

# Romans 6:1–7

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Date: 17 May 2026

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[ 0 : 00 ] 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.

Bow our heads in prayer for a moment, please. Father, you know how we talk to ourselves, you know the fears we have, you know those things that we desire, you know those things that we don't think we can live without. And Father, you look at some of these things and you weep, so to speak. You look at some of them and you laugh. But we give you thanks and praise that in all things, when you look at us, you love us and desire us to know Jesus as Savior and Lord and to walk with Him under His direction and care, filled with the Holy Spirit. And so Father, we know, and we thank you that that's what you desire for us. We ask that your Holy Spirit would bring the words of this Bible text deep into our hearts to form us, so that we might live lives where the evil in our lives is diminished, the virtue in our life grows, and it's all done for your honor and glory. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated.

So this week I had a couple of unusual things happen to me. One of them is, well, actually it's the one thing that happened twice. I had two different people ask me in advance what my sermon was going to be on. And both of these, in both cases, these would be people who wouldn't call themselves Christians. And the second one, he asked me, oh yeah, what do you, he saw me yesterday actually. He said, well yeah, like what are you going to be preaching on tomorrow? And I told him, I'm going to talk a little bit about, the main thing I'm going to talk about is how does moral change happen?

[ 2 : 51 ] How is it, what are better ways so that the good things you do increase and the bad things you do decrease? And he said, oh, there you go, that sounds interesting. And walked off. The first conversation was earlier in the week. And he said, what are you going to be preaching on this Sunday? I told him the same thing. And he said, I don't think that happens. I said, I don't know, what do you mean?

He said, I don't think people change. People don't get better. They're always just basically the same. And then he was going to walk away and he said, no, actually that's not right. I think actually people are getting worse. I think our society is less kind, more hateful, less generous, less willing to listen to other people. I think actually people are getting worse right now. And then he left. And the implication was about my sermon, good luck with that.

But in a very nice way. He's a very, very thoughtful guy. And that's what we are going to talk about a little bit this morning. There's lots that the Bible has to say about change, your moral change, so to speak, of doing fewer things which are wrong and doing more things which are right, using sort of language which developed later, lessening vice and increasing virtue. And Bible has lots to say about that. But this text we have today says some very important foundational things, which are beautiful and hopeful. So if you would turn with me to Romans chapter 6, verses 1 to 7, that's what we're going to be looking at. If you don't have your Bibles, it will be on the screen. The helpful thing

about looking at it with your Bibles is the Bible text isn't on the screen all of the time. It gets taken off. And it's good for you just to be able to look down and say, really? Is that what that text says? Like, I want you to help. I want to help you to learn to read the Bible well for yourselves. And so it's good to have the Bible open and to look at it to see and see if I'm missing things around it. And here's how it begins. Romans chapter 6, verses 1 to 7. Now, actually, just before I read it, you need to know something about why this question is being asked. So just before this in the book, like all the way through the book, it's talked about how if you put your faith and trust in Jesus, then everything that you've ever done wrong and ever will do wrong is completely forgiven. And you're given new life, and you're made right with God, and you have eternity being right with God. And that happens if you put your faith and trust in Christ. And the other thing is that just before this, it was taught just immediately before this, it talks about how when you, as sin grows in the world, sin might have grown and developed, but God's grace super abounded all the more. And that's what it said. So, you know, sin happens and it grows, but even as sin is happening, God's grace super abounds. And so Paul asks a very, very penetrating question. It's not like an absurd question. It's actually a very penetrating and human question. And it goes like this. Chapter 6, verse 1. What shall we say then?

[6:19] Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? George, if that's true, if all my sins are forgiven, even the future ones. And if, I think last week I shared how you can never do anything to make you love, to make God love you more. It's impossible. God is love. So you can't actually do anything that will make him love you more. And if that's the case, George, and if every sin just means that grace super abounds, then aren't you really in a sense saying, and this would be a critique, aren't you really saying that go ahead and sin even more so that grace will abound? And this, I've had this happen in conversations. I got to the point with one person where I was so able to explain the gospel to them, all of these things that I just said, and they looked me right in the eye and said, if that's true, there's no incentive to ever do a good thing again for the rest of my life.

