

First Witness

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- [0 : 0 0] Father, we ask that you would gently but deeply pour out your Holy Spirit upon us at this time. We confess that, Father, we confess before you that parts of our minds are always, and our heart and our will is always in rebellion against you, that we want to pick at things. We want to reject things. We want to be critical of things. And, Father, we confess before you that part of that is the leading of your Holy Spirit, moving us to ask questions, and part of it, Father, is just that bit of rebellion in us.
- And so, Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would gently but deeply fall upon us, that your Holy Spirit would help us to use the best of our minds and the best of our hearts and the best of our wills to think about your word.
- And at the same time, Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would humble our hearts, humble our minds, humble our wills, to recognize that we need your Holy Spirit to bring the truth home to us deeply.
- So, Father, do this wonderful and gracious work inside of us as we think about your word. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.
- [1 : 1 1] Thank you.
- And I read this big, big, big, fat academic commentary. It's like this fat, really. It's in volume two and small print. And I had it open and I have my Bible and I'm working on it. And this fellow comes up to me and says, what are you doing?
- And I thought I'd have this little bit of a teaching moment with him. And I said, well, you know, this guy Luke, he lived about 30, 35 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. He went around and gathered accurate information. And he wrote down these eyewitness reports, et cetera, et cetera. And I'm starting to say this. And he said, there's no such thing as valid eyewitness reports.
- You're completely and utterly wasting your time. And by the way, I just raised my voice for this. This fellow, one of the things he likes to do to embarrass me in Starbucks is to raise his voice so that the whole Starbucks can hear him when he sort of comes after me.
- [2 : 3 0] He doesn't do it all the time. But I think if he thinks he has a winning point, the volume goes up. And he went on and he said, you know, that terrorist who came and attacked Parliament Hill, he shot the soldier and went there.
- He said, there's been like 15 different eyewitness reports. And they all say completely and utterly different things. And if they can't get something like that right, your attempt to read the gospel and Luke and believe that's eyewitness, that's complete and utter waste of time, eyewitness stuff.
- It just doesn't happen. It has no value or worth. Now, I wish I could share with you that I had this unbelievably witty, cutting, or not cutting, response to beat him.
- If there was a videographer going around videotaping my life, which would be really boring, by the way, this would not be in my highlight reels in terms of my response to the fellow.

You know, I said something. I can't even remember what I said. I sort of sputtered away at something. And he went and sat down in his seat. Well, about a month later, which is maybe a month and a half, two months ago, once again, he came in.

[3 : 36] And I'm working with the big, fat commentary, my Bible open. And he comes. And he says, oh, you're still trying to look at that book and the eyewitness testimony. And remember, the guy, the terrorist, it doesn't work.

But, you know, when you try to share the faith with people, you're not always going to hit home runs. In fact, a lot of times, you won't even hit singles. In fact, many times, you're going to strike out in three pitches, laying the ball just go by.

And you strike out. And that's fine. It's not the end of the world. So when it happened the first time, I thought about it and I prayed about it. And I realized something that I would say to him. And I said, God, please give me another opportunity to talk to him.

So a month later, I get this opportunity. He goes into his rent. And I said, I stop him and I say, this is true. I realized what he did for a living. I said, your whole living involves swearing affidavits of witnesses of what went on and arguing them in court.

I said, the day that you quit your job and write an essay in the Globe and Mail saying that you have been perpetrating lies for the last 30 years of your life and that it's all bunk and nonsense, the day you do that, I'm going to listen to what you have to say about evidence.

[4 : 53] You can see why I have so many friends, by the way. Anyway, he got a bit red.

He sputtered and went back down. And he's not said anything to me about historical evidence since then. So I mention all of this because, you know, what I'm going to look at, the title of the sermon is called First Witness.

And on one level, what we're going to look at today isn't actually, from one point of view, it's not the first witness. The text that I was just reading from John, that's the very first witness, in a sense, it tells the very first people who found out that the tomb was empty.

