that it's not very popular is an exaggeration.

[1 : 34] I know that Christianity is seen generally as something that adds poison or toxic stuff to your life, and not something that enhances your life.

And so if you're joining us, or if you're here because you're a believer, welcome. If you're here because you're a seeker, welcome. If you're here because you're a skeptic, maybe even a very profound skeptic, I'd like to welcome you here as we celebrate Easter.

I know that in Canadian culture, Christianity is seen as being something that's more likely to be toxic and life taking away rather than life giving. But I disagree.

Amen! I paid him a lot of dollars just to clap and cheer like that. Actually, I didn't. I didn't know what was going to happen.

So if you're curious or skeptical or a believer, really on this Easter Sunday, I would just like to share what the basic Christian hope is. What the Christian hope is that makes people like me, who had a completely secular education, want to become a Christian and would remain a Christian.

[2 : 47] Even though I'm immersed, in a sense, in the secular world all of the time, I read the newspapers, I look at news summaries, I read novels, all by non-Christians, and why I am a Christian, became a Christian, and why I am still a Christian.

And the first thing to sort of just, we're going to look actually at an ancient text. I'm not going to just sort of pop, say something that just purely comes from my own head. And if you have your Bibles with you, I'm going to be looking at 1 Corinthians 15, verses 1 to 11.

But even actually when I say that, some of you sort of might, those who are a bit skeptical or those of other, you know, religions who have other, have religious reasons and those who have intellectual reasons to be skeptical, I say, oh yeah, okay, there he's going to quote the Bible, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

It's all just sort of as if by quoting the Bible, you're doing something like telling the story of Santa Claus or the Great Pumpkin or talking about the Easter Bunny or something like that.

But it's actually, what you need to know about this little piece of stuff that I'm about to read, what you need to know about it is this.

[3 : 55] There's four ancient biographies of the person of Jesus and his life. And there's so many different cross-references to things in history. And by things in history, I mean not just Christian history, but the Jewish and pagan historians talk about that scholars are able to know that the day that Jesus died on the cross was either April 3rd, 33, or April 5th, 30.

That's the day Jesus died. And the death of Jesus upon the cross is one of the most certain truths of history. Even the most radical, skeptical scholars would accept that Jesus died upon a cross. And there are so many cross-references to history that scholars know. And not only history, but science, because the history is connected to when there's full moons and all of that type of stuff. And so they know that he died. I would say that he probably died on the 3rd of April, 33. But those who hold that he died on the 5th of April, the year 30, we would just have to agree to disagree. But it's one of those two days that he died. And right away you see that what we're talking about is a thousand percent different than talking to you, giving you a story about Santa Claus or the Easter bunny or the great pumpkin.

[5 : 15] And the other thing which is really interesting is I'm going to read this. And as I've said before at different times, it's in some ways unfortunate that I'm going to read something. And you can see that this is a book that has like expensive fine paper.

And it used to have some type of goldish stuff on the side. And it makes it look like a special book. And I, of course, for a wide range of reasons, believe that it is a special book.

But what I'm reading from is actually a letter that was written by a man who was, if we had known him before his conversion, we would have wanted to always keep our eye on him and not allow him to get behind us because he was a very, very aggressive fanatic for religious observance.

To think about it a little bit, it would be as if you went, if you, you know, you've seen pictures maybe of Islamic, very, very fundamentalist Islamic countries. And they have people who have sticks and stuff like that.

So that if they see a woman whose, you know, robes aren't sufficiently long or that, you know, that goes a little bit too below her nose, they can get in all sorts of trouble. Well, the man who wrote this letter was that type of guy for Jewish observance.

[6 : 30] And the amazing thing is he's writing this and to a group of people who used to be pagans. And that's very interesting because in the city where they used to be pagans, the main goddess for that city is the goddess Aphrodite, which is the Greek version of the goddess Venus.

And it meant that the temple, as part of their worship, had prostitutes, which were part of the temple and part of, in a sense, the service of the temple were prostitutes. And in a sense, it was a non-discriminatory type of worship.

