

Real Hope

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 0 0] Father, we ask that you would make us good soil. Help us, Father, to ask good and honest questions of your word. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us, Father, so that we no longer deceive ourselves, that we are aware of the things we say and the things we do and the things we believe.

Continue to pour out your Holy Spirit upon us, Father, so that as you make us more honest about ourselves, that we might more honestly come to your word. And then continue to pour out your Holy Spirit upon us, Father, so that as we more honestly come to your word, that your word would come deeply and powerfully and fully into us, so that in our day-to-day lives, we will bear much fruit that brings not us glory, but you glory.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So, here's the problem.

If you think about it for a second, there's passages in the Bible that when we read them or when they're said out loud, we go, whoa! And then there's other things in the Bible that when, and I'm not talking about the genealogies, you know, that, you know, and such and such begat such and such, begat such and such, and, you know, our eyes are just nodding, and our, you know, our eyes are closing, and our head nods.

I'm just talking about it's really, you know, amazing that there'll be certain passages that are read, and we basically just dismiss them. That's, maybe I'm being too, well, you know, that's what we do, but we're not aware that we do it.

[1 : 3 7] And I don't mean to offend you, but certain passages make our, raise our eyes, we open our eyes, they might make our blood boil, we might feel very threatened by them. Others, if we're honest, it just sounds like religion.

It just sounds like the sort of thing that spiritual people say. So, for instance, the text that we're going to look at in a moment, the opening of that text, which Laurie read, that text goes against a huge, the opening few words basically disagrees with probably 90% of the professors at the University of Ottawa.

But we don't go, whoa, that text is just completely and utterly rejecting behaviorism, it's rejecting Machiavelli, it's rejecting much of the advice in the business school, it's rejecting Nietzsche, the patron saint of post-modernism, it's rejecting all of these people.

We don't think that, do we? Because it's just religion, just the way religious people talk. So, let's look at it, because, you know, if we have that type of problem, that we don't hear the Bible, for the offense that it is, then we're not really hearing the Bible.

So, let's look at the Bible text, it's Romans chapter 15. Be a great help if you open the Bible yourselves and look as well, that you join with me in looking at the text.

[2 : 5 9] And we'll just, we'll read these first two verses, I'm going to be looking at all 13 of the first verses in Romans 15, we'll look at the rest in coming weeks. But just look how it begins.

And listen to it again, and say to yourself, okay, Father, I want you to help me right now, not just to read the Bible the way Canadians read the Bible. Because, you see, the problem with the way that we Canadians read the Bible or hear religion and spirituality, is that religion and spirituality is something private.

It's something personal. It's basically analogous to sharing with people your favorite flavor of ice cream. And that's why we can listen to people say all sorts of actually completely crazy and kooky things.

And it would be considered rude if we were to attack a person, not attack, just challenge them for the crazy and kooky things they say of their religion. Because if it gives them peace, if it gives them some comfort, then that's fine.

It's just religion, just spirituality. So, listen to this text. First, we who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

[4 : 09] Let each of us please his neighbor for his good to build him up. Or in older translations, which is actually more accurate, to edify him or her.

Now just pause for a second. You think, okay, George, okay, what's the problem with that? Well, Marx would say that's rubbish and bunk. All Marxist theory would say that that's bunk.

Nietzsche would say that this is slave mentality. This is one of the many reasons why we should discount the Bible. It's how slaves think. It's how servants think. It's not how the new man and the new woman thinks.

Ayn Rand would say this completely and utterly foolish. Like even such popular things as the secret or most management techniques, they basically say that how are we going to get more strong and how are we going to use my strengths to get what I want?

How am I going to organize the universe to get what I want? And even for many of us, if we read Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Successful Effective People, seek to understand before you're understood, the fact of the matter is is that we don't want to seek to understand before we're understood.

[5 : 28] So that we can really understand, but so we can get what we want. Because it's a way to manipulate people and not give a gift to another, the other person that we're understanding, but ultimately give a gift to ourselves.

Because if we do that very well in a management or an organizational context, we get what we want. We stay strong and the weak stays weak.

And we don't please them. We get them to please us thinking that they're pleasing themselves. If you can fake sincerity, you've got it made. You can fake that you care about the other person.

If you fake that it really matters to you what they think and say, you've got it made. It's all about faking. But when we hear this text, we just sort of say to ourselves, oh yeah, you know, we are strong, have an obligation to bear the whalings of the weak.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Let's get to something a little bit more interesting. But not realizing that this particular text actually really strikes us at the heart and is basically viewed as nonsense by the world.

