

Acts 8:1-25 "The Gospel and Ancient Enmities"

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[0 : 0 0] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah. It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Standing, let's bow our heads in prayer for a moment. Father, we know from your Word that evil spirits often gather even in times when Christians gather in worship. And we know, Father, that at different times in our week and in our day, and maybe even in a very powerful way, Father, these evil spirits speak slander and lies to us and entice us and tempt us and belittle us and harm us. So Father, I stand before you with no power in or of myself, but I am your child by adoption and grace. And Father, in the name of Jesus, I ask that any demons that are present to us and those online, that Father, I ask in the name of Jesus that you would bind and silence those demons and take them far from this place, never to return. And that, Father, none of us would be left empty, but that your Holy Spirit might move within us and among us with might and power and deep conviction, that your Son's hand of grace would be upon us, and that your Holy Word and your Holy

Gospel would enter very deeply into us, so that we might be free to love you and to worthily magnify your Holy Name. And we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Please be seated. For some of you may be present or online. I might have shocked you with that prayer a little bit, but I prayed the prayer, both because it's a good prayer to pray, and also because our scripture text is going to talk about topics like this. In fact, our scripture text today is going to look at two great enmities, ancient enmities that are dealt with by the gospel. And so, if you would help me and help yourselves, if you open your Bibles, we're going to look at Acts chapter 8, beginning at the first verse, Acts chapter 8, the first verse, as we continue our way through the book of Acts. Now, just before I start reading this, two things of context. We haven't looked at Acts for a couple of weeks now. The first is, this is an eyewitness-based history of the first 30 years, approximately, of the Jesus movement that started after the death and resurrection and ascension of

[3 : 51] Jesus. And it's an eyewitness history, eyewitness-based history, written when many eyewitnesses were still alive. And so, one of the things which is remarkable about this book is that it withstood whatever challenges there would have been from eyewitnesses. It means we can have a high degree of confidence in it. And the second thing is that immediately before this, we were told the story of Stephen, the very first person who was killed for being a Christian. And that's what immediately goes just before it. And just to sort of catch you up on it, just went on right before this is at the end of, you know, how Stephen was stoned to death. And as Stephen is being stoned to death, the people doing the stoning bring their cloaks and robes and leave them with a young man by the name of Saul, who most people nowadays know by his Greek name. Saul would have been his Hebrew name or Jewish name, and Paul would have been his Greek name or Roman name. And the language implies that one of the guys organizing the stoning was this guy, Paul. And that's then how this chapter we're beginning, takes right on from that. This is what it says in verse one. And Saul, whom we know as Paul, and who we know eventually wrote a large part of the New Testament, that's the person that we're talking about, Paul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem. And they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church and entering house after house. He dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. Now, just two things about this. We're going to talk about Saul more later. We're going to read about his conversion a couple of chapters after this. In fact, the very next chapter is how this man goes from being such a hater and a murderer to becoming a Christian. And we know from other places in the book of Acts that this ravaging include killing people.

Paul laments in his letters and later on the Acts that he was responsible for killing men and women in the coming out of his great hatred of these Christians. And there's another thing which is important for the rest of the book of Acts and very important for us. I don't know if anybody here is Jewish. If you are, welcome. If you're watching, welcome. But we only became Christians because somebody told us about Christ. And somebody told them and somebody told them and somebody told them and somebody told them. And you go all the way back and you get back to the early apostles.

And some of those people who told people who told people had to be what we now call missionaries. There's been this profound missionary expansion of the church. And one of the things in this story, this little brief introduction, which is very significant, and it's probably something that we don't reflect upon enough in our own lives. What Paul did and the other people involved in this was an evil.

And nowhere in the Bible is that evil diminished. They say, oh, you know, it wasn't that bad. And in no ways do they say, well, because something good came out of it, it's not that. No, no, no, no. What they did was horrific and wrong. And there's never any moral confusion around that.

[7 : 35] But God used this evil act, which was designed to try to stop Christianity from growing. And God used that to grow the Christian movement. God used the evil for good purposes.

In fact, what had happened is that when Jesus had ascended, if you go back and read the story, he said, listen, you guys, you need to go. Of course, you have to tell people about me in Jerusalem.

But then after that, you need to go to Judea. And then after that, you need to go to Samaria. And then after that, you have to go to every single people group in the world. And here a year or so after this, they're all still in Jerusalem. They haven't been moving.

And so God uses this terrible evil to scatter the church. Look again at what it says here.

