

Following Jesus as Saviour and Lord

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[0 : 0 0] Father, this passage of Scripture which we've just read is very deep and very challenging. And we ask, Lord, that you would pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and bring your word home to the command center of who we are.

Bring your word home to our mind, our emotions, our will, to our memories, to our longings, to our fears. Father, bring your word home deeply to us so that we might be disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel, learning to live for your glory.

And we ask this in Jesus' precious name. Amen. Please be seated. Between the two services, I go and I get a coffee.

I probably have a mild coffee addiction. The nice thing about coffee addictions is it doesn't ruin your life. You don't start breaking into cars to rob money for it or anything like that.

But anyway, I went to have a coffee and there was a young woman serving me and I asked her if she was... I said, who's going to win the Super Bowl tonight? And she said, oh gosh, I don't have the vaguest idea.

[1 : 1 0] And I said, are you going to a Super Bowl party? She said, absolutely. I said, I go for the food and to see Justin Timberlake at halftime.

So, you know, she... When I was growing up, I didn't get invited to parties very often. I'm still in therapy over the issue, actually. You know, there's different groups in school and there's like, you know, the more jocks, the art types, the, you know, the popular kids, etc., etc.

If I was in a group, it was the group that wasn't in a group. Sort of it would be the spares. I was part of the spares that sort of just hung around.

And so I didn't get invited to many parties or anything like that. But, you know, it's a very, very common mistake that people make to equate being popular, whatever's popular, as being true.

I mean, generally speaking, people recognize, as soon as it's said that way, that it's not true. But it's a very, very popular sort of...

[2 : 2 0] It's a very, very powerful type of idea that whatever's popular, whatever's becoming popular, is somehow more true than that which is not popular. And when we respond to that, we might respond in a variety of truisms or therapy or cliches.

I don't know if you noticed, but the gospel text which we looked at, I read just a few moments ago, it actually talks about this fundamental thing. In fact, it catches John the Baptist's disciples equating popularity with truth.

And the dispute is partially about that. And it's really interesting, when we talk about things like that, we often just resort to cliches. But when this question is raised to John the Baptist, he doesn't go to cliches, he goes in a completely and utterly wild and different direction.

So it'd be great help to me if you open your Bibles, and we're going to look at John chapter 3, verses 22 and following. And I think we're going to have the first picture of John the Baptist.

The pictures of John the Baptist just basically follow the three principal moments in his life. The first principal moment being his ministry of baptism, which culminates in Jesus being baptized.

[3 : 40] The second picture, the artwork that we're going to see, is the moment which we looked at a couple of weeks ago when John the Baptist points to Jesus and says, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And then the last two pictures we'll look at his end. It's sort of just to give a bit of a sense of who John the Baptist is as we listen to this story about how John the Baptist bears witness finally to Jesus.

So here it is in verse 22. It begins after this. And what it means by after this is Jesus has just talked to Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling party under the Romans, but the group that ruled that part of Judea and Jerusalem according to the Jewish law.

And Jesus had a conversation with Nicodemus who'd come to him at night. And the story continues. Verse 22 after this, Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside and Jesus remained there with them and was baptizing.

John the Baptist, I won't keep saying John the Baptist, but that's who it is. It's not the Apostle John. It's John the Baptist that's being referred to here. John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim because water was plentiful there and people were coming and being baptized.

[4 : 57] For John had not yet been put in prison. Just sort of a pause there. Immediately after this story, John, the writer of the gospel, clarifies that Jesus doesn't actually do the baptizing, that it's his disciples who do the baptizing, but it just refers here.

In a sense, what it's saying is that for one of Jesus' disciples to baptize, it was as if Jesus was baptizing. That's really what's being implied. Anyway, it continues on.

Now, a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. And interestingly enough, what the word is, it's referring to the different ceremonial washings.

So it really is connected to baptism. It's talking about ceremonial washings. And they're having a bit of a disagreement or discussion. You can well imagine that the Jewish person is saying, well, listen, John, the Baptist disciple, whatever his name, we'll call him Bob.

Listen, Bob, you know, our ceremonies come from Moses. It's still just going like crazy. It's just continuing on. You know, but, you know, you and John, you've been doing your baptisms, but, you know, it must suck to be you a little bit because your market share is going way down and fewer and fewer people are going to you because this guy Jesus over there, he's sort of become like the John the Baptist light.

