

The Gospel and religion

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[0 : 0 0] Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us that we might understand your word. And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

So this week I was in a coffee shop and one of my friends is an Orthodox Jewish man. And he came in and he said, George, I'm really glad I found you here because I have a question that I want to ask you.

And I said, okay, well, it's actually sort of funny. I'm just going to be really honest about this. I was working on my sermon. And, you know, in the sermon, I'm going to share the gospel with you.

And inwardly when he came and said, I'd like to ask you a question, and he pulls a chair over to sit down. I think to myself, I'm busy preparing a sermon to witness to Jesus. I don't have time to witness to Jesus to this guy.

Like, I wish you weren't here. That's what's going on in my mind, just to be completely honest and transparent with you. And then I got the check in my spirit and I thought, okay, I'll close my Bible, like close the book and just, I'm going to listen.

[1 : 1 1] God's brought him here. Anyway, so he says, George, I don't know if you, you know, they're going to be legalizing marijuana, cannabis. And I've been doing, I invest and I've been, the growth potential and financial returns potential from investing in the cannabis industry is huge.

And so what do you think? Do you think I should invest in the cannabis industry? He said, I'm going to be asking my rabbi about this tomorrow.

And he said, one of the, and then, you know, so we get talking a little bit. I mean, we actually talked for about 25 minutes over a range of things. But one of the things he said is because most of their products have been determined to be kosher.

So, but he, he's a great guy, by the way. And I've had lots of conversations with him. So I said, this is actually part of what I said to him right off the bat.

I said, you know, here's where we really need to learn from Jesus and the question that he asks. And I said, the question that Jesus asks all the time is what does the Bible actually say?

[2 : 1 6] I said, the problem for us human beings is that we try to follow God and then we develop traditions. And before you know it, you develop a tradition based on the tradition.

And then you have a tradition based on the tradition based on the tradition. And then you have, you know, whatever it is. Like you just keep piling on traditions and you forget what the Bible says. And he said, that's a very interesting thought.

And I said, so what is it? Like I said, all of the dietary laws, like if you go back in the dietary laws, like, you know, especially the book of Leviticus, right, the Pentateuch, the Torah. And I said, what's the constant theme in the book of Leviticus?

And he said, and I said, he starts to think. And I said, what it is, is be holy for I am holy. And the purpose of the law is to prepare you to live a holy life so you can meet with a holy God.

And so I said, that has to be the concern behind everything you do. So I had a bit more of a talk about it.

[3 : 18] And I said, well, you know, it would be kosher and all. I said, well, ask your rabbi, would it be all right for the men to all smoke a joint before they came in for the synagogue service?

And if it isn't, then, like, what are you investing in? We talked about some other things, but you get the point. And we had a very, very interesting conversation.

In fact, he said, depending on what his rabbi said, he'd like to try to have me and the rabbi get together and talk. So you can pray about that, actually. I don't know what the rabbi is going to say, but you can pray that maybe something will come out of that.

But that story, it's actually one of the things, because it actually is a perfect introduction for this very confusing text that Anne read.

So if you get your Bibles and look at Galatians 5, Galatians, sorry, Galatians chapter 4, verse 21. And some of you, if you are trying to follow it, it's a very, very complicated text of Scripture.

[4 : 18] And let me tell you partly why it's very complicated, and it's not very flattering to you and me. We're used to the quick soundbite. For many people, the news in the metro newspaper is too many words, you know, where we get all of the news we need from listening to a few 15-second soundbites on radio.

And what you need to do when you read this text, and so actually, you know what, it's like, if you, later on during the coffee hour, with the parents' permission, try to find a two- or three-year-old, a little tyke who's just learning how to talk, and try having a conversation with them.

And one of the things which is so neat about talking to a little kid who's just learning language is I might ask a question of one of them or make a comment, and the little kid will look at, like, nobody can look with the intensity as a little kid can look at you.

Like, they can just look at you. And you know that the little gerbils are working behind the eyes trying to figure it out. And then I move on to another topic, and I move on to another topic, and then the child finally speaks.

But they haven't followed you with the new topic because they've been still thinking about the first thing that you said. And they'll make a comment. And what's the problem with this text that we're going to read is it's like a piece of poetry from John Donne or George Herbert, where every two or three or four words, the image shifts, and the idea shifts.