And it also will tell you just after that who the very first person was to see that Jesus had risen from the dead. But if you have Bibles with them, you turn to the book of Galatians, we're going to look at the very first historical record of evidence that Jesus rose from the dead.

And it sort of looks funny because it looks like a holy book. This used to have sort of gold on the edge, but it's getting battered around and it doesn't anymore. And it looks like it's a holy book. But before Galatians 1 started as a holy book, it was a circular letter.

[6 : 09] It was a circular letter written by a man named Paul. And at the time, he was probably in Antioch of Syria. And he wrote a letter to a group of former Jewish people and former pagans who had become Christians who were living in what we now call southern Turkey.

And we don't know precisely when Jesus died. It was probably either in the year 30 or the year 33. A lot of scholars believe that he died in the spring of the year 33.

And this that we're looking at was written somewhere between the year 47 and 48. So it was written 14 to 15 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

And it was originally written as a letter. He didn't sit down to write a holy book. He just wrote a letter. And so from the point of view of history, because this letter has been preserved over time and it's now in this book, this is actually from an historical point of view, potentially the very first piece of written documents or evidence of people's belief that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Now, some of you might say, one moment, George. 14 or 15 years later? Okay, you sort of had me a little bit with that guy. You know, because, you know, by the way, that terrorist thing, if you just imagine for a second, you know, my friend who was saying you can't believe eyewitness accounts.

[7 : 34] You know, if we had, if one of us after this service or on Easter Monday, if we were to go to Parliament Hill and have a little table and say that the soldier never died at the war memorial and that there was no terrorist, that he never shot any bullets, if we were to say that, we would be mocked if not having people actually be very angry at us.

That would just, there's just too many people who saw it. But 14 or 15 years, do you think it would matter if we did that 14 years from now? Well, maybe it would. Maybe there'd not be that many people around. But imagine, there's something very significant that gripped an entire city 14 years ago this September, and it was the terrorist attack at the World Trade Center in New York.

September 11, 2001. That's 13 and a half, almost 14 years ago. How do you think it would work if one of us was to go to New York and set up a booth and have a self-published book or a circular letter that said that the World Trade Towers never existed, that nobody died in this spot?

How do you think we would be responded to? You know, the evidence here that's talking about, it's not 14-year-old evidence as to whether Jesus was wearing a robe that came to here or came to there.

You'd say, oh, gosh, who's going to remember that? Well, actually, some people remember clothing, and they might remember that, but that's a separate matter. You know, or whether his eyes were a certain color, another type of color. But this is talking about an astonishing event.

[9 : 07] One of the things which is so interesting about the death and resurrection of Jesus is, you know how the Muslims, one of the pillars of the Islamic faith is that they're to make a pilgrimage to Mecca.

And so once a year in particular, there's thousands and thousands, tens of thousands of people who gather at Mecca. And one of the things about the death and resurrection of Jesus is it happened at, like, in a sense, the Jewish equivalent of the pilgrimage to Mecca.

It happened during the Passover. And so the city of Jerusalem was vastly, vastly, vastly swollen with pilgrims who had come from the entire known world.

And the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was a public, citywide, acknowledged event. And it was a controversial event.

Quite a few years ago, George Bush came to Ottawa, and he was at the height of his unpopularity here in Canada. And it was talked about everywhere. You couldn't watch television. You couldn't listen to the radio.

[10 : 12] You couldn't read the newspaper without knowing that George Bush was going to come. He was really funny about it. He said that the people of Ottawa were very friendly. They were always waving at him all of the time. And occasionally, people waved with all five fingers.

And so it was like a public event. And so Jesus didn't sort of just die. It's not like he was somebody, you know, dying in some odd terrorist, you know, cell.

And we're not even sure if he's dead or alive or something like that. He entered in a public way. His death was a public death. It was so public, they had to describe the charges against him in three different languages. And the tomb wasn't in some obscure spot locked up.