[6 : 36] And in fact, if we're honest, we actually sort of are, if we actually start to really say, one moment, like, okay, like, the Bible's serious about this?

Like, it actually means this? Like, it means this in the same way it means you shall not take innocent human life? Or, like, it really means it?

And then we're going to get a bit frightened. Because in fact, the critiques of Nietzsche and Marx and all, that it will lead to us being doormats, becomes very, very, it becomes a threat to us.

And, and, and what's more, it's not just something that describes what goes on purely inside of the church, just amongst Christians. In fact, you know, this often happens.

I, I often, I get to a passage of the Bible. Like, if you go to, one of the things that's so wonderful about listening to megachurch passages, pastors, getting their blog, you know, listening to their sermons, one of the things that's so wonderful about them is that they can basically spend 20, 30, 35 hours a week just working on their sermon.

[7 : 45] Because they have other people do all the other stuff in the church. So, you know, in many of them, they'll, they'll read like three or four or five commentaries and almost map out most of the book before they actually work on a specific sermon.

I don't have that luxury. I sort of just deep, dig with, deal with each text as it comes. So, you know, one of the things you can do for me is just pray that I can open the Bible well. And anyway, one of the things is, last week, I, I talked about the strong and the weak and I, I, if I could go back in time, I, I would, I would reuse, I changed my language for last week.

Because I think chapter 14 was primarily talking about what's life amongst, for Christians. And 15 is a bit how you live both with Christians, but more importantly, how you live with the world.

And so last week, really the whole contract, you know, those of you who weren't here, you're just going to make any sense. But really, I should have said that the difference was between, you know, a gospel mindset and a legalistic mindset.

That's really what chapter 14 was going on. And this week, they use a different word for weak here in chapter 15 than they use in chapter 14. And they bring this idea of strength. And this now does sort of mean what we understand generally by strength.

[8 : 53] That in terms of some people have just better looking, they're stronger, they have more economic resources, their IQs are higher, their EQs are better. They've had better families, better genetics, better opportunities, live in a better society, have a whole pile of things.

And there's also weak people. And how do strong people deal with weak people? And the key to the change is that it uses the word neighbor. And some of us remember that famous parable by Jesus when the Pharisee says, but who is my neighbor?

And Jesus teaches us that basically the neighbor is every person we meet. And that's what it says. Look at it again. We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

Let each of us please his neighbor for his good. And actually, it should probably be translated for his the good, which doesn't make good English, but that's what the good is mentioned in the original language to edify him.

So just before we get any further, we're going to come back to this text a little bit later because it's of its significance. The text here isn't telling people who are strong to become weak. And it's not telling those of us who have strengths that we just become doormats.

[10 : 11] It's actually telling us something very profound and powerful. Because the normal way that we always want to behave is to please ourselves and to make sure that we're always cared for and take care of ourselves, that our needs are met.

And the stronger you are, the easier it is to make sure that that happens. And the stronger you are, the richer you are, the easier it is to completely and utterly ignore those who are weak, to try to step around them, to try to step away from them, to try to step on them, to crush them, because dang it, they're irritating sometimes, aren't they?

And that's the normal thing. And so what's this text telling us? It's telling us that if we, in some of our areas, are the strong, we don't live to please ourselves.

That what's going on with the people around us, the people that are weak, the people who are at a big reception, you know, in the government or in business, that the no accounts, the nobodies, the ones who are off by the side, not talking to anybody, that we're not to go into the room just looking to see if we can spend some quality time with the people who are above us so we can kiss a little bit of butt and get better known and maybe get a promotion and get ahead, but we're actually to look at the weak, look for them, and that we're seeked to walk towards them, not away from them.

And this whole area here, what talks about bearing up with their weaknesses, it's another way of expressing walking a mile in their shoes. That not only is it telling us that we're to, rather than just please ourselves, actually notice the weak and be concerned for them, but that in a sense, we're to use our strength to try to see the world as they see it.

[11 : 57] Now, it's not saying here that the way the weak view the world is always right. It's not saying that. They're sinful, fallen human beings just like the strong.

But it's calling us, the bearing of their weaknesses is to, let's just for a second, George, I know it might be hard, you know, but just look at the world from the perspective of a handicapped person, you know, physically or mentally handicapped or a person who's just very poor or a person who's had unbelievably terrible things happen in their lives.