[5 : 52] And it happens very, very rapidly. And we're used to just reading, and we sort of get caught up on the first idea, and we haven't quite followed that the writer is moving from idea to idea, from image to image, and linking them every couple of words.

And that's the problem with this text. So that's why we find it hard, one of the reasons why we find it hard to read it. But if you look at the very first verse in 21, it says, chapter 4, verse 21, tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?

Like, that's exactly what I said to my friend. Like, what does the Bible say? Like, you want to be under the law? Like, what does the Bible say as a whole? Like, don't just think about your traditions. Like, what does the Bible say?

So it's the same question. And Paul, of course, it's the same question that Jesus asked the Pharisees and the Sadducees all of the time. Like, what does the Bible say? Like, do you actually read it? Like, go back to that.

Forget about your traditions for a second, but go back to that. Just as a bit of an aside, and this is more of an Anglican confession moment. And those of you who, the only Anglican church you've ever attended is this one.

[6 : 58] You might not know it. This, by the way, the problem of traditions isn't just something for it. The problem of legalism is everywhere. Do you know that in most Anglican churches in this city, we're not part of the Anglican Church of Canada, we're part of the Anglican Network in Canada, but in most churches in this city, you're not allowed to say hallelujah during Advent and Lent.

Like, what a stupid rule. Like, isn't that just stupid? Let me tell you, if I said that in synod, like, everybody would be shocked.

Oh! Well, moment, like, really, you know, maybe the rule in Lent should be every hour we say hallelujah. Like, I don't know. Like, it should be the opposite. But somehow or another, you get traditions on traditions on traditions, and before you know it, like, you've forgotten what the Bible says.

Anyway, so I'm just going to read the text through making a couple of comments, and I'm going to sort of get what's the big ideas that are going on behind it, okay? So it's chapter 4, verse 21, and it begins like this.

It says, Just pause here for a second.

[8 : 29] Now, it's not saying that it is an allegory. If you want to know what a good example of an allegory is, if those of us who read all books, if you've ever read Pilgrim's Progress, it's an allegory.

Every character, in fact, it's so obvious, you know, they all have the names, so you can figure it out, right? So Paul isn't saying that the story of Abraham and Isaac and Ishmael and Sarah and Hagar, which you find in Genesis 16, 17, and 21, that it's an allegory.

He's not saying that it's an allegory. He's saying, I want to think about this as if it's an allegory, because there's, in fact, some symbolic and figurative meanings in this text, which I want you to think about.

There's larger lessons from this text than a mere recounting of who slept with whom and which baby came with which mom. And so that's what he's saying.

So go back to verse 24. Now, this may be interpreted allegorically. These women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai bearing children for slavery.

[9 : 34] She is Hagar. Now, Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia. We would call it now Saudi Arabia.

That's where it is. She corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. And by the way, for the Jewish people who are listening to this text, or if there were Jewish people in this room today listening to the text, this would completely and utterly shock them and offend them.

Because Paul is saying that what we now call Saudi Arabia is where present Jerusalem is. And they would see Jerusalem and the Jewish people as descending from Sarah, not Hagar.

Paul is making this very, very, very big claim that the present Jerusalem is really, in a sense, outside of the promised land, outside of what God is doing in terms of new covenants.

It would have just shocked them. And I'm going to explain it in a moment. But it would have been a shocking thing to them. Like, this would have been, like, an unimaginable type of comparison.

[10 : 44] And note as well, just one thing. He's not saying that it corresponds to Jerusalem in the Old Testament. He's not rejecting the Old Testament. Okay? Paul never rejects the Old Testament.

In fact, he values the Old Testament. He's opening it up to them. And he's not putting down Moses. He's not putting down the law. He's talking about the present Jerusalem. In other words, those who, even though they are raised Jewish, and even though they have the Old, what we call the Old Testament, they would call the Tanakh, they have not recognized the Messiah that all of the Old Testament is pointing to.

That's why he's saying present Jerusalem. Verse 25 again. Now, Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia. She corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

Verse 26. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. He's now trying...

Remember, this is all a bit of an analogy between Sarah and Hagar. And just pause here. If you're wondering how on earth this idea comes about, and this... Part of the reason sometimes the Old Testament is hard to read is that there's ideas in the Old Testament that we're not that familiar with.