There were very inexpensive prostitutes for those who didn't have much money. And then there were expensive prostitutes for those who had a lot of money. And that's the, and the, so this fellow who used to be so completely and utterly against anything other than most minute, minute, minute observance of the, of the Jewish law, even to the point that he contributed to seeking people out and, and making sure that they were either beaten or punished or jailed or even put to death.

And that's this guy, but now he said all of that behind. And he's writing to a group of people who used to worship Aphrodite and Poseidon and probably Caesar and who've left that behind and are now Christians.

They're both Christians. And there's enough historical references that are made in this letter and other things around it that are ancient that scholars know that he wrote this letter somewhere between the year 53 and the year 55.

[7 : 59] They know that they don't know for sure in between that, probably earlier rather than later. And, and so what that means is he's writing this letter to a group of ex pagans and he's writing it approximately 20 to 21 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

So that's what we're reading translated into English. Like that, that's what we're reading like a letter. And, um, well, what does it say?

Uh, and by the way, so this is really important. So what, what, if you're hearing me, what we're reading now isn't like the Quran and I'm not going to say anything against the Quran or anything like that, but a devout, if you have friends who are devout Muslims, uh, they will tell you that, um, God through the angel gave, uh, Muhammad, uh, since divine revelations.

And these divine revelations, they happened to Muhammad in the 600s. And these divine revelations talk about things in the past and things in the present and things in the future.

And so what, what Christians are doing here, it's completely and utterly different than the Quran, right? Is we're actually quoting you a letter written 20 to 21, 22 years, maybe up to most 25 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus that has so many historical references that historians can date the writing of this letter.

[9 : 30] And, and that's what we're, we're looking at. So it's not six centuries later prophecies that we're just asking to believe by faith. Um, this is very, very close to the actual facts.

And, and here's what this man says. If we read it, it goes like this first one. Now I would remind you brothers and sisters of the gospel and gospel just means good news.

Um, I, now I would remind you brothers and sisters. If the good news, I preached to you, which you received in which you stand and by which you were being saved. If you hold fast to the word, I preached to you unless you believed in vain.

So what Paul is saying here is he has this profound good news, uh, which he's told them before and he's reminding them of this good news. And the good news is, uh, as we're going to find out in a moment about a person and what that person did and what that person continues to do and can do and will do in people's lives.

And that's why it's good news. And I remember I began my sermon by thanking you for being here, welcoming you here, because I know that for most of the people in Canada, they don't think of the Christian faith as being good news.

[10 : 39] They think of it as being bad news. In fact, I know that maybe if you're watching this, you realize that if you became a Christian and you told your friend that you'd become a Christian, they'd say to your other friends, I don't know what happened to him or I don't know what happened to her.

They used to be so nice and they used to be so reasonable. I don't know what happened to them that they would become a Christian because that's how it's in a sense, that's how the culture forms us to think of the Christian faith.

But here's this fellow, an ex religious Jewish religious fanatic who would definitely hated pagans writing to a group of ex pagans who used to worship Aphrodite and Poseidon.

And he calls them brothers and sisters. He calls them brothers and sisters. I mean, if you think about it for a second, we live in a world that's only becoming more and more and more and more divided.

We live in a world that's where I'm assuring you a couple of weeks ago how a columnist can call people names and call people names and then without any type of sense that they've been calling people names for two years or longer than say the most important thing is that we can build bridges.

[11 : 52] And you go, what? Like you've been called, you're like a name caller. And we realize how there were in a world where people yell at each other across the divide. And I mean, if nothing else, if you're a seeker or even a skeptic, surely something like this where there is a possibility of going from a profound, even murderous divide to the point where you would call a person on the other side, now your brother, your sister is worth something thinking about and considering.

In a culture, in a time when everything is creating distance and permission to yell and permission to cancel, canceling the other side is seen as a virtue.

And here we have this fellow calling the other people brothers and sisters. And what they've done is they've received this good news about a person and what they've done and what that person's still doing.

They've, they're standing on it and standing on it means that it becomes the basis by which you start to understand yourself and you start to understand the world around you and you start to, and you start to act.

