

Being Real in an Instagram World

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we, your word, Father, teaches us that we flatter ourselves too much to detect or hate our own sin, that we do not see the true condition of our own hearts.

And so, Father, we ask that you would bring your gospel home very clearly to us this morning, that we would have a better grasp of what your Son did for us to make us right with you and to make us your children.

And as we are gripped, Father, by the gospel, may you also reveal to us the true state of our hearts, that we might turn to you for amendment of life, for wholeness and for freedom, that in our day-to-day lives we might bring you glory.

And all this we ask, Father, as you pour out your Holy Spirit, we ask in the name of Jesus. Amen. Please be seated. It's funny how many times I think about this fellow who, I think it was one of my last summer jobs before I was ordained.

I had a job working with a master painter, and we were in a big building, and we went to one of the part of the building, you know, where there's all the heating units and the air conditioning units and all of that type of stuff that virtually nobody ever goes to, and we had to paint it.

[1 : 2 9] And I was his assistant helping him. And he liked taking long breaks. And one of his, he very early on, somehow or another, I can't remember now how that happened, but he discovered that I was a Christian.

And so for the whole summer, he would sort of grill me on it. And, but one of the things that he kept going on over and over and over and over again, especially if I brought in some type of argument or reason to deal with his objection, he would say, you know, I just don't understand this God that you talk about.

Like, why doesn't he just give me a vision of him or just a vision of heaven or something like that? If he just gave me some type of vision or something like that, then I would believe in him.

Why doesn't he do that? You know, through the years, if I had a dollar for every person who said something like that to me, well, I wouldn't be able to buy a house or a car. It doesn't happen that much.

But I'd have quite a few really good state dinners somewhere if I had a dollar for every time a person's asked me that. And maybe some of you are thinking about that. And I don't know if you noticed, but the Bible text that Ken read in 2 Corinthians, actually the Bible tells us why God doesn't do that.

[2 : 3 9] So it'd be a great help to me and a help to yourselves if you open your Bibles and turned to 2 Corinthians chapter 12. Open your Bibles and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 12.

And we're going to start looking at the first verse because the Bible, in a very, very powerful way, addresses this particular question. And once again, if you don't have your own Bible, you can get that one there or you can just listen along.

So, and just so you know where it is in the course of the letter, we're coming to the end of the text. In fact, one of the verses that we're going to read today, most scholars say it's the basic message of the entire letter.

In fact, I'll just tell you what it is right now, that most scholars, when they study this letter, they say if you want to pick up one short little sentence that describes everything that Paul's trying to do in this part of the Bible, it's, my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

But just in the context, Paul is in the middle of what's called the fool's speech. Just last week, we looked at how he said, I'm going to play the fool.

[3 : 49] And I'm going to play the fool and talk like a fool and boast like a fool. And Paul is doing it in the hope that by acting like a fool, he'll sort of puncture the problems and the opponents that he has in that church.

Because he's dealing with a group of people who are very good looking. Just think of George Clooney. And they're very suave.

They're cultured. They're sophisticated. They know how the culture works. And they've come into the church and they're very impressive, very well-educated, very well-spoken. You know, they don't have a hick accent, but they have a cultured, well-educated accent, good diction, very, very clever and smooth with words.

And they're trying to get the church to be more culturally accommodating. And they're also trying to get at the same time, the church not only to be more accommodating to the pagan culture that they live in, but he's trying to encourage them to take on rules and regulations which they claim really go back to a better way to understand what we call the Old Testament.

And so they're trying to give them new rules and new regulations to really up their life. And the third thing that they're doing is they want to go on and on about the visions they've had. And that's what we're going to see. So that's where we are in the letter.

[5 : 12] He's halfway through his full speech. And that's why it begins like this. He says, I must go on boasting. See, by the way, you know, context is so important.

Like if you come across somebody who's going on boasting, they say, no, I'm just following the Bible. In 2 Corinthians 12, 1, it says, I must go on boasting. No, if you go back a little bit, he says, I'm going to be a fool and I'm going to talk like a fool.

It's a full speech, okay? I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.

I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Just pause here. This is a poetic way of referring to the highest heaven.

In a moment, we're going to see the word paradise, which is sort of another way of saying the third heaven. And it's where God actually is. It's like going to the throne of God, where God is, and the image of paradise that we're going to see in a moment.