[11 : 57] But there's a very important part in the book of Ezekiel. I think it's chapters 40 through 48, where Ezekiel has a long vision of heavenly Jerusalem.

And Ezekiel is a prophet during Jerusalem's exile. Ezekiel is in exile in Babylon, away from earthly Jerusalem, and God gives him this vision of a heavenly Jerusalem.

And that was a very important piece of thought for Jews ever since. And there's another piece of the Old Testament, which is all the way through the Old Testament, is that sometimes when the word...

When it talks about Zion, and I know that's not just something from the Matrix movie series, it's actually based in the Old Testament. And sometimes when Paul talks...

When the Bible talks... When the Old Testament talks about Zion, it's referring to, in a sense, the fortress of King David. But other times, it's obviously something more. It's the place of true praise in the presence of the true king.

[13 : 02] It's something which is obvious from the context that it's not talking about the current city, that Zion is often an image for this heavenly place where things are done the proper way, which touches earth.

So Paul here is actually then... He's moving around from this image to image to image. And if you were Jewish, this heavenly Jerusalem, you'd think, Oh, Ezekiel. Oh, you'd think of Zion.

Okay, but for us, we don't get it. That's why I'm just telling you. So go back. We'll read verse 26 again. I hope I haven't put you all to sleep, but I'll unpack it more in a moment. Verse 26. But Jerusalem above is free.

And she is our mother. In other words, Christians' true home is heaven. And where heaven is, there is freedom.

And our home is there, in a sense, our birth comes from heaven. You can think of John 3.16, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son to the end that all who believe in him will not perish, but have everlasting life.

[14 : 08] Just pause here in this text. This is another thing that happened on Friday morning in the same Starbucks. So I'm reading my Bible, and an older guy, a very nice older guy, quiet older guy, he comes up and he sort of taps me on the shoulders, and he says, Is my name in there?

The book I'm reading, the Bible. And I probably had a deer in the headlight moment for a second, and then I said, Well, actually, I almost said his name. I'll call him Bob. Actually, Bob it is.

He said, Really? I said, Yeah. I said, Jesus says, For God so loved the world that whoever believes in his only begotten son will not perish, but have everlasting life.

And when it says whoever and all, Jesus was thinking of you. You are in the book. And he just smiled a quiet smile and said, Well, that's really interesting.

And then he left the Starbucks. So I pray for him. You can pray for him too. You can just call him Bob, but God will figure out where the prayer should go. So verse 26 again, But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

[15 : 16] Verse 27. And now he's going to quote from the book of Isaiah, chapter 54, verse 1. Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear. Break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor.

For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband. So Paul is once again saying there's this other prophecy from Isaiah, which is going to talk.

It's talking about the same type of image of Sarah and Hagar and Isaac and Ishmael, and it's talking about a particular type of birth and how God works. Verse 28.

Now you brothers and sisters, and this is one of the key parts of the whole part, okay? I'm going to explain it in a moment. But verse 28. Now you brothers and sisters like Isaac are children of promise.

That's each one of us who hear who are a follower of Jesus. We're like Isaac. We are children of promise. Verse 29. But just as at the time he who was born according to the flesh, that's Ishmael, persecuted him who was born according to the spirit, so also it is now.

[16 : 27] Paul is being persecuted by legalists. Just pause here for a second. He's not being persecuted by pagans. He's being persecuted from people within the church who are legalists.

This is very, very, very... I mean, other places he talks about being persecuted by the state. This is not a text about persecution by atheists or the state. This is by how the gospel will often end.

People who believe the gospel and try to be shaped by the gospel will often be persecuted by legalists. Verse 30.

But what does the scripture say? Cast out the slave woman and her son for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman. So, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave, but of the free woman.

We're not children of the slave, but of the free woman. So, Andrew, if you could put up the first point, that would be great. And we have to try to figure this all out.

[17 : 39] So those of you, maybe, who have been here for several weeks and I haven't put to sleep and you remember what I said, what... Here's the first thing.

The infinite God made a promise to bless finite and fallen human beings. The infinite God made a promise to bless finite and fallen human beings.

That's really how the story of Abraham begins in Genesis chapter 12, verses 1 to 3. Abraham at the time is 75 years old and his wife Sarah is 65 years old.