Just for a moment, before you judge, before you ignore them, before you step on them, notice them. And, George, they're walking around bent over with these burdens.

get under their burdens as well. How does the world look? And then, as you think about them, what will actually be for their good that you have the power to do?

Not what they want. I mean, street people, to be honest, if you give them money in the city of Ottawa, they want it because they'd like to get alcohol or drugs.

[13 : 17] To give them money is actually not their good. But to see them and say, I'm going to give money to the Salvation Army to help them, that actually might be their good.

Or it might be that you actually buy them something nutritious to eat. I'm not going to get into all the details, but you see what I mean? That's the difference. And not only that, but to edify them, which means to bring them closer to God.

That's to be your heart. And to do this really for them, not the way I described earlier where you can learn a certain set of techniques.

One of those techniques is that if you appear to listen to a person, if you learn how to make the proper eye contact, if you learn how to put your hand on their shoulder the right way, or give them the right type of handshake and the right type of nod, as if you're really listening to them and you're really concerned and you really care for them, but you're doing that just as a matter so you can make your own pitch to get them on your side, when you do that, you're giving a gift to yourself.

You're using your strength for yourself. You're not using your strength for the person who's weak. That's the great challenge of the text. It's the great challenge of the text.

[14 : 32] Now, the question could be, like I can just imagine, the question would be, okay, well, George, that all sounds very, very nice in principle, but why, or should I bother to do that?

I mean, George, I have a lot of stress in my life. You know, frankly, I deserve the good things I've gotten. In fact, isn't it with the advertising things? You know, you deserve this. You deserve that car. You deserve that holiday.

You deserve this. You deserve that type of experience. Like, George, why should I bother? And here's part of the problem that we as Christians have. Maybe it's one of the reasons why we feel a little bit uncomfortable speaking about these things or even making a case for such things in the business school or in the philosophy or social sciences academy because at the end of the day, the primary reason that they give in this text to do this, well, what is the text?

Let's look at it. Verses three and four. Why? And notice how in the English Standard Version it uses the word for. In other words, like why? It's answering the why question.

Like, why on earth do this? Even if you've explained what it means, like why on earth bother? Well, why? For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, the reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.

[15 : 55] For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.

So the problem is, to Nietzsche, well, that's not what Jesus did and that's not what the Bible teaches. Oh! That's probably what people would do.

Oh! If they're not going, oh! Like, that's the way to end the conversation at a cocktail party. That's the way to hear the whole class squirm in, you know, philosophy 101.

And, you know, and of course, you might have to be more, you know, as innocent as a dove and as clever as a serpent in terms of how you argue these things in classes. But, I mean, the thing that will immediately come back is, well, gosh, good grief, George, don't tell me you're actually going to claim that this is just because of what the Bible teaches and, and, George, George, George, George.

Don't you know that? The Bible, like, you look at the Bible more closely, George, and don't, when you look at the Bible more closely, like, you know, you look at it, George, it's filled with contradictions, it's filled with all sorts of confusing stuff, people can hardly understand it, doesn't give you any encouragement, like most people when they read the Bible, let's be honest, George, most people, even Christians, when they read the Bible, they don't get encouragement, hope, they're bored with it.

[17 : 23] And now, if you had done something that you're all like me, you want to sit in that little chair, pull yourself up in a ball, you get all red, you don't know what to say.

And I don't know if I'm going to entirely help you know what to say, but I want to, here's one of the things I pray for myself every week as I'm working on the sermon. One of the things I pray for myself is that I will actually hear and understand the questions that people have about the Bible text, that I try to think about some of the people that I talk about on the street and in other places, the objections and the criticisms that would have about the Bible.

And I try to, I pray that the Lord would help me to hear the questions that people have, the objections that people have, and then the very next thing I pray is that I would be unashamed of the Bible, that I would be unashamed of the gospel, that I would be unashamed of the whole counsel of God, and that the Lord would help me to listen to the Bible deeply.

Now, the Bible here is making a huge claim. Just think about it for a second. Look at this again, verse 3 and 4. Verse 3, for Christ did not please himself, but as it is written.

So, Paul is making a claim about what Jesus did, and now he's going to quote the Bible. The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me. And that's from Psalm 69.

[18 : 47] And what he's doing, Paul is saying that that psalm, that really, when we read that psalm, we're listening to Jesus speak. And that psalm was written maybe a thousand years before Jesus, but when we listen to that psalm, we're listening to Jesus speak.