It's, you, you, you, you act out of where you stand. And then he uses this word. Well, here's one of the things he uses this word believe. And I've talked to many people over the years who have problems with this because they say, George, how is it that just having a different idea in my head or a different opinion that that's connected to me being saved?

[13 : 24] Like that, George, that just, just doesn't make any sense. But you see, here's the thing which is so wonderful about this word, right? It's good news about a person and what that person's done and what he has done for you and what he can do, will do for you and is going to do for you and he will do for you until the point of your death.

And, and the word here believe isn't have an opinion. It's, it's, it's really like, so the other day at a Starbucks, I saw this really neat scene. I happen to know, cause I talked to her before, she's a homeschooling mom and she has a little six or seven year old boy and a little girl who's like two years younger.

And the mom stood outside and gave the son a \$20 bill and the little boy went into the Starbucks and ordered for himself, his sister and his mom.

Isn't that sort of neat? And the mom just stood outside, didn't come in, didn't stand over, didn't, wasn't being a helicopter mom, just stood outside and watched. And the little boy spoke with a nice clear, loud voice and kept using the word actually.

It was really cute. The mom, what does the mom do? The mom believed in the son, right? The mom believed in the son. And that's the word which is being used here for us in Christ.

[14:47] We believe in him. We don't just believe about him. We believe in him. So what, what is this good news?

Well, this is now what Paul is going to sort of just start to give it very, this very brief thing. It's going to look at, look at verses three to five. It goes like this. For I delivered to you as a first importance, what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried.

That he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures and that he appeared to Cephas and then to the 12. And Cephas is just a different name for Peter. And the 12, obviously it doesn't include Judas who's, who's been dead.

But the 12 in a sense, like the special group of disciples now in a sense, the 11, but it's always referred to as, as the 12. Now here's the thing.

And this is going to maybe bother some people when I say this, but I'm going to deal with the bothering. But if you look at that word in verse three again, for I delivered to you as a first importance, what I also received.

[15:58] So I was talking to a young woman after church last Sunday who speaks three languages. I don't know if we have at least one person here who speaks at minimum of four languages and a lot of you speak at least two languages.

And you know that it's impossible to perfectly translate from one language into another. It's just impossible. There's just words in one language where there's, you might need a whole sentence or three sentences or a paragraph to try to explain any other language.

And, and, and, and so what, what you don't know is that here when it says delivered and where it says received, it's technical language in the original language. It's technical language. And it's the technical language of handing on tradition.

And handing on tradition sounds, oh, boring, you know, snooze and who cares about tradition and it's best not to have tradition. But then I need to translate that word tradition because I'm using it and the scholars use it in a sense that would have been understood like 200 years ago, but isn't understood today.

In a sense what it's, he's, he's handing you the DNA. He's passing on the DNA. He's passing on the foundation of the building block.

[17:09] It would be as if, you know, there was to be a, you know, one of those virus movies where the whole world is being destroyed by the virus. And then in some little remote lab, they get the, they get the thing that fixes the antidote.

They get that little sample and they break that sample up into little bits. And it would be the whole point of the movie that, that those people take that little bit that they've received and they take it to the other small remaining labs.

And they take it without any variation. They don't spit in it. They don't add their own ingredients. They say, I would be better with some salt. They don't do anything like that. They take that, that stuff, the antidote, the thing which has been perfectly made that will destroy the virus and save the human race.

And it's taken without anything at all being done to it and given to these other labs where the labs can create the vaccines, which is going to, is going to save the human race. And that's this, that's what's understood with this word delivered and received.

And, and, and, and so the thing which bothers people sometimes is when they hear things like that, they said, well, George, here's the thing about the Christian faith. Like why, why couldn't God have just made it? Why couldn't God have just made it that it was obvious?

[18 : 18] Like why did he make the faith in such a way that I have to learn from you? Like, why can't I figure that out for myself? It seems like it's a, it's a mistake in the Christian faith, but all I can say to you is no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

It's not a design flaw. It's a design feature. It's not a design flaw. It's a design feature. Like, why is it a design feature?