This is very important to the story. Abraham is 75, Sarah is 65. Now, just because Abraham lived 4,000 years ago doesn't mean he's stupid. He knows when women can stop having babies.

He doesn't have a PhD, doesn't use a flush toilet, doesn't use an iPhone, but he's not stupid. He understands how natural cycles work, in fact, far better than us people who think that meat just comes automatically in a grocery store wrapped in plastic.

[18 : 55] He knew how meat came. He knew how to get it. He knew the cycles. His whole life depended upon reading the cycles. So here he is at 75 years of age.

His wife is 65. They have no children. They've been married a long time. They've never been able to have a child. And God says, through you and through your seed as the story develops, I'm going to bless all the nations of the world.

And one of the reasons that Abraham's considered to be a man of faith is he believes God. He's 75 years old with a 65-year-old wife and he's not polygamous. He just has one wife and he believes God.

Isn't that? That's stunning. And so one of the arguments that Paul has been developing is he's saying, in a sense, let's just think about this for a second, this promise that God makes that he's going to bless.

He is going to bless through Abraham and through Abraham's seed all of the nations. Now just pause here for a second. This is a very important pause, even if it puts me a few minutes over on my sermon.

[20 : 00] For some people, even me talking about this is very painful in another way because there's probably people in the church, maybe women in the church who long to marry and have children but were never able to marry.

And there are very likely women in the church who are married or were married and long to be able to have a child or many children and weren't able to have children. And so to even read this text can be painful for some people.

And it's a very important aside, but one of the wonderful things about the Bible, in fact, part of the whole drama of the text is that in Abraham's day, a woman who could not produce children was basically of no value whatsoever.

And one of the wonderful things about the Bible is that that message is never communicated in the text. In fact, the opposite is communicated. That a man's worth and a woman's worth and their value to God does not depend upon them being married.

That is an unbelievably counter-cultural idea throughout the entire time the Old Testament and the New Testament was written, and it's a counter-cultural idea today. And that not only does a man and woman's value not depend upon them being able to be married, it also, for a woman, does not depend for a moment upon her ability to have children.

[21 : 30] She has a value and a dignity and a worth before Almighty God that is not connected to her ability to have procreation, to have babies.

And so part of the drama and the tragedy of the story in Genesis is around Sarah and Abraham's inability to have children, but the text itself is going to point of how God loves Sarah and loves Abraham and he loves all who are single, all who are married, all who are married and have not been able to have children, that your worth and your value and your ability to be used by God to God's glory is separate from these things that the culture says are very important.

So let's go back to this particular story. So what happens in this story? So God has made this promise, the infinite God made a promise to bless finite and fallen human beings. Abraham at 75 with a 65-year-old wife believes this and begins to act on it.

Time goes by. 21 years later, nothing's happened. You add 21, going to do the math really quickly, 21 and 75 is 96, 21 and 65 is 86.

Nothing's happened. Abraham and Sarah aren't dummies. Not many 86-year-old women have babies. In fact, none of them do. So what they decide to do is that they're going to take matters into their own hand.

[23 : 02] It sounds very, very devout, doesn't it? God has said that he's going to do this. I'm going to be very, very, very devout. And because I'm going to be very, very devout, here's what we're going to do. In those days, not only was it, could people hold slaves, but in those days, men could also have a concubine.

So in modern terms, it would be that I'm married to Louise, that's untouchable, and my heirs come through Louise, they're my legitimate children, but I could also decide to have, in a sense, a legally accepted sex object on the side.

Another woman, a concubine, that I can have sex with as often as I want. And that was legally and culturally acceptable. That's just the way the world works. Like, why wouldn't a man be able to have that ability?

And, you know, in those days, lots of, you know, men still die younger than women, and lots of men die in battle and stuff like that, and there might be more women around, or a man's just very rich or very powerful or very virile, so he has his legitimate wife, and then he has one or more concubines on the side so he can have sex with them.

And Abraham and Sarah go along with the culture. And another thing in the culture of that time is that in that culture of the time, in a case like Abraham and Sarah, they can, Sarah can say, I am going to, it's almost like a legal contract, I'm going to allow you to have sex with this woman and whatever children you produce through having sex with this woman, we're going to count it as if I had had the baby and it will be the heir.