They actually said that to me. And on one level, they got it. And I wish I could say I gave a brilliant answer. I probably didn't. But the point is, it's a good question. And it's going to illustrate about what Paul means by all of these things. And it's not going to be that he's now going to say, no, no, no, actually, I don't mean that. And we get back to having to do lots of good things. So God will love you more. No, it's something very different. But it's a wise and helpful question. And so, oh yeah, here's the other thing. There's a wag who said once that he loves the Christian faith because I love to sin and God loves to forgive. It's like a match made in heaven.

Like, what could beat that? I just keep sinning and God keeps forgiving. Wow. Like, who wouldn't want to be a Christian? So how does Paul answer that? So Paul answers that sort of in two verses or just very, very briefly. And he answers it with sort of a big idea, a big declaration and a big idea. Look what he says in verse two. So read verse one again. What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? He says, by no means. It could also be translated as absolutely not with a couple of exclamation marks because it's emphatic. And then here's the sort of the big idea expressed in the next two verses. How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Now, here's the, I'll explain what that means. I mean, in some ways, the rest of the sermon will be explaining what that means. But the first thing he says, no, no, no, no, no. If you, if you understand what I've just said to imply that, that the reason you shouldn't be a Christian is it's just going to encourage more and more vice and less virtue. It's, that's, that's really, really, really wrong. And then he gives the big idea, and it's in two parts. And the first part of it is, in how can we say, how can we who die to sin still live in it? Now, it's literally, if it's translated from the original language, it's very ungrammatical in English. So it, they never translate it really literally. But if you hear it literally, you start to get the idea. Because literally, it says, how can we who died to the sin, how can we who died to the sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? And so what this text is saying is, it's what we, the idea that Paul had introduced the week before, that at a human level, I don't know how many nations are in the world. I should have looked it up. There was an article in the paper the other day about some people think there's too many nations represented in the World Cup of Soccer, which is beginning just about a month from now, just under a month from now. And the response was, well, there's like 217 nations registered with the Federation of International Federation of Football Associations. And so the number we have is less than a quarter. So that's,

that's not too much, given how many nations there are. But the Bible portrays this idea that there's, at the end of the day, there's only two realms, two rulers, two reign, two rulers who reign in two realms. And that's what he introduced last week. And one reign, which all of us enter, it's a biological and spiritual reality.

[ 11 : 03 ] In a sense, it was under Adam. And if you go back and look at it, he, the one way to understand the name of that reign is the sin. That's one reign. And that one reign, it's all about the sin. It's all about thinking of yourself as the center of the universe, that everything revolves around you, of wanting to be like God. And if you want to be the center of the universe and be like God, it means that people have to sort of fit into you, not you into them, if it gets really exaggerated.

And it ends in death. And that's the big realm. And part of how to understand the gospel is that Jesus isn't just some isolated event doing an isolated thing that he can sort of touch you on the forehead and share with you. He's actually inaugurated, he's become the new ruler, the new head of a new, and reigns of a new realm. And that is what he describes in verse three. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Where we've been entered into a realm where he is the king and he rules, and he rules over a realm with certain characteristics. And the fundamental truth of this is that you enter it because of what he has done, you enter it by God's, it's because of God's grace and his love and his mercy and his kindness and his affection for you. And you enter into this whole new realm. And so the human life from the rest of things is on one level, we still have obviously parts of that old realm going on, but we enter this new realm. And those are the big ideas in terms of what it's going to mean. Now, before we go any further, some of you might be saying, well, okay, George, okay, now I'm really confused. Look at verse three, George, and verse four. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. George, doesn't that sort of imply that when you do a little baptism service of a baby, is that sort of saying that that baby's automatically now going to heaven? He's automatically or she's automatically been born again? Like, is that what, isn't that what it seems to be saying, George? Is that what you're saying? And then that sounds like a really weird idea. There's this whole other realm, and you enter it because you, as, and, and, you know, that, and even if it's not just baby baptism and adult baptism, it still really sounds like a weird thing. Like, really, that you just go through this rite or ritual of baptism, and then you're automatically made right with God and all this other realm stuff that's all talking about you. That just sounds really weird. Now, this is sort of an important, if you're outside the Christian faith, you have to give me a little bit of, just give me some grace for a moment, because this is, I'll get back to why this imagery is really important for everybody, but it's because there's a massive confusion around it. I need to take a couple of minutes to talk about it. That understanding that if you go through the ritual of baptism, you're automatically made an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven and right with God for all eternity, is not what the text is saying. And there's lots of reasons why, but I'll give you three very simple reasons as to why this is not the right way to read the text, not just because I'm a Protestant. It's because it's actually not the correct way to read the text. The first reason that it's not the correct way to read the text is that they misunderstand that baptism in the ancient world was a secular word, not a religious word. So, for instance, you can go research this on the internet. There's an ancient pickle-making recipe, and in the pickle-making recipe, there's two different words. They say just dip the pickle or the cucumber into the water once to sort of wash it off, and then there's this other mixture of water that you immerse the pickle in for a period of time, and they baptize it. You baptize the pickle, the cucumber, and it comes out of pickle, okay? It's a secular word. It's a secular word which is used. It has several—another thing is there's several meanings of the word, and one of the meanings is wash, by the way. And so, in the story in the New Testament where Jesus—a woman is crying so much, she's so overcome with the love of God and love of Christ that she bursts into really just overflowing tears, and there's this very tender scene where her tears are falling on Jesus' feet, and there's so many tears that she washes them. The verb that's used there is baptized, that she baptized Jesus' feet. Well, nobody thinks she baptized his feet, right? It's just—it just means washing. That's one of the senses. But the common way that it's used is to immerse so completely that it dies. The image is that when a ship enters into a storm, and the ship sinks, and it goes to the bottom of the ocean, and the implication is that everybody on that ship has died, and the ship is at the bottom of the ocean, it's dead, finished, cannot be