And then he's making a very, very, very big claim for whatever was written in former days, a thousand years earlier, and in our case now three thousand years ago, and in our case in the book of Romans two thousand years ago, that that was written for our instruction.

That when David or whoever wrote that psalm, it not only ministered to his generation, but the people, the next generation, it was ministering to them and every generation, including us, in postmodern Ottawa, that it was written for our instruction that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures, not just this text, but all of the scriptures that make up the Bible, we might have hope.

This is a huge claim. Andrew, if you could put up the first point, only the God who speaks could create a book that speaks instruction and hope to every people group and every generation.

That's what the claim is that's being made here in the text. Only God, only a God who speaks, only the God who speaks, who is not silent, a little bit of a nod to Francis Schaeffer, only he could create a book that speaks instruction and hope to every people group and every generation.

[20 : 39] See, what the text is here, and this is the consistent message of the Bible, it's the consistent message of Jesus, is that ultimately God was responsible for the creation of the Bible.

He used many different human authors, he used many different literary genres, but ultimately God was the one who created the book and God was the one who caused it to be recognized as coming from him and God is the one who has preserved it.

Remember, when Paul was writing this, which has now also become part of what we understand as the Bible, the Christian faith was an unbelievably tiny minority that was to suffer horrendous persecutions by the state, and yet the Bible has been preserved.

And what this text is telling us is that the Bible is sufficient to give us hope. This is a great, this is a great challenge to us because you see, many Christians don't believe that the Bible is sufficient to give us hope.

We actually think that if we get together it would be better to listen to, I don't know, like a famous speaker or a couple of YouTube videos or something like that because, you know, at the end of the day, I don't know if the Bible can actually give us hope and encouragement and endurance because, you know what, my words are better or the words of this particular poet or singer, they're actually better at creating endurance and hope, but the Bible is saying that it's the one that's sufficient to do that.

[22 : 03] And this text is telling us that we can understand the Bible, that ordinary people can understand the Bible. They might have to be in community, we might have to learn from each other, we might have to listen to those who've gone before us, but that ordinary people can understand the Bible.

And it's telling us that everything in the Bible, that God created all of it to be written for us, and that it all speaks about Jesus. That's a huge claim, and that claim can only be true if God is the ultimate author of it in terms of having it created.

Now, just to note before I go on with some other objections to it, because there's a huge objection in the modern and post-modern mind to the text, and the objection is, but George, why is it that the Bible is boring?

Why is it that the Bible are you allowed to say that in the church? You know, maybe I've surprised some of you because maybe you've always read every part of the Bible and never found a single bit boring.

Maybe I'm the only one. Anyone who says that, we're going to have confession later, not private confession, but public confession, because nobody here would believe you.

[23 : 16] And then the other thing is that we hear that God created the book, but then we have problems with it because we expect the book to be perfect.

Now, I'm not saying that the Bible is imperfect, but what I'm saying is that the Bible doesn't measure up to human standards because God created it. And human standards change by culture.

Just think about it for a second. I don't know how many of you can read some 19th century novels, but if you try to read a book by Charles Dickens, like it seems as if Charles Dickens' books are all like this fat. They go on and on and on and on and on with descriptions.

And in the 19th century, somebody who loves a book that's this fat, they'd look at the Bible and say, it's too short. We like tweets. We love Twitter.

We look at the Bible and say, it's so long. Gosh, it's long. You expect me to, whoa. And then we look at it and okay, and I'm like this as well.

[24 : 25] You know what I love in the paper? I love in the paper where there's a complicated thing and I can look in the paper for a diagram with numbers and arrows that shows how it begins here at this time and then Mr. Smith and Mrs. Jones walk from here to there and then they did this and there's an arrow.

I love that. But people read the Gospels and it doesn't do like that. Like you read the Gospels and it's, you know one of the problems with the Gospels?

That there's four or five or six different ways, like just if you take Jesus from, you know, him entering into Jerusalem and it's not that the Bible contradicts itself, but there's five or six or seven different ways to draw a diagram like that that puts it all together and that drives us mad.

Why couldn't God do it? The standards that fit with math geek types like me. And you know what was a huge offense for most of the ages that knew Greek?

the Bible is written in crappy Greek. It's written in the type of Greek that, you know those people who when they all went to high school and they just all did the applied or lower things and then work in service, you know how they speak?