And they were all scattered throughout the regions. All probably just is a bit of a hyperbole, but it means many, many, many, many Christians scattered to Judea and Samaria. And what happened when they went scattered? They got scattered. Well, that explained in verse 4.

[8 : 48] Now, those who were scattered went about preaching the word. And that's a bit of an unfortunate word. Really what they say, it's the first place in the, not the first place, it's one of the places in the book of Acts where, well, basically what it means literally is they went gospeling.

They just went gospeling. They shared the gospel as they went. Just ordinary people. You know, this is very important as well. It wasn't as if the apostles sat down and came up with a grand strategy and did fundraising and got prayer partners and organized mission teams and trained them.

No, no. They just all went. And in a sense, what happens is it's organic, what we would now call organic growth. These people flee, but rather than fleeing and being terrified about telling anybody about Jesus and what he had done for them, how he, the life he lived, the miracles he performed, the brilliance of his teaching, the genius of his teaching, his death upon the cross, his resurrection, his ascension, the Holy Spirit, rather than being silent about that, they told people about it.

That's what they did. Just ordinary people like you and me. And now what Luke, the writer of this eyewitness-based history does, is he gives one particular example, and he does this particular example.

I'm going to talk about one type of ancient enmity, which is also discussed here, but because it deals with another very, very, very important ancient enmity, and something that happens in this forever changes the nature of the church and the Christian movement.

[10 : 26] Well, what is it? Let's look at verse 5. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds, with one accord, paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did.

For even spirits, crying out with a loud voice, for, sorry, for unclean spirits or evil spirits or demons, crying out with a loud voice came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed.

So there was much joy in that city. Now just sort of pause here for a second. The word sign is an easy word for us to be a bit confused about. If you talk to many people, many secular people, they'll say, you know, I took it as a bit of a sign that I should do this, you know.

I'd been thinking about what to do, and then I was walking down the street, and I bumped into a person, and they started talking to me about, you know, this university. I took it as a sign that that's the university I should be going to.

Or, you know, I was trying to figure out what to do about my investments, and then I came upon this article, and I took that as a sign that that's how I, you know, that's where I should put my money, and that's why it's been so successful.

[11 : 41] So many people in our culture still talk about signs, and it's a very ancient type of idea. And really what our secular friends and neighbors are referring to are omens.

That's a very old word, that there's some omen, some communication that gives them a direction that they should go. Many Christians inadvertently talk like pagans looking for omens, and the Bible never promises Christians omens to give them direction like that, at least not in that particular sense.

But what Luke is talking about here are miracles, and he's emphasizing something which is very important for us as Canadians to get our minds around, because we Canadians have developed into a type of people where we have boxes inside of our mind, and the boxes are sort of different areas of thinking or believing, and they don't communicate with each other.

And there's been other times in history where human beings have been like that, but there's been times, especially under the influence of Christianity, where it's not like that, where you want to have just one mind, so to speak, one way of thinking.

And so what it's saying is, because if you think about it, and I've talked about this before, I'm not going to talk about it very much. Like, if Jesus really did rise from the dead, that's a miracle, and it's also a sign.

[13 : 04] It points to something. It has meaning. And to my friends who are watching, or those of you who are here, it means that Islam's not true. It means that Buddhism isn't true.

It means that Hinduism isn't true. It means that what most of us are taught, and what our culture primarily tries to talk about, which is that basically there's just a type of secular world where there's just matter and energy and people that you can touch and feel, that that's wrong.

It's incomplete. Islam and Buddhism and Hinduism are incomplete in significant ways. Native spirituality is not true. Well, why?

Well, because if that actually happened, it's not just sort of like you have a little box here for religious stuff or, you know, that type of stuff. You have another box here for how you do science, and then you have another box over here about how you do finances, and another box over here, another box over here, and how you think about politics, and they're all separate boxes, and they never talk to each other.

That's to live an unexamined life. If these miracles have happened, it points to something. There's a particular meaning. And we're going to talk about that a little bit more in a moment.

[14 : 16] And that's why Luke and some of the different Bible writers, sometimes they'll use the word for miracle, but other times they'll use the word sign to refer to the miracle. Now, let's continue, because we're all in the middle of this story, and I've just said there's much joy in that place, right?

Philip has come. He's telling, gospling. He's telling people about Jesus. And as he's telling people about Jesus, he's also dealing with unclean spirits that have been oppressing or even possessing human beings, and he prays and casts them out.

And he's also been doing works of healing. In verse 9, but there was a man named Simon who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great.