It was in a public place. It had public access that anybody could come to. And what is it cannot be denied at all at any point in time, you know, historically, is that the Christian faith did not spread because of political power.

It did not spread because of violence. In fact, it spread despite political opposition, despite cultural opposition, despite murderous opposition.

[11 : 21] Once again, just maybe the final mention of Islam. It cannot be doubted that historically what contributed to the spread of Islam was the military success of Muhammad and his followers.

The murderous, in fact, the murder was committed. And caravans were raided and cities were raided. And they were very, very successful. But the Christian story is the complete and utter opposite of that.

Stephen is killed very shortly after the death and resurrection of Jesus. And he's killed because he proclaims that Jesus had died, that the tomb is empty, the body can't be found, and that Jesus appeared to witnesses to show that he was alive.

James dies very early. In fact, Paul was so energized by having Stephen put to death, he wanted to get in on the campaign to imprison early Christians and to persecute early Christians and potentially even to kill early Christians.

And so what accounts for this early explosive rise of the Christian faith, despite the fact they had no political power, no cultural power, and that in fact the power of the politics and culture and even the powers of violence were constantly used against them instead of for them?

[12 : 41] Well, not only was the grave empty, but many people, hundreds and hundreds of people, claimed that they had seen Jesus alive and that he had risen from the dead.

And this is the first bit of historical evidence. This had written 14 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. It might, where people still could go and say, did they ever find the body of Jesus?

Like, what, didn't they, did they find that body? People could still go and inquire about that, but it's not just the empty tomb, it's that Jesus appears.

And here's how it goes, verse 1. Paul, an apostle, not from men, nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead, and all the brothers who are with me.

To the churches of Galatia, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever.

[13 : 55] Amen. Amen. Now, I'm going to say some more things about it, but I want to pause here for a second, just to sort of, and I'm going to worry some of you by this first point.

But I'd like to, Andrew, if you could put this first point up on the screen, and then we're just going to talk around it a little bit before we sort of, I'm going to look back at these verses and then talk about a few other verses in chapter 1. Sort of like a big idea for you to understand what's happening here, and also to maybe understand why my friend, who was so critical of evidence, like what was partially driving his hostility to evidence in regards to religion.

And here's the first point. The spiritual myth, what we long for, became fact. The Messiah lived, died, and was resurrected in knowable history.

That's what's at work here. I'm going to show you why it's at work here. But that's what's at work here in this piece of historical evidence. Because the historical evidence, not only does it talk about Jesus actually being raised and resurrected, but the fellow who's saying this is also making a bigger type of claim in this text.

Which I articulate, the spiritual myth, what we long for, became fact. But the Messiah lived, died, and was resurrected in knowable history.

[15 : 22] And some of you very devout Christians are very worried. He's an Anglican. Does that mean he believes the Old Testament is all myth? Well, we're going to get to that in a second. I don't. But if you look again at the text, notice the way that he refers to Jesus.

Look again at verse 1. Paul, an apostle, not from men, nor through men, but through Jesus Christ, Messiah.

That's what Christ means. It means Messiah. Look again at verse 3. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Messiah. And then if you go through, if you read the rest of the letter, you'll see that he constantly refers to Jesus as the Messiah.

The Messiah. That's who he is. He's the Messiah. For 2,000 years, there have been poets and lawmakers and prophets and visionaries and just ordinary Joes who have had and heard of this idea that someday God would send the Messiah.

And in the entire ancient world and even in the modern world, there's this belief. There's this belief in the spiritual. And there's this belief in a sense that we have these ideas that we have longings for things.

[16 : 43] And what Paul is saying when he says that the Messiah died and was raised, he's opening up the entire Old Testament.

He's opening up the witness of poets and visionaries and mystics and lawmakers and people who wrote history and philosophers.

He's talking about rituals. He's talking about ceremonies. And he's talking about all of these things that we so easily just think of as spiritual things but are not real.

And he's saying that the witness of all of these things have been going on for 2,000 years, that these things are not just spiritual myth, idea, out there things.