[6 : 16] It's a lone word from another culture that really is a way of saying like the Garden of Eden. So it's trying to say that he's like the Garden of Eden that's in heaven where God walks with people.

That's where I've been. Okay, it's just some poetic language. We'll read up again verse 2. I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago was caught up to the third heaven, whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know, God knows.

And I know that this man was caught up into paradise, whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know, God knows. And he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.

And just sort of pause there for a second. It's not immediately obvious here in the English, but in the original language, the idea is that God told him he's not allowed to speak about it.

So it's not that he can't find words, but that God told him after the vision that you're not allowed to talk about it, what you've seen and heard. Verse 5. On behalf of this man, I will boast, but on my own behalf, I will not boast except of my weaknesses.

[7 : 24] Though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me.

And just sort of pause for a second. I don't know if you've noticed, it's very subtle, and he's going to make it clear in the very next sentence. This man that he's talking about is himself. So here we have the very thing that I would say hundreds of people to me.

There would not be a year where I don't have four or five or six people tell me if God wants me to believe in him. Why don't you just give me something like a powerful vision, like, you know, of him or of heaven, or just something like that, some type of vision or revelation.

You know, every year I have people who say that to me once we get into a conversation and they find out that I'm a Christian. And so here we see that Paul is claiming that he had that very thing.

In fact, he's had more than one of them. And so the question can be, well, okay, if Paul had them, and it's really odd that if Paul had them that God told him he wasn't allowed to talk about it, but George, if it happened to Paul, why can't it happen to me?

[8 : 42] Why can't it happen to me? Well, Paul goes on to talk about it. And just note the first thing. He says, verse seven, so to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan.

Some of you already, you're a bit nervous about this. to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.

But he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Now, it's a very, very, it's a very curious thing, isn't it? And just first of all, let's just, okay, you know, I, you know, God humbles me up here all the time and it could, it probably is the case that I'm vastly more wicked than everybody here.

But if you're, if many of us are honest, if we had a choice to spend five minutes reading the Bible, where God said, you'd have five minutes reading the Bible or five minutes of a vision of heaven, what would we pick?

[10 : 13] Unless I'm the only wicked person in the room, I would pick the vision from heaven. So you see, on one hand, part of the reason that we're so troubled when people say to us, if God wants us to believe me and to believe in him, why doesn't he give me some type of vision?

Part of the reason we're so troubled with that is that we agree with them. If you could put up the first point, Andrew, if we're honest, the Bible and the gospel seem weak and paltry compared to my own vision of heaven.

And if those of you who've read, I think it's called A Series of Unfortunate Events, by paltry, I mean, by paltry, I mean, weak, thin, gruel, not very much, very, very little.

That's what paltry sort of means. I just had to throw it in. But the Bible and the gospel seem weak and paltry compared to my own vision of heaven, of me being able to have a vision of heaven, or a vision of God, or of angels, or of the supernatural, or of the spiritual.

If we're honest, that's how we think as Christians. You see, this is the wonderful thing about the Bible, that when you actually think about it and meditate upon it, all of a sudden, not only is it going to be answering a question that others pose to you, it actually is starting to pierce our own hearts and reveal to ourselves something about ourselves that we did not know before.

[11 : 51] In fact, if you could put up the next thing, Andrew, here's the issue. Remember in verse 7, it says, so to keep me from being conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan asked me to keep me from being conceited.

In the Bible, when something said twice like that so close, it means we're supposed to pay attention. And here's the second thing, private revelations and visions make me think I'm superior.

You know, that's what happened to Paul. He started to think he was superior to other people, that he was better than other people, that God loved him more than other people, that not only that he just had this vision, but it probably meant he thought he had far better views on politics, on food, on all sorts of things, because that's what happens when we get conceited, when we're full of pride.

And, you know, that's one of the reasons why Paul says in the text, if you just go up a little bit here in the text, in verse 6, though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth, but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me.

You see, it's, because one of the things, I've met people who claim to have many, many visions and stuff like this, and here's one of the characteristics of a lot of them, not all of them, but a lot of them, their lives are a train wreck.