[25 : 49] That's how the Bible's written. It's not written for posh, it's not written in the way that really, really highly educated people who went to Oxford and Cambridge speak.

Greek. It was written in lower working class slave Greek and for many centuries it bugged the heck out of well-educated people.

And if you read it, it's all filled with broken sentences. There's a part of the psalm where it's obvious that he's doing an anagram where every verse begins with the right Hebrew letter and then all of a sudden it just doesn't work because I guess the writer couldn't figure out how to make it work.

And it's in the Bible and that bugs us. The Bible's not making a claim that it's perfect by our cultural standards. It's making a claim that the God who speaks has caused his word to be written and that it has the power to give encouragement, endurance, and hope to every people group in every generation.

And here's another thing. You can put up the next point and I'm not smart enough to figure this out myself. It's an adaptation from a guy who wrote over 500 years ago. God is the source of endurance and hope.

[27 : 08] He gives both by his Holy Spirit. That's what Romans 15 is going to teach. But he uses his word as his instrument. Brothers and sisters, friends in Christ, we've got to trust that if we open the Bible and pray and read it that God does something.

And we've got to trust that we can listen to the accusations and reproaches and criticisms and honest questions of the world. And we cry out to God and say to God, I don't have the vaguest idea in the world how to answer this, but I trust your word.

Help me to be unashamed of the gospel and to listen to your word and let your word do its work in my life. One of the reasons, I won't go into it right now, but one of the reasons, because somebody just this week was asking me why on earth you should trust the Bible and like very simply it's like it's there's a range of reasons for it.

But the bottom line reason for it is that Jesus believed this. And Jesus said that he was going to die and rise from the dead and then he did die and rise from the dead and Jesus vindicates the teaching, the resurrection of Jesus.

Paul who wrote this, he knows that why? Because he was an eyewitness to the fact that Jesus had truly died, that the grave was empty and that he had risen from the dead.

[28 : 38] He was an eyewitness. This is what Jesus teaches. And so Paul says, you know what? God has vindicated Jesus and his message.

Now, some of us, the bigger problem that many people in our generation have to do with this idea that these are words that God has written is that they worry that it becomes permission for unspeakable evil.

Like what was the claim of many people who worked in Nazi Germany during the Nazi era? They were just following orders. What happens if God gives you an order? And aren't there, in fact, all sorts of psychopaths out there who believes that God has spoken to them so they can go and behead people and rape and kill and murder?

Isn't that what's behind a whole pile of holy wars? I mean, isn't that, I mean, one of the problems, this isn't, no, okay, I won't go there, sorry. I mean, that's one of the, aren't, isn't that what often happens?

Isn't there profound religious justification for unspeakable evils? And isn't the Bible filled with unspeakable evils? And George, if you actually hold something like this, isn't this going to lead you into doing unspeakable evil and then just say you're just obeying orders?

[29 : 56] Don't take it up with me, take it up with the big guy. He told me to go and to pillage and to rape and to murder and to steal and to kill. And George, don't you say to me that that never happens with religion or spirituality.

And you can't. Although it's interesting that the way this whole text begins and what the text is grounding, is the opposite of that, isn't it?

How does the text begin? What's he trying to ground? We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Let us please his neighbor for his, the good, to edify him or her.

So I'm going to get back to this. But part of the way to answer the question is just to continue to listen. What follows from this Bible teaching? Like what, is the Bible here actually telling us to go and rape and murder?

Well, look how it begins. The very next thing it does is it tells us to pray. Now here's the thing for this, and we're going to put it up at the end of the sermon. I'll put it up on the screen. But look what verses five and six are.

[30 : 58] Verses five and six are a prayer. God wrote a prayer for you and me. Maybe we should pray it. I know.

I want to be the master of the obvious. The reason we have to all be masters of the obvious is that we ignore the obvious. Like this is really cool. Verses five and six, God wrote us a prayer.

Listen how we, what does he want us to pray? In light of all of this, verse five and six, here's the prayer. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant, that means he's going to give it to us, have mercy on his father and grant this, to live in such harmony with one another in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So the thing, the first thing is, is not that the text is giving us permission, but if we take it to do unspeakable evil, but it's calling you and me to pray a particular prayer.

And it's very, very interesting what it's calling us to pray for. Look at it again. May the God of endurance and encouragement, and don't we want that? Don't we want to be able to endure in good things? Don't we want to be encouraged?