They all paid attention to him from the least to the greatest, saying, this man is the power of God that is called great. And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic.

But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God in the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

[15 : 31] Now, just sort of pause here. And the word magic is an unfortunate word. It's very literal. But it's not like what you go, if you go to Las Vegas, I've never been to Las Vegas, but if you go to Las Vegas, I take it that there's lots of people who do magic shows.

In fact, actually, you'll notice that the stage is set up a bit different than it was last. It's completely empty. Last week there was some curtains about halfway through the stage. That was because for the last week, you know, for a week and a half, there were magic shows every evening here at the Ottawa Little Theatre.

In fact, last week, I met the magician, saw his gadgets that were all sort of stacked up all around there. And they do magic shows, right? Try to, you know, cut people in half and all that type of stuff.

That's not what's meant here. What's meant is sorcery. Sorcery. What's meant is dealing with supernatural or spiritual beings to affect things that we see and touch, to affect human beings and affect events.

It's curses and supposed blessings, but it's not curses and blessings as Christians understand them. It's by Philip had an ability to deal with supernatural or spiritual beings.

[16 : 57] Now, just, we're going to, let's just park here for a second. So the first thing I want to say is that I know that in a Canadian context, I don't know where you all are in terms of being a Christian or not, and I don't know, especially for those of you who are online, there's two different fundamental ways that Canadians look at this.

There's a very significant number of Canadians who basically just say, la, la, la, la, la, yeah, yeah, yeah, angels, demons, blah, blah, blah, blah, that's just all mystical gobbledygook.

It doesn't exist. We believe in science. We believe in reason and stuff like that. It's just complete nonsense. So what I'm going to say next, and you can send me an email if you want.

Well, maybe in the weeks ahead, I'll talk to you about this. I'm not talking to you right now. I'm going to talk to that other very significant part of Canadian population that does believe that there are, in fact, spiritual or supernatural beings, which is a very, very significant number of Canadians who believe in casting spells, are okay with a seance, believe there's ways to use talismans to ward off curses or attacks by evil spirits, or to use crystals to channel spiritual powers, supernatural powers, and there's a large number of Canadians who are like that.

One of my great failures in sharing, trying to talk about Jesus with people, and if by chance he's watching, I give a shout out to you. There's this fellow that I had for three months or so, four months, I had very deep conversations with him about the Christian faith, and this fellow had grown up in a completely atheistic culture.

[18 : 57] He'd grown up on the other side of the Iron Curtain, and he had a PhD in nuclear energy, and he was very, very good friends with another person in the coffee shop who was a very, very Christopher Hitchens type of atheist, very public, and I'd had lots of conversations with him, and the two of them were good friends.

So I actually, for the first three months, I talked to this fellow, we'll call him Bob, as if he was an atheist. I mean, why not? He grew up in a communist country, he had a PhD in nuclear physics, and it looked like he was great friends with this Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins type atheist, and so I would be talking to him about things, and our conversations were always sort of convoluted, and then one day, it dawned on me, and I asked him directly, he said, no, no, I'm not an atheist.

I grew up with all that stuff, and it's bankrupt. It's completely wrong. I've completely and utterly rejected it. And I went, oh. In fact, he really believed in all sorts of spiritual beings.

I've been trying to talk to him thinking it was this, but he was actually completely and utterly different. And in a sense, I don't want to make that mistake here. I know that there are Canadians who believe in all of these types of things.

So just a couple of things. And by the way, one of the reasons, and I could see this with my friend, and I think it's one of the reasons that people start to investigate supernatural powers and spiritual beings, that many people sense the meaninglessness of a purely secular world.

[20 : 48] And many people, I think, feel a type of loneliness. They don't want to inhabit a world where there's just human beings that you can see and touch.

They like the idea that there might be aliens that we might someday meet. They like the idea that there could be angels or good spirits that could help them. They like the idea that there's a type of a thickness to reality rather than just this thin gruel of thinking that all that exists is what we can touch and feel.

And they like that. They long for it. And one of the things that you see here is that the gospel very humbly presents the idea that your longing for something more is a good longing.

but it's ultimately a longing for God, for the triune God, for your creator. And once you come to the creator and are reconciled to him, you realize that, in fact, the world is more than matter and energy.

There is a God who hears your prayers and you can pray to him. And you can pray to him about both the really big things in your life and the very, very small things in your life. And there is a God who actually hears you.