[13 : 31] Their lives are a train wreck. And in many cases, if you were to ask me, would you like to go on a drive to Armprior with them, if you're from out of town, that's like a 45 or 50 minute drive, I'd say no.

No. And so, but often people who've had or claim to have these visions, or maybe they have, and, you know, because God did it to Paul, he can do it.

But what they want is they don't want us to look at what they actually say and how they actually, what they actually say and what they actually do. They want us to somehow evaluate them as, in fact, being somehow superior because of the vision.

You see, it's a human problem. It's a human problem that Christians share because the problem of being conceited is a Christian problem and a Muslim problem and a Hindu problem and a Buddhist problem and a secular problem and an atheist problem.

It's a human problem. But let me tell you, it stinks very deeply for a Christian to be conceited. And so here's the thing as well about this same idea, right?

[14 : 39] If the Bible and the Gospel seem weak and paltry compared to my own vision of heaven and if private revelations and visions make me think that I am superior, hope that says, yeah, okay.

Then here's the third thing if you could put it up, Andrew. The Gospel and the Bible are an open, public revelation from God which humbles me. Go back to that first thing.

Okay, George, God says to me, you want five minutes reading my word or five minutes of a vision? vision, you know, because, you know, often God, the Bible puts me to sleep, God.

It does not get me all fired up. And here's part of the problem. You see, the Gospel and the Bible are an open, public revelation from God which humbles me. The other day I was in a meeting and I know there's a lot of lawyers in the room.

I was going to give this example anyway, even if there were no lawyers in the room. So I'm not picking on you but I was in a meeting with a lawyer and it turned out that there was a bit of a question amongst the committee meeting that runs an organization as to what was legal or not and he said what he thought he gave, he told us.

[15 : 51] And so I then said, you know, I always, I hate being in a room in a meeting where there's only one lawyer present because in my experience if you have one lawyer present he or she will tell you what the law says and we all think well the law is pretty esoteric what are we going to say against a lawyer and we go along with it.

But in my experience when there's two lawyers in the room they disagree about what the law says and everybody in the room laughed and then the lawyer who was a really good fellow he said, George, you got that wrong and he said when there's one lawyer in the room he gives you a ruling when there's two lawyers in the room they give you three opinions.

And part of the issue is, you see, is that for many of us law is esoteric. It seems like there's lots of big books and then if you get whatever number of big books there are for the law if you go for government regulations you can like triple it or make it ten times with a number and who can read it all so it's very esoteric.

But you see, here's the thing and visions are very esoteric it's special knowledge, right? But the thing about the Bible is it's a public open revelation from God that in that Sunday school class two-year-olds are having the Bible read to them.

They don't even know how to read but they can hear the Bible they can learn it. And, you know, it's one of the great problems for theologians and pastors is they can give their great learned things about what's going on in the Bible.

[17 : 28] And then over coffee you know, some working class guy or gal who hasn't finished grade 10 can say, well, George, that was all very interesting but in this text it says this.

And it can be humbling because the Bible and the gospel is an open public revelation from God for us to read and to hear for the illiterate and for the literate.

And right from the early days of the New Testament because of Jesus' command to go into all of them every single people group on the planet and tell them about Jesus and make disciples teaching them to obey all that I have told you and from that from the very, very early days the early Christians understood that they were to translate the Bible into the words of the people group and not have the people group have to learn their language because it's a public open revelation from God which humbles us.

It's the complete opposite almost of any type of a vision which is private. So that's exactly here what's going on in the text.

But now some of you might say well George okay that's very, very interesting but you know George you often do this it seems. What about the thorn? What about the messenger of Satan?

[18 : 57] Like let's just be honest it's not just Christians but for many, many, many, many people in our culture we have a great there is a great fear that if you get too close to God God will tell you to do something like wear a suicide vest and blow people up.

God will tell you to go and shoot people in a mosque or a church that God will tell you to behead somebody in a bus like it is a great great fear in our culture.

And some of us can just easily imagine what it would be like if we went back to our university or our workplace and we were to read this text and the people in the office might not feel comfortable but if they noticed if they hadn't fallen asleep they'd go whoa a thorn in the flesh a messenger of Satan they'd miss all that other conceited stuff it would be an elephant in the room.