[32 : 13] Like, the Bible here is saying, call out to God. Get on your knees. Fall on your face in prayer. Stand, if that's how you like to pray, with eyes open or closed and your arms stretched out to heaven like a three-year-old child wanting to be picked up by his mommy, because he loves his mommy and he wants to be held by his mommy.

Call out to God, our Father. And ask him to grant us such harmony with one another in accord with Christ Jesus.

This is so important for us to hear. So what is advice about how to get along with people? If you go to a party, what do they tell you? Don't bring up religion. Right? In Canada, you want to get along?

Don't bring up religion. And here's the great problem that's always been a problem in the church. It's the consistent problem of the church. Churches can have harmony around idols.

Churches can have harmony around the idol of being of the same social class. We're all working class here. We don't have anything to do with those toffee-nosed people who went to Oxford and Cambridge. We're all upper class.

[33 : 22] We don't have anything to do with it. We're all white. We don't have anything to do with the blacks. We're all black. We don't have anything to do with the whites. We're all Asians. It is possible for churches to have harmony around the same views on politics, the same views on economics, of being in the same social class, ethnic class, all these things.

And it doesn't say pray that you can have harmony around your idols. It says pray that you can have harmony in accordance with Christ Jesus.

Flee idols. Flee these things that cause so much war and violence and hatred in the world. To protect your class.

To go after the other social class. To protect your economic interest. To go after the economic interest. To treat people of a different color or a different education or a different ethnicity or a different, the one you eat in different ways as if they're other, as if they're people that we should be afraid of.

Harmony in accordance with Christ Jesus. That together, you may with one voice. In the Greek, you know what it says? With one mouth. One mouth.

[34 : 35] One mouth. Glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God. Can you just put that up on the screen, Andrew?

Look at the therefore. Therefore. You know, don't please yourself. Look to the weak. Think of Jesus. Think of the Bible, the hope and the encouragement and endurance that comes from it.

Think of that. Pray this prayer. Therefore, welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God. And then the next thing which we're going to look at very briefly. You know what the implication of these next few verses is?

Here's the implication that you and I should be willing to get on our knees and pray for the day that there are so many people who come to Church of the Messiah and call Church of the Messiah their church home. There are so many people who come to this church whose first name is Mohammed.

That we have to think of nicknames for them to tell them apart. Because this text is going to answer why is it that God wants us to share the gospel across class lines, across educational lines, ethnicity lines?

[35 : 46] Why is it that he wants to share the gospel across lines of sexuality, of politics, of nation? He wants more people to know how good he is and praise him.

He wants from every social group, every people group, every ethnic group, he wants people from every group to know his goodness and his mercy and to praise him.

Listen to this. He's going to tell you now how God has kept his word and he's going to quote from every major section of the Tanakh, what we call the Old Testament. For I tell you that Christ became a servant of the circumcised to show God's truthfulness in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy as it is written.

Therefore, I will praise you among the pagans and sing to your name. And again, it is said, rejoice, O pagans, with his people. And again, praise the Lord, all you pagans, and let all the peoples extol him.

And again, Isaiah says, the root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the pagans, and in him will the pagans hope. And then there's another prayer.

[37 : 10] I'm going to put up on the screen later. God's giving us another prayer to pray, brothers and sisters. May the God of hope, this is what we can pray for each other, for ourselves and for this church.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit, you may abound in hope. You know what?

We can't have too much hope. We eat hope. We drink hope. We breathe hope. And most of us are on a diet. We need more hope.

We need high-calorie, sorry vegetarians, red-meated, high-fat hope. We need to breathe it.

The Bible is asking us to pray for this. Now what about this claim? I mean, you can see a little bit of why we don't have to be worried that if you understand what the Bible is and who Jesus is, you don't have to worry that the Bible is going to tell you to do unspeakable evil.

[38 : 17] But the main reason is a part that I hardly talked about at all. It's verses three and four. Look at it again with me, please. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, the reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.

Everything is going to fall, everything about this, looking from the strong to the weak, for the basis of prayer to understand the scriptures, why we can trust them. They're all in a sense hinged on Jesus and who he is and what he did.

Look again. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, the reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me. If you're a non-Christian, you hear one of the things that you might not know about Christians is that we reproach God all the time.

You know what does reproach mean? Completely lost my place in my notes, folks. But anyway, there you go. Reproach means to accuse of moral failure, to express disapproval, to express disappointment, to blame, to discredit, to rebuke.