Well, for two reasons. It's a design feature because God, when he caused these scriptures to be written, he wanted people from every people of the group of the world to hear about himself in their heart language.

He didn't want, he didn't want a remote tribe in the Amazon to learn Koine Greek and postmodern Canadians in downtown Ottawa to learn Koine Greek.

He wanted us to hear about Jesus in our heart language. And then that goes on with this other part, which is not a design flaw, but a design feature that while we enter the Christian faith one by one, like we make a personal decision or we recognize that a decision has been made sometime in the past, that sometime in the past that we, we've come to this faith, but we, we enter it, but we don't walk it by ourselves.

[19 : 38] We walk the faith with others. If you haven't watched the Good Friday service, one of the wonderful things that Victory said in her little, her little talk, it was a really wonderful point, is that, you know, she, she comes from, she comes from a place.

You don't mind me saying this. You said everything. You put her on YouTube on Friday. And she came from a place where everybody in a sense knew her name. She had lots of mothers and brothers and fathers. And she comes without her mother, brother, father to this place.

And then the Christian community, she can play with kids and she has mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters. And God doesn't want us to follow Jesus all by ourselves.

It's a design feature that we need to gather. And the church has set aside people like me to study and to learn the resources and to, and to, to, to, to trust the, the broader church that I, I can read a scholar who wrote a book 20 years ago.

I can read scholars that have died long ago and I can get to understand things. I get to impart it to you. And it's a design feature and it's a wonderful feature. You can hear Jesus in your heart language.

[20 : 56] Okay. Well, I mean, why trust Paul? I mean, in lots of circles, Paul is the big bad guy. And Paul's the guy writing this letter to our Muslim friends.

They, they will tell you that Paul was the one you can't trust. He changes everything. There's many, many people throughout the last 150 years of scholarship. And, and not only that, but throughout, throughout history of, of different others that who just say, Paul gets everything wrong.

Why, why trust Paul? Here's the other thing you see. So what, what, what did Paul say? There's two things here, which are just so profoundly cool about what this letter written 20 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus by an ex-Jewish religious fanatic to ex-Aphrodite and Poseidon worshippers, worshippers who are now his brothers and sisters.

And one of the things which is so cool about that is also the word that. You didn't just, we'll read it again. Look at verse 3b and, and, and, and notice this. Remember I said, for I delivered to you and this delivered and received that that's like the language of receiving something, which is like the antidote, the DNA, which you receive on and without changing it.

And you pass it on without changing it. And then he goes, I'll receive that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas and then to the 12.

[22 : 18] And one of the things is in the ancient writings, they didn't have quote marks. The that, in a sense, functions like quote marks. So here's the thing. This is so cool.

That little bit that I just read. Remember I said to you, we can now, scholars know, because there's so many historical cross references. They know that Paul became, saw the risen Jesus and became a Christian somewhere towards the end of 33 or somewhere in the year 34.

And if Jesus died on April the 3rd, 33, and rose from the dead three days later, that means that potentially only several months after Paul sees the risen Jesus, what he's saying is he received this when he became a Christian.

He's quoting what he received. When I read that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures,

and that he appeared to Cephas and then to the 12.

You are hearing the witness of his mother, his brothers, the 500, and all of the people who saw the risen Jesus.

[23 : 56] This is their message. This is their message carried through the years and through the ages to you and me today.

If you think about it for a second, it's a very, very simple set of statements. It's a type of statements that if you were to go and try to teach a little three-year-old that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Bible, Christ was buried, Christ was raised on the third day in accordance with the Bible, Christ appeared to Cephas and the 12 and others.

And a little child could learn that off by heart. And they wouldn't understand everything, but they could hear it. And it wouldn't take very much to try to teach them those little bits of things, which I'll say a little bit more of in a moment.

But at the same time, that very, very simple message... Like one of the things when I talk sometimes about what Jesus does first on the cross, I just remember the word rise.

Okay? And when I remember the word rise, then I can say Jesus was our representative. He identified with us. He was our substitute. And his death was an act of exchange.

[25 : 30] There's simple little things that you can do that help you to remember. And you could see these simple little words that a very simple child or a person with a very low IQ could get them.