So George what about that? Well let's look at it again look at verse 7 so to keep me from being conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations a thorn was given me in the flesh a messenger of Satan to harass me to keep me from becoming conceited.

Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this that it should leave me but he said to me my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me for the sake of Christ then I am content with weaknesses insults hardships persecutions and calamities in other words he's just described his thorn we'd say George weaknesses insults hardships persecutions and calamities are not a thorn that actually the word thorn can also be translated as steak I don't mean the type of steak that you eat I mean you get one of those really rough things where it hasn't been sanded and it's nice and long like this or even longer and it's just roughly cut at the bottom and you can hammer it into the ground the very same word that's translated as thorn can be translated as steak for the sake of Christ then I am content with weaknesses insults hardships persecutions and calamities for when I am weak then I am strong so is the Bible here just telling us to be masochists what's going on thankfully it's quite a few years ago but my only brother had a season in his life where he had some heart trouble and he had to go in for some surgery it was a bit of an emergency surgery and unfortunately it was one of those cases that he ended up having the doctors had to go back in twice

[21 : 47] I believe and in each case they had to open him up my brother is a joker the first time he after his first surgery when he was going to his own to a doctor a specialist to check on some you know there was a bit of an infection or something anyway he went to the office and they were doing an intake interview with him and they said you know are there any serious things in your family history that we should know about and my brother said yes everybody in my family history has died and the nurse said oh what was their problem and he said well they're all mortal human beings die after the doctors had cut him open a third time and he had to go in for a checkup he taped a zipper, uh, onto his body from here to here so that when they opened him up they saw the zipper and he said

I'm tired of you hammering my body open I thought next time just install a zipper and it will make it a lot easier uh, but anyway here's the thing uh, you know we all know this that, uh, if we have a little kid and they've, uh, they really scraped themselves and, uh, uh, it, you know you put a bandage on it and you need to keep taking the bandage off and putting new cream and ointment on it and washing it out so that the cut will get better and if the cut is maybe over here or, you know, somewhere where there's hair on their body they cry because it hurts to take the thing off and those doctors to save my brother's life and to save his life again and then to save his life again they had to crack open his sternum and make a huge big cut and go in and do all sorts of cutting and it would have really hurt and it was really inconvenient but they did it to keep him alive and we all understand that but here's the problem with this text if you can put up the next point here's the problem not with the text but with us I see conceit and pride in others as a problem it is hard for me to see my own conceit and pride it's even it's hard for me to see it or see it as a problem you know one of Jesus' most famous sayings is it is so easy for us to see a speck in our own eye and not see the log in another person's eye in other words

I have this little speck you know I see this little tiny speck I have a huge stake sticking out of my eye and I can't even see it I just think it's normal living and I think I can see better than other people I think I'm more healthy I think I'm more whole I think I'm more wise and if I'm one of those two lawyers in a room and we give three opinions I told the right one every time and unless we have a really good husband or wife who reminds us when we were wrong we don't even remember when we're wrong and that's what it means to be a human being but in God's eyes our conceit and our pride is unbelievably deadly unbelievably deadly because it keeps us from grace it keeps us from God you know there's an old saying you can't look up to God when you're looking down your nose at other people it is humanly impossible to look down your nose at other people and look up to God at the exact same time even if I do this

I'm still just looking down my nose my eyes aren't up there Andrew if you could put up the next thing here's this great verse which is so important in the text the Lord said to me my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness and in the original language the way this is expressed it's expressed a little bit almost like Hebrew poetry so that grace and power are seen as synonyms because as we all know in this life a lot of times people have power but they have no grace and a lot of times people want to offer us grace but they have no power but in this text it's telling us that God's grace is powerful and God's power is always full of grace and my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness and in fact in a very very subtle and subtle way Paul is pointing to this even as he's telling the story you might have noticed a little bit this odd thing about praying three times like is the Bible telling me George that okay you know I have this