[6 : 21] And people are going over to him. And, you know, I mean, what's going on? Maybe you should turn it down. Maybe what you're doing isn't right. Maybe what you're doing isn't of God because, I mean, we know we're of God because we're Moses and we're still really popular.

And this guy, Jesus, he's growing in popularity. So what's going on with you? Maybe it just isn't valid, not important. And so verse 26, they, and in the original language, it's not both of the groups.

It's just John the Baptist disciples. They come to John and said to him, and this is really, really a very, very telling thing, right? You can sort of hear sort of the anxiety in it as they ask the question, Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan to whom you bore witness, look, he is baptizing and all are going to him.

All just means lots. It doesn't mean every single person. It means lots. It's the way we talk sometimes when we're really feeling down. everything is going wrong. Everything is collapsing.

Well, we don't really, literally mean that, right? We just, it's, we're depressed. We exaggerate. And, you know, they have to start to wonder if, how is it that what we're doing can sort of be valid or true and important if it's becoming less popular?

[7 : 43] And it's a very human problem, connecting that type of popularity and movement in one way with somehow being true or being valid.

It's also very, very interesting in another way for Christians. It's very, very hard for us to believe. I should probably be standing here. I'm in darkness over there, right?

Yeah. I'm a slow learner. Every week, the lights keep changing too. Is this better? Okay. Actually, I want to always stand like this so you see my best side.

No, I'm just, it's not true. Yeah, that would be a great thing for me to comment on a text like this, by the way, which we're about to look at, me being concerned about how I look. It's very, very, very, listen again to the text, verse 26, and they came to John and said to him, Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan to whom you bore witness, look, he is baptizing and all are going to him.

It's a very, very hard thing for Christians to get their mind around the fact that God and I have very, very clear boundaries and God is God and I am not God and that will never change and that I can diminish, my role can get smaller and as my role gets smaller, God gets greater.

[9 : 25] It's a very hard thing to get our mind around because we tend to think that God and me are sort of joined at the hip and if my popularity or my power or my influence goes up, well then surely God's going up too and if my sort of influence and my importance are going down, then surely God's is going down too and it's a very, very powerful human dynamic to somehow or another link my destiny and my influence to God's status and it's in that type of direction that John the Baptist moves.

You see, John could have just said a cliché, well just because it's popular doesn't mean it's true. That could be on any newscaster's lips an easy thing for a writer or a parent or one of us to say it's just a simple cliché.

But John goes and he looks deeper behind this to see a basic heart condition of a deeper human problem of us somehow thinking that we are joined at the hip with God and I am never joined at the hip with God.

He is not joined at the hip with me. So listen to how John answers in verse 27 and from verse 27 on to 36 it's all just, it could almost be written like a creed.

It's these series of simple statements that are all connected to each other and I was saying to my wife just last night part of the problem I have with this text is it's one of the things you can pray for me every week.

[11 : 15] I said you could almost take every one of the verses 27, 28, 29 all the way down to 36 and you could almost preach an entire sermon in fact more than one sermon just on each verse.

It's the series of very deep and profound things that John says in connection to the fact that his popularity is going down and people are starting to forget about him and people aren't making as much of him as they used to.

He's less important. he's diminished and his disciples who love him and are connected to him their hearts are breaking about this and here's the first thing that John says verse 27 a person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.

Now this doesn't mean here that bad thing it's in the original language the implication here is that every good thing that any human being has is given him from God and why does it say heaven?

It's because heaven is that place where God is fully present and fully rules and his presence and his rule is experienced as life and joy and wholeness and so John the Baptist says every good thing that any human being has in their life is ultimately something that we've received.

[13 : 04] If you could put up the first point and my first point I came across this quote from J.C. Ryle and I just could not beat it. So that's why it says J.C.

Ryle I cannot command continual success in my ministry I can only receive what God gives me. Now I know this point I'm the only pastor here although every Christian is called to be a minister we're all in a sense called to be priests Jonathan has started a really great learners exchange between the two services just challenging us to understand the whole priesthood of all believers and in a sense the ministerhood of all believers that we are called to serve the Lord where we work there is in a sense in the Bible no such thing as a distinction between secular and holy because Jesus is Lord of all he's Lord of how we live in our cubicle if we're a civil servant or we have a cubicle outside of it he's Lord of how we serve in the military he's Lord of us as entrepreneurs as professors as stay at home moms or dads as retired people he is