But at the same time, a poet, a musician, a person with a profound... an artist, a philosopher, a scientist, one who has great education and a great IQ.

The child can believe it and understand it. And people like Paul, who are very, very well educated, he could take those symbols, those simple words, and he could think through how they matter to a world that worships Aphrodite and Poseidon.

And he can think about all of the different Old Testament texts that refer to it. And he can take that and he can go and look about how it fits with Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 and with this text in Leviticus and this text in Genesis chapter 1 and this text in Zechariah and this text in Malachi.

And he can think of how these things connect to what the Greek poets think, which he does in Acts chapter 17. And you see that on one level it's all there. And somebody who's just very, very simple-minded or somebody...

[26 : 55] And actually, by the way, I'm very simple-minded. Where people have great powers of abstract thought, it's a seed and it communicates everything and it opens this door just to see the world in a radically different place.

And it's the ancient witness that those early people who were witnesses still in the face of profound opposition and we have to remember that, well, people will, if you're maybe not aware of it, people will, I mean, one of the really, really stupid things that people will say, sorry, not stupid, I didn't mean to say that.

If you believe it, I didn't mean to call you stupid. I apologize. One of the things which is just not well-informed is that somehow another Constantine, when he became a Christian in the 300s, somehow another forced all these creedal things on the church, which is just not true.

For basically the first 300 years of Christianity, to become a Christian was to become unpopular and persecuted. And the early Christians weren't celebrated, they were persecuted.

It wasn't very long after the Christians, that Jesus died and rose from the dead and the Christian faith began, that the first martyrs were martyred.

[28 : 15] And so we hear this very, very ancient testimony of what had actually happened, and structured in such a way that everything from the youngest to the most brilliant minds can be fed by it and can develop it.

And so it's not here that something that Paul is just trying to make up out of his own head. It's something that he's giving that goes right back.

And part of the reason, by the way, that you should believe it is that, I mean, Paul ends up going to the death rather than denying that Jesus actually rose from the dead. that he goes, he dies for a fact.

And he hands down the interpretation of that fact. So what does he say again? Well, let's look at it very briefly, sort of getting close to the end.

Verse 3 again, For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures. And I just want to point out that one thing that the word

for, in the original language, it means for the benefit of somebody else.

[29 : 35] So Jesus died for the benefit of you because of your sin. And this is just so profound. You know, sometimes those of you who've been blessed with children, what was I, it was, it was not that great, not that great of a, of a movie, the new Ryan Reeves movie, The Adam Project.

And he's meeting his, you know, he goes back in time and he's talking to his mom and his mom doesn't know that this is her son, but like whatever, 30 years later. And she's talking about how difficult her son is.

And she says, what is it she was thinking of putting her son in a boarding school where it was like, it was the ISIS stronghold. That's, that's how much he was driving her crazy that he was going to put her, she was going to put her son in a boarding school right in the center of the ISIS craziness. And sometimes we want to strangle our kids, but, and part of the way we, we get around it is we just, we also think about the things that are wonderful about them. But the thing about, about this word for, is that Jesus died for the worst of you.

Like he died knowing the worst about you. He doesn't die thinking, that George, you know, gosh, there's so many good things about him.

[31 : 00] I think I'll die for him because he just, all those things, no. Jesus died for me knowing the worst about me. And his death is a death which creates a benefit for me.

The, the other thing about for is it's sometimes a synonym for the word in, in the place of. So that he dies in my place and he dies for my benefit. And he dies for my benefit mindful of the absolute worst about me.

And then verse four, that he was buried. I remember still, very clearly, the first time I touched a dead body. And it was a shock.

And I have to confess, I was nervous about touching the body. I wasn't sure if I was going to get, I don't know, bad things transmitted to me by, like I'm just, I don't know, just being honest, right? But if you touch a dead body, it definitely doesn't feel like a live body.

And, and so this thing is just emphasizing the death of Jesus that the, the, that some two men took the body down from the cross.

[32 : 10] They don't go into the details about how they got the nails out of his hands and out of his, and his feet. But they would have somehow gotten that out.