returned, and it's an image of immersion into complete death. That's how the word was used in the ancient world, as a secular word. So, to read it now as a religious rite is to misread the word. Why? Well, there's a second reason, which is also very important, and that is, I mean, it's just a—it's a general principle of reading if you read, but it's especially the case of the New Testament, of anything with it to do with the Bible, is you don't read and interpret one part of a book in such a way that it makes the rest of the book filled with contradictions. That's just generally not a good way to read, unless the reader is just completely scatterbrained, and you can't understand what on earth they're saying. The more clear and coherent a writer is, you don't interpret one bit in a way that makes the rest of it nonsense. And here's the issue here. If you go back and read the book of Romans from beginning to end, time and time and time again, it says it is by faith alone, in Christ alone, that we are made right with God, time and time and time and time again. If now it is saying you're made right with God by being baptized, by a ritual, then all of those other verses in the book of Romans become problematic and wrong. All of them. Like every one.

[ 17 : 59 ] And usually when people debate this and use this as a text to illustrate baptismal regeneration, they never go through the book of Romans and show how they haven't made the rest of the book incomprehensible. So that's the second reason. And the third reason is in terms of the verbs.

And so there's a verb in the ancient language within which this is written, which is called the divine passive. It's where God does something. And so if you're to look again here at verses three and four, do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

The word baptized there is a divine passive. It's saying that God has done something. And it would be the height of blasphemy for me to pour water on somebody, or this summer we're going to be doing some baptisms in the Ottawa River, for me to use the divine passive of what I do. George's baptizing is very different than God baptizing. So the right way to read this then, now that you've taken that out into account, is did you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? So what it's saying is, don't you know that all of us who were so immersed into Christ Jesus that we died? That's the first part. We're baptized into his death. And it's like an emphasis thing that's going on. We were so immersed to death into his death. God immersed us into who Jesus is and what he's accomplished us. He's immersed us to the point of death into his death. We were buried, therefore, with him by immersion to death, into his death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. And so when you go back and you read the Gospel of John, and Jesus says to Nicodemus, you've got to be born again. You need to have a life that comes to you from heaven. This is all in keeping with that. It's saying, but it's just revealing even more than what Nicodemus didn't understand until you read the end of the Gospel of John, is you come and you put your faith into me. And God is bringing you into faith with me, and God brings you into union with me. And the way he brings you into union with him, it's as if he kills you into Christ's death. He puts you into death into Christ's death. And he also puts you by death into Christ's death so that you will share in his resurrection and receive newness of life. You're born again. That's what the text is saying. That's the big kingdom. And here now we get to see why the mistake, and this is why for those of you outside the Christian faith who are hearing this, this is very profound. It's saying that God does something for you. Not only does he do something for you in the person of his Son that you can't do for yourself, but even the coming to Christ is something that he does for you. That you'll find out in heaven that when you put your faith and trust in Christ, that comes with his help that you call out to him. And if it's just completely and utterly up to you, it would be a little bit as if I was just watching the first part of the second Greenland movie, and the young boy has to go across a crevice on a rickety bridge, and he says he can't do it. And then, of course, the dad just gives him two encouraging words, and he does it. And I'm thinking, there is no way on God's earth that somebody afraid of heights would be able to do that just because the dad says five words to him, completely and utterly impossible and incredible. Would not happen as one who's afraid of heights. So the image would be there that somehow or another the person is, like, he may be even knocked unconscious and brought across. Like, that doesn't work entirely here. But God does something that I couldn't even do myself.