Lord of all but I just thought I'd share this thing in terms of ministry because it's more of a personal thing let me tell you we ministers we pastors we can start to get really down on ourselves if our attendance isn't up and to the right offerings aren't up and to the right it's not a pretty sight in a pastor's soul often and this is just a very very powerful way to capture it so one of the things you can pray for me is that I will believe verse 27 that I will really believe that a person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven now some of you might say George doesn't this sound a little bit like it sounds like a Christian version of what Muslims say all the time what is it that Muslims say something bad happens something good happens some tragedy happens inshallah just

God's will can't do anything about it inshallah I don't know if I'm pronouncing it correctly that's a very classic Muslim phrase it in some ways perfectly captures how Muslims understand who God is in some ways he's like a tyrant he's absolute power and just does whatever he wants and so some bad things are going to happen just God's will and so some of them might say George is that sort of like that how does but here if you could put up the next point the gospel does not call me to be fatalistic and passive it calls me to active humble grateful life partly you see that when you look at the very next verse which we're going to read in a moment I mean this is in the context and you look at

John's ministry you realize that John was not being fatalistic or passive you know if we think everything rises and falls on our ability well first of all that's just going to be very very unjust if everything just rises and falls on our ability you know let me tell you if you're raised in a certain type of family if you have certain types of genes if you have certain types of opportunities just from your family of origin life's going to be a lot easier than if you have a different type of family and if everything is just completely and utterly up to us it leads to pride it leads to arrogance it leads to presumption it leads when we're successful it leads to despair and hopelessness like in a very very odd way if the pendulum fills swings all the way to inshallah well that creates this big problem of being fatalistic and passive but if it swings to the other extreme where you just have to grab your destiny be the captain of your own soul be the captain of your destiny just you got to go out there and attain and that's all right to a certain degree when you're young or when you're powerful and when you're well connected but it sucks if you're none of those things and the fact of the matter is that for most of us if we live long enough all of those things will pass and all of those things will go and when we tend to think that it's all up to us it quickly leads to insufferable arrogance and pride or heart rending despair and so when

[18 : 11] John the Baptist commenting on the fact that Jesus John's influence is declining he has these series of statements in the first one sort of the gateway into it as a person cannot receive even one thing the original language implies a good thing unless it is given him from heaven you see this actually means that I can say grace thank you father for this food thank you for this place that we worship in I don't know why I'm here rather than maybe in South North Korea or Saudi Arabia where we'd have to hide and just be meeting in a small room and maybe even whispering like I don't know why God put us here but you know what he has put us here we should just be so grateful this is a gift that we have received and God doesn't give these gifts so we are fatalistic but he gives these gifts so we can have a confidence and a courage

John the Baptist look at verse 28 John you yourselves bear me witness that I said I am not the Christ but I have been sent before him I am not the Christ but I have been sent before him to understand that all good things come from God it creates a type of humility before God a gratitude before God a thanksgiving before God and it's part of the ground for being courageous we all know that one of the problems in the West is that our high standards of living have often meant that we are crueler where we can influence our power and it often works to diminish courage and generosity I think it's something like the 23rd consecutive year in a row since Stats

Canada has been tracking it that the number of people who are able to claim a \$160 deduction on their income tax has declined we become more prosperous we become less generous but what John is saying here is that when we're gripped with the fact that all good gifts ultimately come from God it is part of the ground that allows him to go and proclaim behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world come to God repent of your sins it creates within him not fatalism or being passive but a whole new ground and motivation for action now some of you might say sorry

I mixed up my analogies let's read from 28 and 29 you yourselves bear me witness that I said I am not the Christ but I have been sent before him the one who has the bride is the bridegroom the friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice therefore this joy of mine is now complete he must increase but I must decrease he must increase but I must decrease if you could put up the next point Andrew one of the things one of the things that's very very powerful about this text remember I said how one of the problems we have when we think that it all depends upon us everything depends upon us it often leads to us being very very proud and having a very very false sense of our power and doing things to cling to our power but what

John is saying here what the Bible is bearing witness to is that the more that I know that I am not the Christ but that instead I am to pave the way for him the saner my life will be I mean we all know that the me too the hashtag me too movement was really in many ways launched over the Harvey Weinstein's alleged just as unbelievable just alleged long standing turning a blind eye abuse of his power and he abused his power in terrible terrible ways at least it's alleged I have to be careful I'm on the stage it's alleged that he's abused his power and if these allegations are true it's a horrible thing and it's launched a whole movement of women now complaining about other powerful men who've done other things by abusing their power and it's a type of insanity isn't it that some men would behave in such a way and what