It became fact. It became fact when he calls Jesus Messiah. And that this Messiah, the stories of Jesus, the prophecies, the poems, the longings, the visions, these became fact.

[17 : 47] And he walked among us. And he died upon the cross. And then the tomb was empty. And he arose and was seen.

I mean, if you think about it for a second, as Jeremiah was sharing earlier about Islam, Muhammad is an ordinary man who has these spiritual visions from God.

Like, what is Buddhism? Buddhism is about a man who believes that he has found enlightenment. And he talks about it. And he gives advice. He talks about the things that he's seen. What is Hinduism? Hinduism is, in a sense, just the cultural and popular religion of the Indian people.

But it's all about stories. And it's about myths. And it's about ideas. And it's about spiritual things. And what is it that we think in our culture? We talk about spirituality. And we talk about longings.

And we talk about all of these types of things. And out of all of this world, this early writer is written to people who believed, originally, before they became Christian, in Greek myths. And nobody thinks that these Greek myths actually happen.

[18 : 50] And nobody thinks it actually matters. And Paul is saying that in a world that has myth and has longing and has the spiritual and has, in all of the world, a particular people who also have prophecies and laws and rituals, that in the midst of all of this stuff, which just seems to be something which comes from our head and from our heart, that all of these things, that it actually becomes fact and walks amongst us in knowable history.

And he does it when he says Christ. He opens the door. You see, in our culture, I'm reading a novel right now by an author by the name of Thomas Perry.

And he has a recurring character in some of his novels. And she's a Seneca, which I think is one of the Iroquois tribes. And he mixes a lot of sort of Iroquois religion and spirituality into his novels.

And this particular novel, it's one of the things which sort of goes through the novel, is her inner struggle with the fact that most of her life, she believes the science that she learned in high school and university.

And that she knows that that's like the most true. But on the other hand, she sort of has this feeling that there must be something that's sort of spiritual.

[20 : 09] That there must be something to these stories and this idea of wisdom. And you see, in our culture, just as it's been the case throughout most of history, there's this idea that there's like things that actually happen.

Like there's tables that you can knock on and chairs that you can sit on and food that you can eat and money that you can count. And then there's spiritual things. And in fact, in our culture, if you were to really go after this author and say, oh, come on, you can't act.

I mean, really, it's science. You can't believe these things. I mean, she knows that she has, in a sense, in the novel. The novelist knows that there's no basis to believe in these mystical things, that science is true.

But on the other hand, it sure seems like there should be something mystical, which is already there. And in such a world, the mystical becomes fact. The mystical becomes fact.

In knowable history. That's what Paul is claiming. And in fact, it's actually, you see, it's because of Jesus that now we realize that the real God deals with real people by revealing real truth and doing real things.

[21 : 19] The real God deals with real people by giving real truth and doing real things. And that it's not just an anomaly here in the New Testament.

That, in fact, in light of the gospel, that we can go back and we can read Deuteronomy and Joshua and Judges. And we can see that God has always been doing real things and revealing real truth to his people.

And that what we now know of as the Old Testament is not just spiritual things, but are also often historical accounts of God doing actual things with actual people.

Because that's the living God. Because that's the living God. And he knows that real people need real truth and God to do real things. And the pinnacle of all of this is when Jesus dies upon the cross after having lived a public ministry for three years.

And his death upon the cross and his death upon the cross and his death upon the cross and a tomb which is really empty. And real appearances that make no mistake. You have to go beyond this to other historical witnesses that Jesus was able to eat fish, that he could be touched, that a range of other things that this really happened.

[22 : 28] And so this is a mind-blowing idea that in the face of the longings and the myths and the spiritual things in the world that we inhabit, that myth, that longings, that they become fact.

And that's what Paul's claiming when he says, Paul, an apostle, not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Messiah and God the Father. And all the brothers and sisters who are with me to the churches of Galatia, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Messiah.