[ 21 : 52 ] He helps me to call out to him, and then he actually brings me to Christ. And not only bring me to Christ, he puts me to death, immerses me in Christ to the point of my death, into his

death, and into his resurrection, and I am made right with God. Hallelujah! Such a beautiful teaching. And that's what he's saying. So there's these two realms. There's this one realm where, through Adam, now human beings, we all desire to differing degrees to be the center of the universe. We all desire to have the world revolve around us. We all want to have our idols and our gods and be like God and set our own rules and obviously agree with a lot of rules a lot of the time. But at the end of the day, we look out for number one. And, you know, for instance, in that Greenland movie, it's very, very human. The other parts of it, when it comes time to get on a ship, people who are all good friends, when it comes time to life and death, they all look out for number one. Ripping gas masks off of people and pushing people down so they can get in and not die. And that's, at the end of the day, what this kingdom, this realm of living under the sin is. And God does something we cannot do for ourselves to no longer live under the realm of the sin, to carry us into this new realm inaugurated by Jesus in his life and death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ and his realm and living by a different rule.

And that's what's so profound. And that's, so by the way, when you read in the Nicene Creed, we believe in one baptism for the remission of sins, it's referring to Romans chapter 6. If you were to have a Bible verse beside it, it's referring to Romans chapter 6, verses 3 and 4. That's what it's referring to. It's not referring to the ritual of baptism.

That's what the creed originally meant. So, how does that help with the question? Remember, the question is, why does the gospel not lead us to sin? Why does the gospel help you to live a better life? In the sense of, why is it that you will, there is something actually in this gospel message that rather than encouraging you to live a more and more immoral life, saying, I love to sin and God loves to forgive, a match made in heaven. But instead, if you understand this story, this teaching, you actually come to understand a different truth, which is the same faith that saves is the same faith that longs to obey. And how is this developed here? So, I'm going to read through now, we're going to read verses 3 and all down to verse 7. What you're going to see in these verses now, if you look at it, is you're going to see that it's describing the current, the culture, the flavor, the purpose, the telos, the characteristic of this new realm, and what makes it different than the other realms. Because you see, every realm, what God calls us into, on one hand, God does not call us now in Christ to create a Christian nation. My American brothers and sisters and my Canadian brothers and sisters in Christ who believe that the Bible teaches a Christian nation are wrong. They're wrong.

They are not reading the Bible correctly. They aren't. Because Jesus doesn't say, go into the world and conquer lands and make Christian nations. He says, go into every people group and make disciples.

[ 25 : 38 ] Completely, radically different claim. And so, on one hand, there are going to be Canadian Christians that are going to be different from Zimbabwe Christians. But on the other hand, and because it's going to be, it's a different culture, but culture matters. And so, what the Bible is going to be doing now is it's going to be describing the shape of what that type of reign of Christ is going to look like. What is the current? What is being proposed? What is being illustrated? What are you being drawn to? What are you being pushed to? So that things are actually going to look different as you become more acculturated to the new culture where Christ is King? I'll give you an illustration.

So, when I was in Zimbabwe just recently, I mean, there's lots of differences in Zimbabwe between Zimbabwe and Canada. One of the things is they drive on a different side of the road. It's a small thing, but they drive on the different side of the road. There's other things as well. I discovered, only just the other day, because we're discussing about going back to complete the training that we started, and I discovered that I'd made a huge mistake about how names work in Zimbabwe. I discovered that in Zimbabwe, unless you are a close relative or a good friend, you don't use a person's first name. You just don't. So, I shouldn't refer to Hudson as Hudson. I would call him Boulard.