[24 : 27] Legal, culturally acceptable way to do it. And so Abraham and Sarah, knowing of God's promise, they're 96 and they're 86, and so Abraham starts sleeping with Hagar and he produces a son, Ishmael.

96 years old, he has a son. So here's the, if you could put up the next point, Andrew, this is, this is really an important point in, in, in Paul's argument here in Galatians 4.

Religion, because you see, basically what Paul is saying here is the Bible is saying here is that the Bible condemns legalism and religion. human beings have to be saved from religion.

And one of the things I said to my, my Jewish friend, I, I shared with my Jewish friend was that, you know, part of the problem of, of any community is that we, we start to lose our way with traditions and rules.

and it's not just, there can be other types of legalism. I, I've given an example of legalism from Anglicanism, but you know, when I was very, very active in charismatic churches, there's a different type of legalism in many charismatic churches.

[25 : 47] You've got to get the emotion going. Holiness is a particular emotion. And if you don't get that emotion, the spirit wasn't there.

there's a famous story of a person who came up to the praise musician and said, boy, I really felt the Holy Spirit fall at this point in time in your song. And this guy said, no, that's when the bass kicked in.

You were just having an aesthetic experience. That's all it was. And it's a very subtle way to take us away from, from the Bible and dependence upon the gospel and dependence upon God that we have to have an aesthetic experience or an emotional experience.

or some other type of thing. There's very subtle ways by which our focus goes away from Jesus and his word and goes in other directions. And so, this text is a profound, even though it's hard for us to understand, if we start to understand how he's using the images, he's showing here how, what does Abraham and Sarah do?

It appears as if they're devout. God's made this promise. Let's make this promise happen. And how we're going to make it happen? Well, let's look around in our world, in our culture, the best of our culture.

[27 : 09] And we're going to look at the best of our culture. We're going to look at the best of our laws. And we're going to, we're going to do the best thing in our culture. And so, what's the best thing in our culture? I'm going to sleep with Hagar and I'm going to have a baby.

So here's one of the problems when we read the Bible. You see, one of the things, if you start to read the Old Testament, never think that because you read the Old Testament, every time you read something, God is giving it two thumbs up. Way to go.

No. Abraham sins in this. Why? It's clear even before Genesis 12 that you're not supposed to, for a married man, you don't sleep with somebody other than your wife.

Doesn't matter if it's legal. Doesn't matter if it's cultural. Doesn't matter if that's what all the smart people say. In the Bible, it's wrong. So what Paul has done, I mean, what Abraham and Sarah have done is they've been religious.

They've taken the best of the culture, the best of the law, and they've done something by their own imagination and power to accomplish something. At the same time, they've done something which actually literally goes against what God has said to do.

[28 : 19] And that's what religion and spirituality do. And so that's why I put it here, religion chooses presumption and natural, in quotation marks, powers over a sovereign God who promises and works a miracle.

And in this particular case, I said a miracle because the miracle is going to come in the story of Isaac and as we're going to see, it's a miracle that's replicated in your life and mine when we give our lives to Jesus. But religion chooses presumption and natural powers over a sovereign God who promises and works a miracle.

So, what happens? So, Isaac, sorry, Abraham and Sarah, they have a baby through Hagar and his name is Ishmael and there begins to be, you know, one of the ways that even the Old Testament shows how God does not bless polygamy is that instantly there's conflict.

There's conflict now that Hagar starts to look down her nose at Sarah. Sarah now resents Hagar. There's conflict. There ends up being conflict as well when Ishmael and eventually the child of promise is born, which ultimately leads that Hagar has to be sent away to what we now call Saudi Arabia.

Muslims, by the way, in the Quran, rewrite this entire story to make Ishmael the hero, just so you know. If you ever try doing this as a Bible study with Muslims, they'll say, no, no, no, the Bible's wrong.

[29 : 42] It's corrupt. No, the Bible's not wrong. It's right. But that's a separate story. So what happens is four years after Abraham and Isaac, Abraham and Sarah have done this with Hagar.

God shows up again and speaks to Abraham and says, I'm going to give you a child. Abraham doesn't have a flush toilet, but he's not stupid. 100 years old, Sarah's 90. And Abraham's reaction is to laugh at God.