I have this knee problem God heal my knee didn't do it God heal my knee doesn't do it God heal my knee okay now I'm not allowed to pray for it anymore like is that what the text is saying no no it's a very very subtle thing it's a bit of a literary thing to make us think see you know one of the problems I have when I read the Bible is I like to gallop through the Bible and galloping through the Bible is good to get a bit of you know a big sense of what's being said in God's word but also we need to to pause with the Bible and we need to think about the different choice of words and to realize that God is not an idiot when he had his Bible put together that there's subtleties there in the Bible that he wants us to see and to notice and so go back and look at verse 8 three times I pleaded with the Lord about this that it should leave me who for those of us who are Christians who prayed about something three times Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane you see on one hand three times is just a bit of a synonym of say it's just a sort of a bit of a poetic way of talking about a season of prayer because that's one of the interesting things about this text it's telling us that there's a season whereby we pray something and then at some point in time in the season we might come to a realization that God has in fact given us an answer but it's not the answer that we had hoped for but he has in fact given us an answer but at the same time that he's communicating that with this language of three he's also pointing us to another person who asked the father for something and the father did not say yes to the request and if you are here and you're a seeker you don't know the Bible very well in the garden of Gethsemane

[28 : 18] Jesus leaves his disciples he goes to a place to pray he knows that the soldiers are even now heading towards the garden that he's been betrayed by one of his friends that the soldiers are coming on behalf of civil and religious authority that they are going to arrest Jesus they know that he's going to be found guilty and he knows he knows that he's going to die upon the cross the very very next day he knows that he does not even have 24 hours to live and in the garden he says father if it be your will may you take this cup from me father if it be your will may you take this cup from me father if it be your will may you take this cup from me and the cup there's lots of imagery there it's you know one way to understand the state of our lives is if you could just imagine that all of a sudden it would be like a little bit like a horror movie or a science fiction movie and you have the really evil person there and the evil person takes a bit of a cut or something and something black and foul drips out and it's some of their evil and it goes into a cup for another person to drink and you know it well it's somehow communicating the evil through the cup and there's these

Old Testament Tanakh images of somehow another one other way to understand that my sin my shame the evil that I've done the evil that I've thought the good that I should have done that I didn't do and if you could just imagine that every time that's a little bit of black foul stuff that goes into a cup and a bit of black foul stuff that goes into a cup and if you're at all honest about your life you know eventually it would be like a lake it would be too big to drink so just imagine that every time it happens the moisture drips you know fades away and it just becomes more and more and more and more and concentrated and one of the ways to understand what Jesus does for us on the cross is that the cross is not just about his death but that God the Son of God whose own cup would have nothing black or foul in it because he has never sinned but that on the cross he takes my cup all of that black foul stuff from my life all now represented in a cup and on the cross when Jesus dies three times before he dies he says

Father I don't know if I can drink this for George and for and for Deborah and for Daniel and for Jonathan and for Yasmin and for Shirley and for Dick and for Shannon and for Dana and for Carl and for Earl and for Jeremiah but if that is what you are calling me to do I will drink it and on the cross what you see with him dying is him in a sense figuratively drinking my cup and you know if you could put up the next thing Andrew the God remember I told you how the great fear of our generation one of the many great fears of our generation is if you get too close to God you're going to end up with a suicide vest blowing innocent people up or you're going to behead a person on a bus or you're going to do all these horrible things here's the thing in our worldly imagination the gods of this world either abandon us or tell us to kill people but the true and living God revealed in an open public revelation which reveals God's gospel to us the true and living God who has revealed himself in his word loves people and dies to save them the gods of this world either abandon us the gods of this world that we fear tell us to kill people the God revealed in the Bible the true and living God doesn't tell his people to kill people but it tells a story of God drinking the cup of wrath the cup of evil from each life he dies to save them that's why you see the gods of this world cannot understand the cross the gods of this world in many cases like in Islam they don't believe that such a great prophet like Jesus could actually die upon the cross they believe that God did one of two things but it was another person who died there not Jesus because Jesus is the second greatest prophet and the gods of this world that love money and power and wealth and prestige and boasting inevitably as they start to look at Jesus they say oh you know that stuff about the cup of wrath is so you know it's so it's how Hicks talk it's how uneducated people talk and they want to make Jesus into an example but not a sacrifice because the gods of this world love power and cannot get their mind around the idea that the true and living God the creator and sustainer of all things the one who is sovereign and will bring all things to their proper end that he would love people like you and me and that what characterizes him is not just power but grace and that out of his power and his grace seeing you and me he loved us even though we were at enmity with him even though we feared him even though we believed lies about him even though we didn't want him to come close even though we're mad that he doesn't do what he wants and in face of all of that still he loves us and he he rescues us by becoming weak and dying upon the cross and that's what's revealed in the Bible so you see