And I, I can imagine the squeamishness about it. And they get that out and they, they put him in something to carry him or put him on a donkey or something and they take him to a different place. And then they would have put him down and done at least a bit of washing of him and taking his clothes off. We didn't have any clothes on when he was crucified. So they would have washed the body at least a bit. They would have applied spices on him and then they would have wrapped him relatively tightly and they would have wrapped something separate around his head.

And they would have done that with their bare hands and then they would have picked him up and they would have put him on something and then they would have carried him to the tomb which was a cave and then they would have somehow still picked up that body and put him in a cave and then the soldiers rolled the stone and sealed it and guarded it.

And all of that isn't covered in that very simple word buried. It's emphasizing his death. And then that he was buried that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

[33 : 25] And one of the things which is really interesting about this you can see it in the English that he was raised. It's passive. The text is making clear that it's not some development of human evolution and that Jesus is this new pinnacle of human evolution and it's some power in him by which he is raised.

It's not some technological or some communal technological thing with him and his buddies that he by his power is resurrected. It's passive.

He is dead. dead. He is dead, dead, dead, dead, dead and buried and no one thought he would rise from the dead and God does something in him.

He is resurrected. It does not mean he's resuscitated to this size of death only to die again. He has defeated death. He has defeated the sin, the worst in you which contributes to your death.

He has defeated that. He has dealt with it. He has in a sense swallowed it, eaten it, consumed it, drank the cup, made it finished, no more, for you, for your benefit.

[34 : 42] And then God raises him to life on the other side of death where death and sin have no power over him whatsoever. And he does it for you and for me.

This is the Christian hope. Not butterflies, not seasons. This is the Christian hope. Is it true? The word appeared means convincingly made present. To Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep, synonym for death.

Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. To which even with this litany of evidence, someone might say, but George, this is a misogynistic text.

Well, it's not entirely. Apostles include men and women, and brothers and sisters well implies sisters with brothers. But why doesn't he mention Mary, and why doesn't he mention his mother, and why doesn't he mention the two people on the road to Emmaus, one of whom was almost definitely a woman?

[35 : 58] Why does he ignore those people? Nobody knows why, but here's, I think, a very, very good reason. Remember, you have to just remember how historical this is, that this is as if, I mean, we don't have the actual original letter, but there's no reason to doubt this, and if you went back in time, the suggestion is that Paul lists people who are still alive.

Well, actually, with one exception, because James is probably dead, but he mentions the two biggies, Peter and James in the 12, that's in a sense the two biggies, and then the rest of them are probably people who are still alive.

He's in a sense saying, you know, you're in Corinth, you can get on a boat, you can go on a walking tour, you can go back to Jerusalem, you can talk to these people, and that's maybe why he didn't include Mary Magdalene, 20 years, Mary Magdalene, just as there are lots of things that kill us today, there are even more things that would kill you back then.

that's how confidence he is in the story and the reality of it, and I just need to, you know, and so why does this matter and why is this good news?

Now here I'm going to share something which, there was a time once I asked, I've met a couple of people who've translated the Bible, and I remember asking one of them once, like, he was talking about what the word actually meant in the original language and how it's translated, and I asked him afterwards why do they do that, and he said well, you know, we could do that, but the fact of the matter is publishers don't want to publish it if you put certain types of words in, and so that's why it's done, and so they've smoothed over something, and I'm going to tell you what they've smoothed over, and I know it could be something which is painful for me to say here, so I want to say, because it's going to be, it's an abortion reference, and it's not me imposing it, because it's actually there in the underlying language, so what I want to say is, I want to say that this, I'm not, I know this could be a trigger thing for some people, but this isn't an us versus them thing, there are people here and watching here who've either had abortions or contributed to abortions, and so this isn't trying to trigger anything or make you feel guilty or anything like that, many people have had abortions and don't feel guilty, and some have had abortions, many have had abortions and do feel guilty,