See, one of the wonderful things about the Bible, you see, if our relationship with God was just magic, you laugh at God, it doesn't work. You know, because in magic, you have to have the right attitudes, you have the right moves, you have to be in the right groove, you know.

But in the way God works, in his economy, it doesn't have anything to do with us. Like, there's a really wonderful story in, I think it's John 5, where, and it's not often caught by people who preach and teach the Bible, but basically, there's a man who's never been healed and he's by the pool in Bethesda, and basically, he's a grumpy, disbelieving guy, and Jesus heals him anyway.

Because it's not as if faith is a type, you know, God, faith is a type of way of adding up merit and if we get enough good things about us then God will do a miracle.

[31 : 06] It's all about God being sovereignly powerful. He does the miracle. Abraham, so anyway, Abraham's 100 years old, Sarah's 90, God says, I'm now going to give you a child, and Abraham laughed, Sarah earlier laughed at God, and Isaac's born.

Recognized as a miracle back then, has to be recognized as a miracle now. 90-year-old woman from a 100-year-old man, they have a baby. His name's Isaac. Could you put up the next point, please? We'll have to see.

God keeps his promise by performing a miracle. See, religion has presumption and natural powers.

But God performs a miracle. And a miracle is a supernatural act of God that the natural order cannot produce on its own. I think even today, medical science could not have a 90-year-old woman have a baby.

It's a miracle. So here's then what is going on in the story. God has made a promise to bless Abraham and through Abraham to be a blessing that will touch every people group on the planet.

[32 : 28] And religion tries to fulfill that by its own powers and with its own presumptions. It's a bit of an image or a symbol for how religion and legalism within Christianity always works.

Using its own powers and its own presumption. And instead, against this, God performs a miracle in the birth of Isaac. It's completely and utterly shocking.

And look again now at verse 28 in chapter 4. We haven't looked at the Bible as much. We've been talking about the Bible without reading. But look again at verse 28 of chapter 4. Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise.

This is a completely stunning text. I do not make myself a Christian. Next point.

I do not make myself only a miracle by God can make a human being into a child of God. Every single person here, whether we have very, very, very weak faith, intermittent faith, not even sure if we have any faith anymore because life has just seemed to beat us up so much where we are struggling so deeply with shame.

[33 : 51] What matters isn't the strength of our faith, the strength of the emotions that go along with faith. What matters is that we have put our faith and trust in God and when we do that, God creates a miracle.

Every person here who has given their life to Jesus, God did a miracle. And if you are here and have not yet given your life to Jesus, there is nothing that you have done or nothing that you have to do.

There's nothing in you that's so bad or so broken or so shameful that God will not do a miracle in your life when you call out to Jesus and ask him to be your Savior and Lord.

He turns no one away. Could you put up the next point? We're going to go through these a little bit quicker. We receive the miracle by having faith that God will keep his promise.

It's just really in many ways as simple as this. If we had some kids here and I was doing a kids talk and I would say the first two people, first two kids who come up here, I'll give you a toonie.

[35 : 16] And let's say the kids believe me and they came up. All they have to do, they have to believe that if they come to me, I'll give them a toonie. And how do they, what happens?

They put out their hand. That's all they do. And I put out my hand and I drop the toonie into their hand. I have two toonies in my pocket. That's why he said two. And that's all that the Christian life is.

God makes this astounding promise that he will do a miracle and in that miracle he will take you who are dead and make you alive. He will take you who are filled with shame and make you blameless.

He will take you who has not been perfect at following the law and he will clothe you with the righteousness of Jesus. He will take you against whom countless accusations and sins have been made and he will pay for them in the person of his son.

He will take you who are not even able to touch the sandal of Jesus and he will make you one to whom Jesus will put his arms around and call you his brother and sister in Christ.

[36 : 25] He does all of that as a miracle. And faith is just putting out our hand because we believe what God has said and God is the one who does the act.

Next point. God accomplished something once for all in history. In Jesus being conceived in the womb of Mary being born his sinless life his miracles his teaching but all leading to his death upon the cross John's gospel is Jesus is introduced humanly speaking by John the Baptist saying to his disciples as Jesus walks by behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

That God in history accomplishes something. See one of the things that all religion does all legalism does is that in legalism Jesus becomes an example in legalism he becomes a teacher in legalism he might become your guru but he is never the savior he is never God doing something definitively in history that only he can do and accomplish that we receive by faith.