The spiritual myth, what we long for, became fact. The Messiah lived and died and was resurrected in knowable history. Now, some of you might say, okay, George, let's say that's true.

Let's say it actually happened. So what? I actually had that happen to me in a, I thought I'd give this knockdown, I had this like half an hour conversation with this smart young man in a Starbucks.

Maybe it was half an hour, it was like 20 minutes. And I thought, wow, I really, I was thinking I really nailed this, you know, in terms of the evidence. And at the end of it, he just said, so what? So what?

[23 : 54] Once again, not one of my better moments if they were videotaping George's triumphs at witnessing in Starbucks. That would be in the blooper section, not the, here's what, it's the before picture, not the after picture.

And I have to confess, I was so focused on the fact that I, you know, I eventually did come up with something that sort of struck him by it. In fact, I told him that if all he cared about, if all he cares about is what to eat, what to wear, who to sleep with, and how to make money, then nothing in the Bible will make even the least sense to him.

But if he has any sense at all of longings, if he has any concern at all about the reality of death, if he has any concern about the meaning of life, then this is where you've got to go.

Which made him pause. At the end of the day, I think he actually really is only concerned with who he can sleep with, what he can eat, what he can drink, how he will make money, and what he'll wear.

That it hasn't struck him that he needs to think about anything more. But the question can be, so what? So what? There's a famous skeptic about the resurrection who said, so what if God did a conjuring trick with bones?

[25 : 17] Like, what does that matter to us? Well, imagine for a second that your family is having some type of trouble.

You know, that never happens to families that they have trouble. And you bring in a family counselor, and you get the different family members together, and she has some group sessions, and then she meets privately with each of the individual family members.

And often in counseling sessions, what you often try to do is they often want to get a particular event that they can look at as a way to try to get at what's going on. And so let's say the counselor comes in, and after listening to the different people, she tells you, well, you know, in this story, it's this event that we're looking at, you did this and this and this and this, and you did these things because of this and this and this and this.

This is what you were trying to do. This is why you were doing it. This is the meaning of what you did. And if she did that to you, you'd go, one moment, you haven't asked me what I thought I was doing.

Like, you haven't listened to me. Surely, unless you're claiming that I'm just a liar or that I'm deluded, surely what I say that I was thinking and what I was trying to do, surely that has to have some bearing on the meaning of what was going on.

[26 : 44] Like, you can't just listen to other people. And that would just be fair. You know, unless the person's lying or deceiving.

I'm watching a series on Netflix. I think it's called Bloodline. And one of the things which is curious about it is that there's family dynamics. And a lot of times, somebody is actually being deceptive.

And when they're sort of called about what they were doing, they try to deceive. And so, you know, it can be. It isn't always just up to the individual person to determine what they've done.

Because sometimes we lie. Sometimes we deceive. Sometimes we are confused about what we've done. But what Paul is going to say here is that surely, if in fact Jesus willingly died, and if he predicted to everybody that he was going to die upon the cross for other people, and if he said that he did this out of love for us, and it was going to cost him something, and there's no particular benefit that he gets out of being so badly treated, and if he actually rose from the dead, doesn't it make sense that we should listen to what he said the meaning of the events are?

In fact, that's what goes on here in the text. Paul goes on to say that the meaning of the event isn't something that he's thought up, that he's invented or imposed on events, that all he's done is received from Jesus the meaning of the events.

[28 : 21] In fact, he says that if he was just to think it up himself, it wouldn't be worth anything. Let's look at the text. Verse 11 of chapter 1. Verse 11 of chapter 1.

For I would have you know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was preached by me, that's the gospel means sort of the account of what happened on the cross, is not man's gospel.

In other words, it didn't come from human beings. For I did not receive it from any man or woman, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

In other words, you know, in a sense, every time we reveal what's going on inside of our heads, it's a bit of a revelation. Like if I was to say, if I was to close my eyes and then I'm going to think about something, and if I was to ask every one of you, okay, what was I thinking about?