[23 : 47] John is expressing here this deep seated thing is to always remember I am not the Messiah I am not God I am not the Messiah I am not God I am not God's anointed that's not who I am I mean in light of the me too movement for every person whether a man or woman to just be able to say maybe even every day I am not God I am not the Christ I am not the Messiah I am not the anointed one even in of itself we can see that that's a movement towards sanity but then John understands from God that it's not then therefore that he's sad or depressed that he's not the Christ but that God has called him in a very simple humble manner to have a very important role which is to point to the Christ to prepare the way for the Christ to live a life in such a way that people will know

Christ it's not just that he steps down from trying to be the Christ and then he goes nowhere he has nothing to do but he begins to understand that his whole life is to be preparing people to know Jesus both by how he lives and by what he says but some of you might say George I think this comment in verse 30 he must increase but I must decrease George don't you think it's a little bit pathological that any normal healthy person would say something like this don't you think it's a little bit pathological just to say that God or Jesus or whatever that anybody should somehow be getting greater and greater and greater and that they should be getting smaller and smaller and smaller that someone else or something else should be getting increasing while you diminish like

George that doesn't sound like it's psychologically healthy if you could put up the what artwork did we put up the yeah that's the first of the have we seen that yet oh you have to see that so here here's the thing about this piece of artwork I know it's pretty gruesome so this was actually not as gruesome as a lot of the paintings I could have picked those of you who know the story of John the Baptist know that how he came to an end is that there was a very powerful king and powerful kings back then could basically do whatever they wanted like if you think I mean in a sense it would be like North Korea there is no such thing as law there is just the will of the leader not quite maybe as bad as that because Rome did have some rules but things like this were very common in

Herod John the Baptist spoke out against some of the abuses of Herod in particular a particular type of abuse that he had done which involved stealing his brother's wife and marrying her and he just spoke out against it and Herod's wife his new wife hated John the Baptist for it and so Herod had John the Baptist thrown into jail and probably it was one of those situations where if John the Baptist ever just changed what he said and just let Herod do what he wanted and was silenced John the Baptist would have been able to get out of jail but John the Baptist wouldn't back down that what Herod has done is wrong and he wouldn't remain silent it wasn't that he screamed all the time but he wouldn't say that that which was wrong was good that that which was evil was fine he continued to speak truth to a very very powerful man and so

Herod left him in jail and one day sort of a dance happened at a party even the dance sort of shows the sickness of the power because Herod's wife's daughter dances a provocative dance while Herod's drunk and in a sense he gets so taken with this provocative dance he promises that this young girl his step daughter can have anything she wants up to half his kingdom and so she goes and asks her mom what she should ask for maybe she's thinking she should ask for a diamond necklace or emeralds and the mom without missing a beat said the head of John the Baptist on a platter and so it's a on one way it's a gruesome picture but it's a powerful picture a very strong man in an earthly sense his foot on

[29 : 12] John John's head removed and you see the head on a platter that's going to be taken into a banquet hall full of guests terrible atrocities by the powerful or something that had been going on for a very very very long time but here's the thing the man who is dead at the bottom with his foot somebody else's foot on him he is the same man who said he must increase but I must decrease but you see what happens here as we're gripped by the gospel this statement it's not a psychologically sick statement it's saying something which is it's actually addressing a human problem and it's addressing a human problem with something that we desperately need in fact as a Christian if you grasp that he must increase but

I must decrease it is a statement that will make tyrants tremble and abusers tremble and ideology and the state tremble God because God is small God is small what does ideology want to make God small and tame tame what is it that the state wants to make God small and tame that what's going on right now in Canada with the summer jobs thing you're all right to have a belief in God as long as God is very tiny and very tame and so we live our lives constantly as if people are big the state is big ideology is big movements are big but

God is small but as you hear the gospel as you come to know Jesus this becomes the cry of our heart he must increase but I must decrease it's not saying I should decrease so my boss can increase it's not saying I should decrease so my employer can increase it's not saying I should decrease so my husband or wife can increase it's not saying that I should decrease so some ideology can increase what it's inviting us to is begin to understand that the God who does exist is a God who shapes the planets and holds them in his course. He is the God who claims the entire earth is his. He is the God who changes history. He is the God who is far bigger than we can possibly imagine and everything else in light of him is small.