[38 : 30] I do want to take this opportunity to say that anytime, anything like this which is painful that comes up in the Bible, it's not, remember Jesus died knowing the worst about you, he didn't die for you because you're so cute, good looking, successful, smart, holy, and now he finds out something bad about you, he knows all the worst about you and he dies for you, so if you go back and read verse 8, here's the thing, last of all, as to an aborted fetus, he appeared also to me, the rejected, the discarded, the worthless, ashamed, the ashamed,

Paul is saying that was me, some scholars think that it was one of the ways that his opponents attacked him and called them names, and just as our gay friends have embraced the word queer, he in a sense embraces it, and he says in verse 9, for I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God, but by the grace of God, see that's why it's good news, by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain, on the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me, whether that was, it was I or they, so we preached and so we believed, but the verse 10, you see, this is the wonderful thing about the gospel, you see, if you're watching or listening to this, and you think life, as far as you're concerned, life is just about having a nice house, making lots of money, having careers, having nice holidays, having lots of popular things, then in a sense Christianity has nothing to say to you whatsoever, all I can say to you is hopefully a time will come when you will realize that there's something more to life.

If you think about Zuckerberg who owns Facebook, I mean he has a thousand billion times probably more money than most of you, and he's despised by billions of people, isn't he? why do you think that becoming like Zuckerberg will actually make you happier, more liked, and not despised?

[41 : 33] see, Paul cannot change his past, he was a very, very, very bad man, but the grace of God, Jesus dying for the worst of him, to give him something, gives him something that he cannot give for himself, it gives him an acceptance by God, to be connected to God, he cannot change his past, but he can change his present, and that's what grace does, it changes your present and your future, and when your present and future is changed, it changes your past.

The things which most were wrong about him and so deeply broken about him and yet he was so deeply proud of, now by grace he sees their wrongness, and rather than it filling him with constant memories of dread and regret, it helps him to understand the depth of Christ's love for him and it gives him a heart and compassion for people who are bound and broken by so many things and he can understand at the deepest and most profound level their need for Jesus, their need for grace, their need for the message of sins forgiven, their need for his presence and power in their lives, the need for grace to be the fuel that gets you through the day and that begins to shape your dreams and your imagination and how you see your city and your family and your future and your past, he can see their profound need for grace.

that is why I'm a Christian. That is why I hope you would, if you're not a Christian now that you will become one.

And if you feel any stirring in your heart, if you're not yet, say that you are a Christian, feel any stirring in your heart, if you don't, that's fine, maybe, I pray that someday you will. But if you feel any stirring in your heart, that's Jesus doing this to you right now and saying it's time.

Lay down your defenses, the idols that you cling to, and turn to me, and I will take you as my own. And as victory shared on Friday, I will introduce you to your brothers and sisters as you follow me with them.

[44 : 19] Please stand. bow our heads in prayer.

Father, we thank you for Jesus. We thank you for grace. We thank you, Father, that it is a wonderful story. It is a powerful story. Yet it's not like Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny or the Tooth Fairy or the Great Pumpkin or any obviously false story.

And it's not like the many false cultural stories that Canadians tell themselves, that this Father is a story that's rooted in your heart, that's rooted in history, that's completely and utterly true.

And it's not just for the mind, but it's for the very center of who we are. We thank and praise you that Jesus, he died for us knowing our worst, that he was truly dead and entombed, that he rose again on the third day and he appeared to many witnesses, and that to hear these words today is to hear Jesus speak to us and he speaks to us to come to him, that we might receive grace from him, that our sins will be done away with, that he makes us new, that he reshapes the story of our lives and reshapes the end, that in Christ the end will not be how bad you were, how terrible you were, how much of a failure you were, how you were a loser, but in Christ and because of Christ, the end of my story and the end of every story of every person in Christ, whether it be Zuckerberg, to the poorest, most broken person in the world, that not because of who we are, but because of Christ, the final word will be from you, Father, welcome. I have so longed to have you see me face to face, come deeper in and higher up into the love of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit this day and every day for all eternity, that in Christ that is the final word that transforms every moment of our lives.

[46 : 35] God's people and we ask that that might be the means by which we stand and see the world, see ourselves, our past, our present, and our future.

We thank you for this great act of grace, this great act of love. And we ask and thank all these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior and all God's people said, Amen.