You'd go, I don't know. Well, I can tell you I'm thinking about a really nice, I was thinking about a really, really nice older lady by the name of Ruth Jo Barton, who's now dead, whose cottage we used to go to.

[29 : 31] I need to reveal that to you, don't I? And it's the same often when we're trying to understand the meaning of events is the person has to let you know what's going on in their mind, in their heart.

And that's what Paul says. That when he tells everybody not only the fact of the resurrection and the meaning of the resurrection, it's not something he invented. He actually goes, he asks Jesus, Jesus tells him the meaning of the event.

Let's continue. Verse 13. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism before many of my own age among my people.

So extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. Notice how he understands the distinction between learning things from others and human beings and learning them from Jesus.

He understands that. In fact, he goes on to say, as you can see, if there was anybody that you wouldn't want to trust to understand the significance of Jesus, you wouldn't want to trust me.

[30 : 33] Like, we don't know what everybody thought when they saw Stephen, the first Christian martyr, stoned to death. But what we know from the historical record is that Stephen being stoned to death did not cause Paul to be repulsed.

It gave him an idea for a new career to kill more. And so Paul said, listen, if you're thinking that it's I figured this stuff out, whoa, no.

In fact, if it was up to me, you'd want to run from me. Verse 15. But when he who had set me apart before I was born and who called me by his grace was pleased to reveal his son to me in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me.

But I went away into Arabia and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remain with him 15 days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

In what I am writing to you before God, I do not lie. Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia and I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

[31 : 48] They were only hearing it said, he who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy and they glorified God because of me. So here's the second point, sort of the big idea in the text.

The true meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth came from Jesus before and after his resurrection. The true meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth came from Jesus before and after his resurrection.

Those of you who have been coming to the other church, you know, prior to this, we've been going through the book of Luke and we're just about to come up to the crucifixion actually in the book of Luke and we've been tracking along with it.

We see how many times that Jesus predicted that he was going to die upon the cross and told the disciples the meaning of why he was going to die upon the cross. And now Paul is saying he didn't necessarily hear all of that at first, but what he does know is that it was after Jesus was resurrected from the dead because I saw him, he explained to me the meaning of his death upon the cross and his resurrection.

You see, that's why, that's part of the reason why, it's like some of you might have been really bothered. Like, why is it that Paul seems to be so mean to people who disagree with him? Were some of you bothered by that?

[33 : 09] Look up at verse 6 where you see Paul being apparently very mean. I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

Not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, that's himself, or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

As we have said before, so now I say again, he wants to make sure he wasn't misheard. If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the approval of man or of God or am I trying to please man?

If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a slave of Christ. So some of you might say, George, why is accursed? Why is that so harsh?

Why is that so harsh? Well, think about it for two seconds. Just two things about it. The first thing is this. Remember that story I told you again? Imagine your family is in some type of crisis and you bring in a family counselor.

[34 : 16] Wouldn't you be really angry if the counselor completely and utterly disregarded everything you said about the meaning of your act and took it that everybody else was telling the truth?

Wouldn't you be upset? And Paul is saying here, listen, this is nothing personal about me. In fact, he includes himself that if I go off the rails and start saying something, don't listen to me.

He's saying, listen, the one who died and the one who rose from the dead, he told us the meaning of what happened. Don't we want to just extend to Jesus the same thing that we want to extend to ourselves?

And that's why Paul is saying, but it's even more that because remember I said that of course if you think about it, so here's the first thing that in the gospel, Paul by using the word Messiah is saying that in a sense myth becomes fact, the spiritual becomes real and knowable history.

And then he said, in terms of the so what question, well, to even start to understand what the so what question is, we don't just go to our attempts to impose meaning on this. Let's listen to what the person who rose from the dead explained as the meaning of the text.

[35 : 27] And in fact, if there's anybody that you should believe, it would be somebody who could be raised from the dead, who's defeated death. Because that's what resurrection means, he's defeated death and that which causes death and all powers of death, all of them, he's defeated.