God, I'm so disappointed you didn't get me that job. You know, I find the Bible boring. God, I blame you. I mean, we might not come out and say that, although maybe we will, you know.

[39 : 40] And the fact of the matter is, is that the whole world has reproaches and accusations against God. Imagine for a moment that the world was to gather, all the people were to gather before God, before he does his judgment on each human being.

And they were to express out loud their reproaches against God and all of the ways that God has failed, that God can't possibly understand.

And they might say, God, how on earth could you possibly understand what it means to be human? You're God. You're up there. You don't have bodily needs. You can just do whatever you want. You can just, you can just shut this down. You can just raise this up.

You know, we can't, we can't do anything to you. We can't fight you. We can't try to bring you to court. You can just do whatever you want. How on earth can you possibly know what it means? And then maybe the cry would go out.

And what does God know? How on earth does he know anything? I wish that we could make God to know these things. Let him be the victim of religious fanaticism, which leads to lying and killing.

[40 : 44] And then they, after they've lied and they killed, they wash their hands in innocence. Let him be born illegitimate. Let him be born to a despised subgroup in an insignificant people group.

Let him be part of a people group conquered by an imperial power. Let him not be well educated or prosperous or good looking. Let him have to work at poorly paid manual labor.

Let him lose his father early. Let him have a dysfunctional family where they do not support him or believe in him like many of us are. Those who are, those who find the whole sexuality teaching so frustrating.

Let God, let him know what it means to never know sexual love. Let him be rejected by his half brothers and half sisters.

Let him be misunderstood by all. Let him be hounded by religious leaders and the educational elite. Let him be hounded by the powerful. Let him be arrested by the authorities on trumped up charges.

[41 : 43] Let him be denied legal counsel. Let him be abandoned by his friends. Let him be beaten and tortured. Let him be publicly humiliated, publicly made naked, subject to public ridicule, abuse and scarred.

Let him die of failure. And then all the people would be silenced. The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.

Andrew, could you put up Romans 1, 16 to 17? Could you read it out loud? I can't. I'll try to read it with you. For I am not ashamed of the gospel.

For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. To the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.

As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. God does what is right to make us right with himself.

[43 : 00] And while human beings step on the week, over the week, around the week, away from the week, God stepped towards us, weakened in reproach, reproach and sin.

And he stepped towards us to stoop to save us. The same act by which he bore our reproaches was the act by which he bore our rebellion.

And took the doom which properly belonged to each of us. And dying and taking our doom, he offered to us his destiny and his place with the Father.

This act of human beings having Jesus bear our reproach was the means by which when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, he welcomes us.

That is his power to us if we receive it by faith. I'm just going to ask you all to stand.

[44 : 03] Andrew, could you put up the next one? It's the first prayer. I'm going to invite you just to Andrew's looking for it.

It's originally point six. This is just an invitation to pray these prayers with me. I want to just encourage you right now, if you've never given your life to Jesus, there's no better time than not to ignore in a sense these prayers and just say, Jesus, be my Savior.

Be my Lord. I give myself to you. Use your own words. Your heart will lead you. God's not looking for perfect words. But just say to him that you want to be his.

And he'll take you. He welcomes you. He'll welcome you as his. He turns no one away. No matter how many reproaches you've had against him, how successful or broken your life, he will not turn you away.

He will take you as his. And you'll be his forever. As we as a congregation, can we pray these two prayers that God has written for us? Let's pray this first one.

[45 : 20] God of endurance and encouragement, please make us disciples of Jesus gripped by the gospel who meditate upon your word written. Please grant us a Jesus-centered harmony with one another, which flows into a common praise of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' name, amen. And the second prayer, God of hope, please make us disciples of Jesus gripped by the gospel who are filled with joy and peace in knowing you.

Please help us to abound in hope by the power of your Holy Spirit. Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us.

Draw, bring your word deeply into our lives. Father, help us to have the courage to be honest with our questions and help us, Father, to hear the cries of our city and the cries of our nation, the cries of our friends and the cries of our family.

Father, help us to hear their cries and be unashamed of the gospel, unashamed of the whole counsel of God, unashamed of you, to pray for them, to lift them before you in prayer, to share the gospel, to seek their good.

[46 : 35] Father, please use us in such a way. And we ask this in the name of Jesus and all God's people said, amen. Amen. Thank you.