And it's only if he gives me permission to use his first name that I could use his first name. And I was asking people to give me their first name, like how to speak to them, and I was completely confused by it. Another very simple thing, because one of the things which is so neat when you do cross-cultural work, is the Zimbabweans are also interested in cross-cultural stuff. Like, it's not just a white thing. Like, it's a human thing. So, one of the things I... So, we got into lots of discussions about how cultures are different. It was really, really interesting. They're really thoughtful guys. So,

one of the things I pointed... I said to them is, so they do something there which is very touching. You see a senior cleric, like a very older man, wanting to talk to a younger man who is having, obviously, some problems. And so, they were going to go to the corner where they could be away from somewhere else. And the older clergy would take the... They're both men. Take the other man's hand, and they would walk hand in hand off to the corner. And I said that if you did that in Canada, they'd think you were gay. And they all went, what? Like, that's terrible. Like, what could be more lovely than this gesture of taking your hand and walking you away? It shows tenderness and affection and closeness, and they're just... They go into it, right? And I'm saying, I'm not saying that Canadians are right or anything. I'm just telling you, if you come to our church and, you know, and you want to take my hand to tell me something, and I don't do it, it's a cultural thing, right? So, what does the culture look like as you start to have... You enter into a world where Christ is the King. And that's what's going to be described here. And look what it says. It goes like this. We'll begin at verse 3. Verse 2. How can we who died to the sin still live in it?

How can we, in a sense, continue to follow its rules, listen to its stories, obey its commands, desire the things that it desires? How can you actually do that if, verse 3, do you not know that all of us who have been... We died into that. God took you and me and died us, immersed us in Christ so much that we drowned and died into Christ Jesus. And then he emphasizes, he takes us and immerses us in Christ to the point of drowning and dying into his death. And that sounds really sort of odd, but then it continues. We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death. Why?

[ 29 : 34 ] In order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk with him in newness of life. So God does something for us passively. And now this new life is going to be characterized by walking with him, not just by ourselves. Notice again, it says that we will, that we might walk, that we, sorry, that we're going to be with him. Therefore, verse 4, with him.

We're going to be with him. And we're going to walk into newness of life. That's what's going to characterize this God's kingdom, is that God doesn't want to bring you, you know, the other reign is, you're under sin, and at the end of the day, you're going to die. He wants us to start to live knowing that we're walking with Christ. We're with him. We're in him. We're with him. He is our king.

The purpose of walking with him is to walk new into new life, more and more newness of life. The entire direction is towards life. And it's not just life, it's also glory. Look at verse 4 again, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.

So what's going to characterize what God's kingdom is? He wants us to know more and more the glory of the Father. And the more we see the glory of the Father, the more the glory of the Father shapes us. And we walk in newness of life. And then if, look at verse 5, for if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. The end of our story under the reign of Christ is our resurrection. With him. We are with him. Verse 6, we know that our old self, our old man, was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved by sin. And this idea of the body of sin, what its meaning is under God, under the old self, ruled by the sin, our old man, we have a body of sin. And the way to understand that is very simple. Lots and lots of people in this church should probably know at least a couple of C.S. Lewis quotes, and have maybe even read a couple of C.S. things. But I could say, very few of you, if any, have read the whole body of his works. Everything he wrote. And that's the idea here. It's contrasting, it's going to be developed, this idea between like the ruling center and the things you do. It's going to be developed as the Bible has more things to say about moral change in chapter 6 and chapter 7 and on. And so it's describing here, to go back to it, that verse 6, we know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing. That in a sense, all of the things that we do that are under sin might diminish and get lower and lower and lower. That's what God's heart is for you, because he doesn't want you to be enslaved. To be under the sin is to be a slave. To be under Christ is to be free.

[ 32 : 47 ] It is for freedom that Christ has set you free. It's for freedom. And that's going to be developed more and more as it talks about the virtues. And it continues, verse 7, for one who has died has been set free from sin. Now, if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also raise with him. So it's describing freedom, and that's everything that God wants to do under Christ, that's what it's being described. Now, some of you might say, well, George, how does this help with living a more moral life? You do more good things and fewer bad things.