So the first thing Paul is just saying, it makes sense for him to be so concerned about this because the meaning is coming from Jesus himself who was raised. But the other thing is what is the meaning which we haven't said yet.

Well, what was the simple summary of the meaning? Let's go to verses one to five again. Paul, an apostle, not from men nor through man but through Jesus Messiah and God the Father who raised Jesus from the dead and all the brothers and sisters who are with me to the churches of Galatia.

Here's the meaning. I mean, the first meaning is it's the Messiah who died. It's the Messiah who rose from the dead. It's the Messiah who entered knowable history.

And then the meaning? Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Messiah who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father to whom be the glory forever and ever.

[36 : 50] Amen. That's the meaning from Jesus who is the Messiah who died and rose again.

That is the meaning. Andrew, if you could put it up the next point. The living God has always rejected human pride, human boasting, and self-salvation.

Instead, he provided the person and work of his Son to truly rescue us and bring us to life and freedom in God himself.

The living God has always rejected human pride, human boasting, and self-salvation. Instead, he provided the person and work of his Son to truly rescue us and bring us to life and freedom in God himself.

Look at what it says again in verse 3 and 4. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Messiah who gave himself for our sins to deliver us.

[38 : 08] He didn't come to add value to our lives. He didn't come to be a therapist. He didn't come to give advice. He did something radically different.

That whether we recognize it or not, it would be as if we go swimming off of an outcrop in the ocean and we don't know that there's powerful currents and we're starting to drown.

And in a sense, what this is saying is that all religion and all spirituality and all secular and non-religious attempts to find human meaning are really just advice.

It's as if people seeing us drowning in the ocean, they throw books at us. Read this. It tells you how to swim. You shouldn't have swam in there.

You're a bad person. Here, you do this, you know, and we yell at them or maybe we're very kind or whisper to them.

[39 : 16] Maybe we say, I'm going to be up here thinking good thoughts that you get better. And what the Bible is saying is that all, it's God seeing our complete and other need that all of our pride, whether it's religious pride, spiritual pride, secular pride, atheistic pride, all boasting, whether it's religious boasting, spiritual boasting, atheist boasting, secular boasting, boasting in terms of sexual conquest and money in the bank or how many awards your kids have made because you're the best soccer mom in the city, in the universe, in the galaxy, that whatever boasting that we have, whatever attempts to save ourselves through earning money, through being successful in relationships, through doing rituals, through knowing mantras, through knowing how to be enlightened, whatever type of self-salvation, boasting or sin, God has always rejected that and he sees that we are drowning and Jesus does not primarily come to throw a book at us or say, do this.

the gospel says is that the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus in knowable history is that Jesus jumps in the water with a rope around him and grabs us when we cannot swim anymore and the current and the waves are about to drown us and he brings us out to life and freedom and health.

that is what the Savior did. That is what he can do for you. That is the meaning of his death and resurrection.

That is why it is called the gospel good news. That is why it is not good advice, good rituals, good techniques, good observations.

It is good news. This is what Jesus did. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Messiah who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father to whom be the glory forever and ever.

[41 : 43] Amen. Why is it called an evil age? It is an age where we will all die. It is an age where no human utopia will ever be created because there is something bent and wrong within us.

It is an age marked by political power. It is an age marked by our desire to tower over others and when we cannot succeed that we cower under others.

And this is what marks our age. And in the midst of such age people merely give us advice. And Jesus came and defeated in his death upon the cross and in his resurrection all boasting all pride all ritual all political power all sin all of the things that keep us separate from God all of the things that are bent and broken in us that we can never possibly fix ourselves he delivered us from this in his death upon the cross and in his resurrection.

That is the meaning. One final thing after the so what question the final question is now what? Now what? Now what?

Look at these key words again in verse 3 and 4 and 5. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father to whom be the glory forever and ever.