It's an invitation for you and me to grow in the humble, thankful knowledge that we have been saved and redeemed to call the planet holding, planet creating, history changing God as our good, wise, loving father.

And as our understanding of God gets bigger, the state shrinks. Human power shrinks. And we can see it in the life of John the Baptist.

[33 : 12] As God gets bigger, Herod gets smaller. As God and his wisdom and his justice and his mercy and his kindness and his love grows bigger, the cruelty and the hatred and the pretensions of the powerful become smaller.

final piece of artwork. You see, you can take the painting down.

I don't know what your stomach is for stuff like that. This is all actually old things. Just as a side, my daughter is in fine arts and I discovered when I went looking that the paintings about John the Baptist being beheaded are actually, there's lots of them.

They're very gruesome and some of them are actually quite talked about a lot. There's one that I debated putting up which I've been told is talked about. It's by a woman painter from around the year 1600.

I can't pronounce her name, but it shows these two women wrestling John the Baptist down to the ground while one of them takes a knife and slices his neck. And it's unbelievably graphic and painted in the year 1600.

[34 : 31] But I decided that would be a bit too graphic for us to show in church. But you get the point. Here's the thing. If he must increase and I must decrease, we can never make too much of Jesus.

John the Baptist now goes on and we're just going to look at these things very, very briefly. He goes on now. He's already said that Jesus is the bridegroom.

But now look at how he describes who Jesus is, beginning in verse 31. Who is Jesus? He is the one who comes from above and is above all. And then John says, listen, he who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way.

Who is Jesus? He who comes from heaven. He is above all. And who is Jesus? He is the one who bears witness to what he has seen and heard.

I am the one, when I talk to you about God, how do I talk to you about God? Because I listen to the word. How does Jesus talk about God? Because he is God. He just bears witness to what he has seen and heard.

[35 : 36] And whoever receives his testimony, verse 33, sets his seal to this, that God is true. For he whom God has sent, that's who Jesus is.

Jesus is he whom God has sent, utters the words of God. Only God can utter the words of God in this sense.

And who is Jesus? He whom God has sent, who utters the words of God. And who is Jesus? He is the one who gives the Holy Spirit without measure.

We can never make too much of Jesus. Just very briefly, if you could put up the next point. One problem that a Christian will never have is God not giving enough of the Holy Spirit.

I can quench the Holy Spirit. I can ignore the Holy Spirit. I can resist the Holy Spirit. I can do all of those things. But when I get to heaven, I will never be able to say to God, God, you did not bestow upon me enough of the Holy Spirit.

[36 : 49] Why? Because Jesus is the one who gives the Holy Spirit without measure. It can't be measured. It's too much. It's too much. He must increase, but I must decrease.

He is above all. He is sent from God. He must increase. I must decrease. And one of the problems that many of us have in our lives is that we have periods where God seems very far away.

Maybe we've been caught up in sin that makes us very, very ashamed. Maybe we're struggling with illness that makes us feel very, very weak.

Maybe we're struggling with feeling completely and utterly forgotten. Maybe we're struggling with the problems of just getting old, and we see people who are younger than us moving on, and the world moving on in ways that we don't understand, and we can't appreciate, and we don't feel valued.

Maybe we've just lost our job, and we're struggling with a sense of shame, and lack of power over unemployment. Maybe we're underemployed, and we feel just profoundly underappreciated.

[38 : 00] And when we go through times like this and seasons like this in our lives, and it's a common, common, common problem. If we were honest with each other, every single one of us here could share of times for different reasons where we would feel like this.

And it can feel as if we're not Christians at all. But the very next thing that John the Baptist says should give every single one of us as Christians great hope. Verse 35. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.

The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. Next point, Andrew. If my salvation is in my hands, I am doomed.

Why? I'm weak. I'm frail. I get tired. I get discouraged. I do terrible things.

However, since my salvation is in his hands, I can have humble confidence. Some of you, I've used this analogy many, many times.

[39 : 12] It comes from this text. When we put our hands out to Jesus and say, Jesus be my Savior and Lord, none of us should ever imagine that our hand, our arm, is long enough to reach to heaven.

I lift my little puny arm to heaven. And what am I trusting? That the strong hand of Jesus, the strong arm of Jesus, can reach from the infinite distance of heaven down to my weak, puny hand.