That if they were to look at you now and take a snapshot of you, and in five years, if Christ doesn't return, you're more generous than you were five years ago. I mean, they look at you in the year 2031, looking back at your 2026 self, and you're more generous. You're more forgiving. Some of your besetting sins, you either have stopped doing them or you do them. How does this actually help?

Well, the first thing is to realize how radical this is compared to the alternatives. And what are the alternatives to how the Bible is starting here to picture the ground and the basis of moral change? And that's, I think, why my friend said good luck with thinking that there's any way that people are going to get better. And in fact, everything in our culture is shaping people to be worse. We tend to just say, use more willpower to be better. We say, what you need to be better is more information. To which I just say, you think the internet is making you a better person?

Like endless information? That's making you a better person? Like really? Like that's a better story than this? And we tend to try to shame people into behaving better or try to appeal to their pride. Like, don't do this. It's beneath you. But if in fact the whole problem of human life is self-centeredness and thinking you're the center of the universe, to appeal to a way to make you even more think you're a God by being too big for little things is actually not going to really help you. Or by creating fear?

[ 35 : 14 ] Or like even look at the, and the type of stories that go around along with all of that, do they actually really help you to do fundamental lasting moral change? Obviously you can get good insights from people. I read widely amongst, I read like a novel a week and they're all non-Christian writers. And I learn lots from non-Christian writers. I'm not saying you don't learn from other people. All truth is God's truth. But really, if you look at what the Bible has just described, and you look alternative, like really, do you actually think that if you became a student of the Quran, that you would be a better person? Do you know the Quran encourages men to beat their wives?

That's what the Quran teaches. And it could go on. Do you know if you really think that if you believe the communist or the Marxist story and propaganda, that that would make you live a better life? Like really? The new atheism had its huge sway in the first part of this millennium. Has it made Canada and any country where it has had huge effect, has it made our countries better? I don't know. I don't think it has. But what the Bible, and all of these other ways tell you stories. And we live by stories. We're changed by stories. And so what is this? What is it that this is doing? This text is telling us, first of all, it's not just telling us a new story that pleases us. This is true. Jesus really did rise from the dead.

And if he really did rise from the dead, it vindicates who he is and what he said. And it vindicates what our Jewish friends call the Tanakh and the Torah and what we call the Old Testament. It vindicates its teaching. It vindicates the New Testament. And if Jesus really did rise from the dead, when we put our faith and trust in him, then God really does take me and bring me into Christ and drowned me into the point of death, into his death and resurrection. And that is actually true about me.

[ 37 : 22 ] And now I have a completely new king. Now, it's a little bit like if the true king comes back and takes the capital city and then the other people flee.

And there's still parts of me. There's gorillas still fighting and all of that type of thing. But the fact of the matter is, is that the very center of who I am, there is a new king, a new ruler. And this Bible text is telling me that it's worth my while to fight those gorillas because at the end of the day, the victory that has already begun in me with my risen king, Jesus, the crucified and risen king, that he actually will bring everything to a complete and utter victory in me. That is the end of my story. So it's worth it to fight those things in me that are wrong. I have a new presence in my life that I can call out to. One who shared all my human weaknesses and shared my trials and temptations and loved me so much he died for me, knowing everything about me that I can pour my heart out to him. I can pour out my shame at failure and my sin. I can pour my heart out to him.

And he is a compassionate one who listens. And he is my risen king. And he is the one who walks with me. It gives me a new story to understand my life. Not that life is one dang thing after another and then I die. But life is one opportunity now to become more like Christ and to bring him glory and to show that I am not the center of the universe, but all things come of him. And that generosity is part of the fundamental story of the universe. Forgiveness and love and compassion. And when you try to move into justice and those things, you are moving in terms of the flow of ultimate reality and the ultimate end of the story. And it is worth it to pursue it. It is worth it to pursue it. And you can

challenge the elephant stakes in your life. You know, I don't know if it's true, but they talk about how when they're training an elephant and they take a baby elephant and they knock a stake into the ground and then they tie the baby elephant and the baby elephant tries to pull away from the stake and it can't.

And it so trains the baby elephant so that it doesn't think, you know, by the time it becomes a huge honking elephant that can not only pull up the peg but knock out the wall, it just, it sees the peg and thinks it's bound by it. And this story is challenging us to realize we have, under the sin, there's all these elephant pegs in our lives and we don't have to follow them.