[22 : 04] And there are angels that intervene, but there's also, in fact, hostile spiritual beings, which we Christians call demons. When Christ is your, when the message that Christ is your savior is proclaimed, it's not the case that more people start to interact with the spirit world.

In fact, you see in this story it's the complete opposite. as Jesus is proclaimed as savior and Lord, as he's proclaimed from having, being able to perform miracles and that even though he performed miracles and he could have avoided dying on the cross, it means for certain that when he died on the cross, he died on the cross purely because he loved you.

People can put two and two together. If Jesus was able to calm the storm and do that, then surely he could make it that the soldiers couldn't put him on a cross. So he had to have died voluntarily on the cross purely and utterly because he loves you.

And when he rises from the dead, then you know there has to be, in fact, a God that exists and you listen to why Jesus said he was doing what he was doing and what he was all about and you realize that Jesus has come from the creator of all things and the sustainer of all things on a rescue mission to rescue you because God loves you.

He's for you. He wants you to know him. He wants you to know him and all the freedom that he brings. And so when the gospel is proclaimed, it's not that more people want to have dealings with whatever the spiritual world is.

[23 : 44] They come to understand that there is a devil, that there are demons. And as the gospel is proclaimed, people are delivered from demonic oppression and possession. and influence. That's what the gospel does.

Christ has defeated Satan. His doom is certain. He still has power, but his doom is absolutely certain. This is the first of the ancient hostilities which is talked about in this story.

That ever from the time of the Garden of Eden, there are unseen powers and forces and beings who hate human beings.

And it is foolish for human beings to think that they can deal with such beings and tame them. these evil spirits will appear as light, as white, like white magic versus dark magic, black magic, good magic.

They'll appear that way, but what's happening is that we aren't, no human being is actually taming these beings. No human being can do that. These evil spiritual beings are taming you, oppressing you, making you hate yourself and harm yourself and hate others and break up your family and see the world as a dark place.

[25 : 24] and the light of Christ and the love of Christ and the goodness of Christ and the mercy of Christ and the truth of Christ comes into your life to deliver you from all of that because Christ is for you.

And so there's this ancient hostility which we need to be aware of.

By the way, just as a bit of an aside on it, you know, C.S. Lewis talked about how there's two extremes. It's a very wise way of talking about it.

There are Christians who see demons everywhere and they talk about like the demon of smoking and all that and they talk about demons too much. They actually end up almost having a type of paganist, pagan understanding of the world.

The other extreme, which is the one that most of us are probably tempted to, is to never think of there ever being anything demonic affecting our lives or the lives of others.

[26 : 30] And that's also an improper extreme. we live as if we're rationalists or naturalists or technocrats. And I just want to encourage you to pray for me and us to pray for each other that the Lord would give us a discernment.

Sometimes what we're dealing with in our life is in fact a type of demonic attack. Sometimes what we're dealing with in high places or low places or in work situations or in cultural situations is in fact a type of demonic attack.

And we need to be willing to be seen as being ignorant fundamentalists, knuckle-dragging charismatics, and pray into it.

the devil will create all sorts of odd ways for us to think about ourselves so that we won't want to actually just do something simple like this as to pray that in the name of Jesus whatever spiritual beings, demons, are involved that we ask the Father in the name of Jesus to bind them and cast them out and that the power of Christ will come instead.

be a fool for Christ. It doesn't necessarily mean you have to do it in public. It means maybe in your private prayers that that's how you not only have to ask the Father for wisdom about what to say but you need to pray into it.

[28 : 01] Now there's a very, very other big thing which is going on which I haven't talked about because I want to get to the point that makes it very obvious and that's what it comes up here a little bit later.

Let's, I think, I can't remember where I left off in reading. Let's read verse 11 and they paid attention to him, that Simon, for a long time because he amazed them with his magic but when they believed Philip as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God in the name of Jesus Christ they were baptized both men and women.

Even Simon himself believed and after being baptized he continued with Philip and seeing the signs and miracles performed he was amazed.

See here we see that the power of the true and living God is greater than any demon than the devil himself. Philip, a purveyor, one who frequented the company of demons and amazed people is completely gobstruck, amazed when he sees the Holy Spirit move and work.

Verse 14, Now, when the apostles of Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God they sent to them Peter and John who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit for he had not, that is the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

[29 : 29] Then they, that is Peter and John, laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. Now, when Simon saw that the Holy Spirit had been given through the lay in honor of the apostles' hand he offered the money and we'll just sort of pause there.