God in Jesus accomplished something once for all in history. Next point. In salvation I accomplish nothing I can only receive what he accomplished for me.

In salvation I accomplish nothing I can only receive what he accomplished for me. You know that's why Spurgeon said the Christian faith is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.

[38 : 23] It's the same analogy as me with the coin. It's like street people saying to another street people that that guy over there in that corner has promised to give you bread if you're hungry and if you believe I'm just telling that other person and I say yeah if you come here I'll give you bread and you just go over and you put your hand out and God gives you the bread of life.

Next point. I receive and then I live and I live out of receiving. See the way the book of Galatians is structured is the first two chapters are basically biography autobiography.

Paul tells important things about himself so they'll understand why he is what he's saying is authoritative that ultimately the autobiography is to get across the point that ultimately it's all Paul is doing is just telling people what Jesus said and about who he is and what he did.

That's all he's doing. He got it right from the horse's mouth so to speak and then chapters three and four are theology. It's trying to communicate to us who it is that Jesus is and what it is that he accomplished on the cross.

And chapters five and six which we'll start looking at next week is how do we live after we've received this miracle. That God he does a miracle when Jesus everything about Jesus is a miracle.

[39 : 48] His conception his birth his life his miracles his teaching his death his resurrection his ascension it's all one miracle and God accomplishes a miracle in us when we put our hands in faith and he gives us Jesus.

Jesus and what he accomplished on the cross. God gives you Jesus. He gives me Jesus. And the Christian life begins when we receive and is lived out of receiving.

God bless you and what God bless you can you put up the last point? I think it's the last point. The important thing about faith is its object not its own strength.

Just want to sort of very closely you don't have to know a precise moment that you gave your life to Jesus. You don't have to know the moment. Like I don't know.

Like if you asked a little kid when was the moment you began loving your mom? Like what kid would know the answer to that question? They might know they might be able to say by the way between the ages of 12 and 17 I hated my mom but then something happened and I started to like her.

[41 : 03] But you know you ask a six year old when did you start loving your mom? It would be like I don't know like I've just always loved her. And so there are many people here who have become Christians that the receiving of what Jesus done is not a moment that you can remember because you can't remember a moment when you didn't trust.

But you know what? Faith isn't about knowing the mechanisms or the emotions it's about the object. And some of you might know that I began the year not a Christian and the end of the year I did become a Christian I don't really know when it happened.

That's fine you don't have to know the moment because what matters is the object not your faith or how emotionally strong it was or how strong your willpower is.

and once Jesus does this God does this miracle in you to make you his you're his forever. He doesn't undo the miracle. And you're invited to live in really a whole new way to understand that God has done a miracle in me and in you.

And that there's a type now of a security and a hope and a promise that cannot be taken away. And we're invited to live with a type of quiet confidence and courage that comes out of reception.

[42 : 25] And the same God who performed a miracle can do a miracle in your friends and he'll do other miracles in your life as well. Please stand. I want to just emphasize again if you are here and you've never put out your hand to Jesus I don't know maybe if you're a very visual person just even now just put your hands out or at least you can do it out loud or just in your own heart and mind and say Jesus Father you've promised that if I put my hand out you will give me Jesus and I put my hand out to you now and give me Jesus.

I want you to do that miracle in my life to make me your child and never let you go and do it in your own words and God will hear that prayer and answer it. Let's bow our heads.

Father many of us struggle people because we hear texts like this but we quickly forget and we think that salvation is a result of how emotional we are or how good our moral life is or how good our devotional life is or how much things we're accomplishing for you or Father we start thinking it's all about us and what we accomplished as if you're looking at all of our excellencies and Father thank you so much that it's a miracle Father that you did a miracle in Jesus and having him born and live and die on the cross and rise from the dead and that you invite us to come and receive what he's accomplished and you do a miracle when we put our hands out to you Father we thank you Father for this help us Father to live our lives day by day gripped and remembering what you have done for us and help us to live our lives confident in that miracle that you will never undo and grateful for what you have done Father may our lives be marked by confidence and gratitude in who you are in the power of Jesus and your promise to make us your own forever all this we ask in

Jesus's name amen discovery went I want to be