And any who calls out to Jesus and lifts their puny little arm, Jesus reaches down and grabs my hand. And my hand is weak.

I struggle with sickness. I struggle with feeling underappreciated. I struggle with all these things. But my salvation is not dependent upon how hard I grip onto Jesus' but how his hand grips mine.

And his hand will never let me go. And friend, his hand will never let you go when you put your hand in his. Verse 35 again, the Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.

[40 : 28] And then this scary text, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Verse 36, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life.

But the wrath of God remains on him. You know, in Canada, our wrath, most Canadians are angry at the Christian God.

Are angry at the God who's introduced by Jesus. How can you let all these things happen? How can these things be happening to me? And it's really, really funny.

In Canada, this idea that every human being has the wrath of God on him is deeply offensive. Yet every single Canadian or most Canadians can think that our wrath at God can remain on him.

And that's fine. we have a very, very hard time even thinking that God could be indifferent about us. But we have no problem at all thinking that we can be perpetually indifferent about God.

[41 : 43] And we live in a world, we live in a world where we die, where no utopia ever works, where we do wrong.

And in some simple way, surely we can understand that we are separated from God in a way which is problematic.

And God's anger at our evil and our indifference and our callousness and our pride and our vanity and our envy and our lusts and our gluttony.

Why is it that we would want God to start to think that any type of evil is fine? See, here's what this text tells us about God.

The next point, Andrew. You and I can be anger-driven without a trace of love. But in this world, you cannot be love-driven without ever being angry.

[43 : 08] In this text, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. It's talking not about a God who's anger-driven, but is love-driven.

And because God is love-driven, he will always hate those things in us which are hatred and sin and abuse of power and self-righteousness.

And he will never stop being loving. And so his anger, because of his love, will continue to exist.

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains him. The next point, Andrew. I can obey God without any faith in him, but I cannot have faith in Jesus without wanting to obey him.

We can obey God purely and utterly out of fear, out of duty and obligation. But if you trust God, you'll want to obey him.

[44 : 26] If I never trust my wife, if I, sorry, if I always want to not, if I never want to do what my wife asks me to do, she will come to the proper conclusion that I don't love her and I don't trust her.

But if I love her and trust her, the more I love her and the more I trust her, the more I will want to do what she asks.

And so it is with God. If you could put up the next point. Death, sin, shame, disease, alienation.

If we're honest, it's easy to imagine that God's wrath remains on us. But the gospel is, in this text, whoever, you have gender dysphoria, are you same-sex attracted?

Are you black or white? Are you rich? Are you poor? Are you well-educated or are you not very well-educated? Are you good-looking or are you very plain?

[45 : 43] Whoever, it doesn't matter, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son or reject the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

When I believe in Jesus, the just wrath of God on me is laid on him and he gives me eternal life.

That's what the gospel is. The just wrath of God on me is laid on him and he gives me eternal life.

What is it saying? It is saying, I have peace with God. It is saying, I have all that is wrong in my life has been pardoned.

What is it saying? It says that I begin to know the eternal life of God on this side of the grave. What is it saying? That God has given me a claim to heaven that comes not because of my deservings, but because of his unfailing, unstoppable love.

[46 : 55] The same love which will never surrender or make peace with evil is the same love that led Jesus to the cross to die for you and me.

Please stand. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, if this was just sort of therapeutic advice, it still would sound really weird.

It would sound very odd. But Father, we give you thanks and praise that you never make peace with evil.

You never make peace with abuse. You never make peace with hatred. You never make peace with injustice.

You never make peace with violence. We thank you, Father, that you are love and you never make peace with evil.

[48 : 03] But we thank you, Father, as well that because you are love that your son came and died on the cross to make us right with you.

That he was willing to come and take my place and take that penalty which I deserved upon himself. To take the death that I deserved upon himself.

To take the shame that I deserve upon himself. To take the sin that is mine upon himself. Father, thank you that your son in love for us, seeing our weakness but still loving us was willing to come and do that.

And Father, thank you so much that when I put my hand in the hand of Jesus, he will never let me go. That he will take my hand every day until I die and take my hand through my death into the new heaven and the new earth.

that his hand is strong, his love is strong and it is unstoppable. And so Father, as we are gripped by the strong hand of love of Jesus, we ask Father that you might work a work of healing in our minds and in our hearts.

[49 : 20] That increasingly the cry of our heart will be that you must increase and I must decrease. Father, all these things we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior.

Amen.