So this is a very puzzling text and even with, if those of us who are, I'm not going to talk about how there's two different groups within the Christian world that take this text and build a lot of doctrine on it.

I'm going to say they're both wrong. That's not what the text is saying. But even if you read the book of Acts, it's a very odd text. If you go back and read Acts chapter 2, the very, very first Christian sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter says that if you, you know, what's just happened, are we all speaking all these languages and all of these things, it's all because Joel has been fulfilled and the Holy Spirit has fallen upon us and that's why these things are happening.

And then Peter says at the end, if you give your life to Christ, you also will receive the Holy Spirit. So here we have a whole pile of believers. They've given their life to Christ. They've been baptized.

And somehow or another, there is this perception they haven't received the Holy Spirit. So what on earth is going on? Now, I think the way to understand that is this, and this is the second great enmity that's in the text.

[30 : 53] You see, if the gospel is going to go to the ends of the earth, that means, and to every single people group on the planet, it means it's going to go to people groups, let's just be honest, that we hate and detest.

I know you're good Canadians and we don't hate or detest anybody, but yeah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, you're just not being honest. Okay, all I have to say for those of you who spend all your time watching the CBC, you've got to go to people who wear MAGA hats.

Okay? You know, for those of you who like watching MAGA hats, you've got to go and you've got to go to people who have really multicolored hair and lots of things and are very, very pretty.

You have to share the gospel with them, okay? And it doesn't matter. You can just multiply things. I've had, you know, we've had a multicultural congregation downtown for quite a few years and I've talked to people.

I remember talking to one woman and I said, there's only this other person's Romanian and she's asked his name and when it turned out he was Russian-Romanian, you could just see her whole body tense up that she didn't want to talk to him.

[31 : 58] I remember talking to this one couple who were Czech and I said, oh, there's this other person from Czechoslovakia and they asked their name and they said, oh, they're Slovak and they, you could just see they all tensed up.

The Czechs don't like the Slovaks and vice versa. You know, West Germans don't like East Germans. I mean, there's just this, in the case of what's going on here between Samaria and Jewish people in Jerusalem, there's two different ways to count it.

One way to count it is a thousand years of enmity. One thousand years of enmity. And that thousand comes because, you know, the United States are friends to the south.

They had a big civil war. Many, many people died. It ended up, though, that the country was united. The North won. The country was united under the North.

And the United States is just one country today. But what happened is just after Solomon died, there was a civil war in what was Israel.

[33 : 02] And that war never came, like, that never came to an end. They never, the two groups never merged into one country. And for 300 years, there was frequent warfare between the north and the south.

And then, in the 700 BCs, the northern kingdom was taken over by Assyria. And what the Assyrians did, which is a very common thing throughout history, is they took a whole pile of the Jewish people and they scattered them around throughout the Assyrian Empire.

And they brought people from other places that they'd conquered and they put them there in the northern kingdom. So now you had a mixture of pagans and Jews living in what used to be the northern part of Israel.

And they intermarried and their religions became intermingled. And so there's 700 years where the southern kingdom, Jerusalem, viewed these other people, now called Samaritans, as being half-Jewish, pagans, everything that they despised.

And there were 700 years of hostility. I don't know how many of you have ever had to go to marriage counseling.

[34 : 14] One of the things they talk about in marriage counseling is, so you know, the man and the woman, they come into the marriage counseling and maybe not visible to the other person, they come pulling a whole pile of resentments about the other person.

One person I heard use the analogy, it's as if they're pulling a little red wagon stacked up with resentments. And you both come to the session pulling your little wagons of resentments piled high.

Well, imagine if you had 700 years of resentments. So the real danger was that these Samaritans would become Christians and they would become Samaritan Christians, that from that point in time on, there would be Samaritan Christians and Jewish Christians.

Separate churches, that dividing wall of hostility and estrangement between Samaritans and between the Jewish people would not be removed. In fact, it could even grow on, it might still be there today amongst those who are Christians.

So I think what happened is that God did not want that to happen. I mean, we might loosely talk about Canadian Christians and Nigerian Christians or Indonesian Christians, but we don't really mean it in any type of serious way.

[35 : 35] If we do, it's a serious error. There's no hyphenated Christians. There's just Christians. That's all there is. There's just Christians. And so what God did, somehow or another, Philip had a discernment.

Our charismatic friends would call it maybe a word of knowledge, that these Samaritans hadn't received the Holy Spirit. We're not told how Philip came to that conclusion, but he tested. He wanted to test it.