here's the thing we're going to wrap this up very quickly with three little simple points if you want to try to write them down later or something go on the webpage if I go through them too quick but here's the thing you see in the eyes of the world text like this my grace is sufficient for you verse 9 for my power is made perfect in weakness therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me enter if you could put the next one up oh sorry that's not the one I wanted to put up but anyway put it up anyway we'll get that in a moment this text we're going to see it more in the prayer that we're going to do next therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me that word rest is the same word that's used in the Old Testament of God through the tabernacle being present in the center of his people so that he would guide them protect them speak to them love them it's an image of pitching his tent amongst them to be fully in their presence though same word falls many times in the book of Revelation when it talks about the day when there's the new heaven and the new earth and we dwell with God and he dwells with us it's the exact same word as is used in John 1 14 the word the word became flesh and dwelt among us dwelt rest upon read it again my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me that Jesus himself will pitch his tent in my life for the sake of Christ then I am content with weaknesses insults hardships persecutions and calamities for when I am weak then I am strong see what this text is calling us to is not resignation resignation is self-centered and passive

Jesus did not resign himself to going to the cross this text is calling us not to be resigned to being a jar of clay but to accept it resignation is self-centered and passive acceptance is other-centered and active and that's what you see with Jesus with the cup for God in his love of God and for his love of you and me he accepted the cup and he walked towards those who were going to kill him and as Christians have famously said for generations it was not the nails that held him to the cross but his love for you and me that held him to the cross so you see from the eyes of the world and the eyes of the powerful to say that somehow or another accepting that I am a jar of clay that God can use me even though

[38 : 15] I am a jar of clay and that I am weak and that God can use me and that it's his power well if that doesn't sound like I have healthy self-esteem but if it's true it means I'm actually living in the real world I was born powerless I lived the first nine months of my life in my mother's womb I lived as a child for a long time and even now you know for many of the things that are most important I'm very powerless and when I die I will be completely powerless and our addiction and love of power is mostly just conceit in pride that we see and hate in others but we do not see and hate in ourselves and the fact of the matter is I am a jar of clay who had a beginning and a jar of clay who will have an end but this is not to leave me to be depressed because God the son of God died upon the cross to redeem me to live in me and to live and walk with me always is a jar of clay his is always the power so just in closing yeah here's the one thing the quicker I stop flapping my arms and trying to fly and let him strap me into his plane as his passenger the quicker I will fly so it's a bit corny but what the heck next one

Lord help me to grow in accepting that I am a jar of clay whom you redeemed and with whom you will live you will forever pitch your tent that's what the text is telling me promise of the gospel you see it's it's only in the context of the gospel that we are to understand that we're jars of clay and not be depressed but to understand we're living in the real world I am a jar of clay book of Ecclesiastes describes human beings as a vapor with a longing for eternity in their heart isn't that beautiful a vapor that has a longing for eternity a longing for heaven in its heart that's us human beings next one Andrew final one dear Lord please help me to be gripped by the gospel and then die to my conceit and pride and live free as a jar of clay in the embrace of your grace and power all to your glory and praise this is what the text is inviting us to pray could you please stand if the Lord has touched your heart would you pray that with me and you know if you're here today and you don't know where you are with the Lord and maybe you've been thinking that just reading the Bible isn't as good as having a vision

I don't know maybe this is God has touched your heart if you have not given your life to Jesus and you feel a bit of a pressure inside of you stop fighting the pressure surrender stop running and turn to Jesus and say Jesus may this prayer may this prayer be my entrance into your kingdom may this prayer be the prayer that begins me as your child forever I encourage you if you feel that pressure to not push it off but to say yes to it please join with me in praying dear Lord please help me to be gripped by the gospel and then die to my conceit and pride and live free as a jar of clay in the embrace of your grace and power all to your glory and praise Father pour out your Holy Spirit upon us make us these jars of clay embraced by your grace and power and learning to live whether we are lawyers stay at home dads or stay at home moms or pastors or missionaries working in the government wherever we are learning to live for your glory and praise in Jesus name we pray

Amen