[43 : 11] Amen. Grace. God's unmerited favor made real to transform peace to be restored and reconciled and in proper relationship to the creator the sustainer of all things the end of all things to be properly restored to him not on the basis of our own accomplishments but because the Jesus dying upon the cross is a power for salvation that is graciously and powerfully effectively come to us that we receive like beggars not weighing our merits but pardoning our offenses that makes us at peace with God.

Andrew if you could put up the final point this isn't original to me now what? I have been saved I am being saved and I will be saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone now what?

You put your faith in Jesus you put your faith in Jesus and then that's just something from the past and then you live the rest of your life on your own power by your own accomplishments by your own self salvation your own pride your own boasting well that's in fact why we have to weekly and daily repent Father I'm just so sorry for the fact that today pride and boasting and self salvation has characterized my life in this way in this way in this way it's poisoned my relationship with my wife with my kids with my boss with my neighbor and I ask your forgiveness Father grip me with the gospel help me Father to live out of the truth that I am saved only by grace only by putting my faith and trust in Jesus alone and that that Father help me to be so gripped by this to know that I have been saved in the past that even today I need to be so gripped with the gospel by what you have done for me on the cross by the gift of the Holy Spirit that comes in me and constantly brings me back to Jesus again and again and that my final glorification

Father everything is an act of grace that I am to have a faith in Jesus in and only in him and that Father as I am gripped by the fact that I have been saved I am being saved and I will be saved by by by by grace alone through faith alone and Christ alone that as this grips me it it pushes me into confronting my pride and boasting and self-salvation the knowledge that that it's by grace alone by faith alone and Christ alone it pulls me and draws me into trying things I would have never never done when I think about changes it grounds me to know that this is myth become fact and it's not just another therapeutic story it grounds me something to stand on as I as I start to look in gratitude for the things which I'm being pushed to and then pulled to and as I and as I and as I think and I'm gripped upon the fact that it's by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone that I've been saved

I'm being saved and I will be saved it shapes how I'm to understand how my mind is to work and how my will is to work and my heart is to work and my lips are to work and my memories are to work and my longings are to work and how to how to deal with with my fears and how to deal with my relationships and how even I should have a heart for the city and the world that as as it as it as it grips me as I first hear the gospel and put my faith in this thing in what Jesus has done for me in the cross and as I as I'm reminded of the gospel again and again that that's that that's it's out of that that I live it's out of that that I have a hope for glory that that's the now what that's the now what for you friends and some of you for the first time in your life there's no time better than today to say Jesus I have lived in rebellion against you I want to be you are the end of my longings the end of my yearnings and you're true and you're real and I acknowledge that you alone will rescue me can rescue me rescue me

[47 : 29] Jesus I need to be rescued and some of you the day is the this might be the first day you ever say that prayer from your heart and there's no better time than today to do it but for those of us who've done it boy if you're at all like me you so need to be reminded of the gospel and to be reminded once again that I have been saved I am being saved I will be saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone there's no better time than today to say precious Jesus Father pour out your Holy Spirit upon me and make me a disciple of Jesus gripped by the gospel who lives for your glory please stand Father I just ask that you would pour out your Holy Spirit upon us continue to pour out your Holy Spirit upon us Father if there are those here who are thinking that maybe today is the time that your Holy Spirit is pressing upon them to turn to you to be their Savior and Lord

Father help them with the words Father help them just to say Jesus be my Savior and my Lord I hold nothing back Father help them just to say that to you honestly Jesus be my Savior and my Lord I hold nothing back live in me forever Father help them and guide them to cry out to you with those words their own words from their heart to you they don't have to be perfect Father we know that because you do the work and you just look for some call out from their heart from our heart to you and then you cross that infinite distance and fill them with grace and peace your Son with the Holy Spirit and Father for the rest of us the Holy Spirit as he convicts us Father pour out your Holy Spirit upon us pour out your Holy Spirit upon us make us disciples of Jesus gripped by the gospel who live for your glory bring home to us in a deep way that we have been saved are being saved and will be saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone and this we ask in Jesus' name

Amen