So Peter and John come down. They do an examination. They also come to this perception, somehow or another, that the Holy Spirit hasn't fallen. And Peter and John are the two leading apostles. And so they pray.

And as they pray, the Holy Spirit falls upon the Samaritans. And the Bible doesn't say how they know that. They just say, the Bible just says, if you go back and look at the text, that they see something.

Now here, I'm just going to speculate. Okay? It's not the Bible. It's just George speculating. If you go back and you read the first book that Luke wrote called the Gospel of Luke, there's a scene in there where John is one of two people, but probably with the support of all the apostles, a Samaritan village has treated Jesus badly.

[36 : 53] So John says, and his brother says to Jesus, can we call down fire from heaven and have this place destroyed? And Jesus says, no. I don't know.

This is my speculation. You know, in the day of Pentecost, one of the signs that the Holy Spirit had fallen was that tongues of fire came and fell on everybody in the room.

And I wonder if what they saw was that John finally got to call down fire from heaven. But it wasn't fire of destruction. It was the fire of the Holy Spirit.

And they had incontrovertible proof that the same Holy Spirit that fell because they were believers in Jesus in Jerusalem, the same Holy Spirit that came upon every Jewish Christian.

It's exactly the same Holy Spirit that falls when the same gospel is preached to Samaritans. And you're going to see something very similar when the next great estrangement happens in chapter 10 when the gospel comes to the first pagans to believe.

[37 : 58] And you're going to see something very similar there. It has to have an apostle and there's something that makes it clear that these ancient divisions in the gospel have come to an end.

You see, there's one creator. There is one creator. One triune God has created all things, including human beings. And when human beings fell, we needed God to save us.

And God does save us. He sends his son. He sends one savior to one humanity. And that means there's only one gospel. There's not a Muslim gospel, a Buddhist gospel, an African gospel, a Canadian gospel, a European gospel, and Chinese gospel.

There's just one savior and just one gospel. And when we hear that gospel and receive Jesus as our savior, he puts us into one kingdom. One kingdom.

There's not gay Christians and straight Christians. There's just Christians. When I was organizing a Dig and Delve event and apologetics about this issue and somebody said to me, well, what do you call a gay Christian if you don't call him a gay Christian?

[39 : 04] And I said I call him my brother. That's what I call him. My brother. He's my brother in Christ. There's only one gospel.

And it's for every single people group on the planet. So one of the things, if the first thing, just in closing, is that I think we need to be aware of the fact that sometimes the devil can't be converted in the mystery of God's providence, at some point in time, the angels that fell, there's no turning back for them.

Now there's an ancient enmity and we are involved in a spiritual war against them. But there's no equivalent war for human beings. And we need to, I think, have the discipline of praying for our rivals, our persecutors, the people we don't like.

If you are a very, very committed follower of Donald Trump, you need to pray for people you know who are very, very, very different from you politically and vice versa. Like it's good for your soul to pray for their conversion.

I just want to close with one thought. I think it's very Christian that we should pray that Hamas will be defeated soon.

[40 : 24] I also think it's very important that we pray that people who are members of Hamas come to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And those are not contradictory things to pray.

They are both Christian ways of praying. You have to deal with evil, but you also have to pray that for those who are consumed with evil, that they will come to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I invite you to stand. Bow our heads in prayer. Father, we give you thanks and praise that for those of us who are Christians here or watching online or downstream, Father, we give you thanks and praise that somebody shared the gospel with us and that your Holy Spirit moved in our heart that we said yes to this good news and that Jesus became our Savior and he also became our Lord.

We ask, Father, that you grant us opportunities and courage to share and bear witness to Jesus to others. And, Lord, you know our hearts. You know we might pretend that there aren't people who are our rivals or our enemies or who have hurt us or that we are prejudiced against, but, Father, you know that's not true within us.

And so, Father, we ask that on one hand you both gently convict us of the truth about ourselves, but that you would help us to pray not only that our tormentors or persecutors would stop it, Father.

[42 : 01] We know that you want us to pray for that. But help us, Father, to pray for their conversion. And, Father, we pray right now. We ask, Father, for the swift defeat of Amas.

And we ask, Father, that many who are caught up with that ideology, that they would repent of it, that they would put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

And we ask that not just for those who are followers of Amas, but for all involved in that conflict, for the Jewish people and Muslims who aren't members of Amas.

Father, we pray that many of them will come to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And we ask all these things in the name of Jesus, your Son, and our Savior. Amen.

Amen.