Like, we should be a place that questions the assumptions about what just has to be. It doesn't just have to be. Another story. This is like 15, 20 years ago. I went to one of those gatherings of clergy that, like a continuing ed thing for clergy, and I was there about 15, 20 minutes early and I had a, no surprise, I had a takeout dark roast coffee black with me. It was a really cold day.

[ 40 : 23 ] I was wearing a very comfortable sweater and the guest speaker, one of the two guest speakers came walking by and he was a fellow who, he had become a little bit more prosperous, if you know what I mean, as he entered into middle age, but he hadn't updated his wardrobe. So he was wearing a jacket and a tie and the tie looked like it was strangling him and the, it looked like if he'd breathed the wrong way, he'd pop the buttons in his jacket. And he comes up and he says, oh boy, coffee and a sweater, boy, I wish I could wear a sweater. And I said, I have good news for you, friend. I have a car. Five minutes from here, I can take you to a store and buy you a sweater.

And then we can get a coffee. Anyway, he just laughed and didn't want it. But really, you don't have to be there in a tie that's choking you, in a jacket that's going to burst. You can wear a sweater. You have permission. You don't have to live under those other types of rules. And even if it also redefines the things in your life that you can't, you know, sometimes God brings moral transformation like a moment. I know a fellow, upon his conversion, lost all of his alcoholism and his desire for drugs. We know that there's people in our congregation, that's not been the story of their lives. They have to fight and fight and fight and fight, but it's always worth fighting it. And partly, we start to redefine besetting sins as a chronic condition that God could still heal, that's treated by daily repentance and attempt to amend your life.

And that this teaching is saying, given that at some point in time, this will be completely defeated in you, and the reign of Christ will be perfect in the new heaven and the new earth, it's worth it to repent against this every day and never make peace with it.

It changes everything as you start to enter into this new story with a new king, with a new presence, and we fight these battles on our knees, and we fight them as a church together, and we uphold each other in prayer, and that's what God is calling to us. And that is why the gospel, when it grabs you, actually becomes an engine of moral change. Go back to my opening, I'll just close with this. I said earlier that the faith that saves is the same faith that longs to obey, and the old adamanness immediately makes us worried about that word obey. But it will make it seem, but here's the way to understand the difference that faith in Christ means. Let's say I was visiting somebody in a hospital, and let's say I was visiting my wife in my hospital. Hopefully that, you know, won't be for until she's 105, but I'm visiting my wife in the hospital, and some random woman yells in at me and says, can you go and take your own money and buy me a coffee and bring it right here? I need a coffee. If I obey her, that's like weird. If my wife asks me, can you go down and get me a tea or a decaf coffee downstairs and bring it to me, I will not obey the first person. That's not what the Bible is talking about. I will obey my wife in her request. Why? Because I love her. That's the context of the faith that saves is the faith that longs to obey. I invite you to stand.

[ 43 : 52 ] Bow our heads in prayer. Father, it's hard to know with the internet whether people are getting worse or whether they're getting better. Father, we do see, Father, we do see some types of toxic compassion. Father, we do see evil, the rise of anti-Semitism, which is very evil. We do know that it seems as if all the statistics say that fewer people are generous. And we've all probably, Father, felt how online types of things can really have very toxic consequences. And Father, we don't know if that's just driven by bots and algorithms or whether it's really going on. But Father, what we do know is that when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, you bring him truly into us and us into him. And he is creating a new, new, he is the, our new king. And he is working in us that we would live under his rule. And that his rule is towards newness of life. His rule is towards the diminishment of anti-Semitism, of hatred, of xenophobia, of misogyny, of injustice, of ungenerosity, that his rule will work to diminish those things in our lives. And that his rule will work to make us

desire to be more compassionate, more generous, more giving and forgiving. And we thank you, Father, that that is the story, not the algorithms and whatever else is going on, that the story to form us and the one who's forming us is your son, Jesus Christ. And so we ask, Father, that you would continue to work in a powerful way, bringing the gospel truth home deep to our lives. And we are so thankful that you desire to change us from one degree of glory to another. You desire us to walk in newness of life. And Father, help us, help us to call out to you and walk that walk. And we ask these things in Jesus' name, your son and our savior. Amen.

Amen.