

The Fatal Mistake of Religion and Spirituality

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[0 : 00] utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

This is the gospel of Christ. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ. Please remain standing as we together recite the affirming Christian faith by saying the Apostles' Creed.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is sitting at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

He shall come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

[1 : 13] Amen. Just remaining standing for another moment and just bow our heads in prayer. Father, Father, I thank you that you are a God who has spoken and has spoken in your word and continues to speak to us, not just in private revelations, Father, but everything, Father, ultimately is at one in harmony with how you have spoken to us in your word written in the Bible.

And Father, we ask that you help us to use the best of our minds and the best of our hearts and the best of our wills to understand your word. But Father, as we ask for this, we confess before you that the best of our minds is not enough, that we need, Father, you to meet us in the Bible as you pour out your Holy Spirit upon us, that our mind unaided is inadequate to truly digest your word and have your word enter into us so that our lives will bear fruit for your glory.

So Father, we stand before you, we ask that you would pour out your Holy Spirit upon us with might and power and deep conviction so that we might perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name today and every day until we see you face to face.

And this we ask in Jesus' name, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. Just a little while ago, I discovered that a friend of mine whom I've known for quite a few years, that he's probably about the same age as me, that his marriage of 30 plus years has probably come to an end.

And that's, of course, a very sad thing. Ever since I've heard about it, I've been praying for him and his wife. And he and his wife attend a very, very, very solid church where they have been very, very active and involved.

[3 : 09] And, you know, they've done all sorts of the things that you would think to be right in terms of their kids and all sorts of other things. And I don't know, obviously, what goes on inside the house and I don't know what's, you know, brought the marriage maybe to an end.

Maybe not to an end, but maybe to an end. But it's just very sad. And it raises a very interesting type of problem. It sort of touches on a deep fear that many of us have about the Christian faith is that it sometimes it just seems as if it doesn't work.

Right? That here's this couple that could be married for over 30 years and attend a really solid church and they probably read the Bible and prayed and maybe even read the Bible and prayed together and did all sorts of the things that you think they should do.

So how on earth could something like this happen? And because you see at a very, very deep level many of us believe and think that Christianity should make us better and it will work out so that our lives are better and that they're an example and they bring glory to Christ.

And that's not only how we think it's how many people think that, you know, doing something like that things should turn out different and if they don't we think to ourselves like where on earth is God?

[4 : 31] And maybe even start to think well why on earth would we even bother with all of this stuff? So when we hear stories about this apart from the fact that we might now be very touched and maybe some of you will pray for this unnamed couple that I learned about a couple of months ago but it raises sort of real issues for us like how on earth can Christianity be true?

How on earth can the Bible be true? if things like that happen to people who seem to do the right things? And if that's the case why bother? So as I said we're going through the book of Romans and the book of the text of scripture believe it or not with all that odd language about circumcision and uncircumcision it actually goes to the very heart of this particular question and this particular fear and expectation that many of us carry around.

But just before we go there if you have your Bibles you might want to start turning to Romans for it. Andrew could you put up our verse Romans 1 16 to 17? So if you're a guest here this morning as we've been going through the book of Romans the text that we're reading the way the book of Romans is written the book of Romans is a book and Paul sat down and he wrote the book and the way it's written is that the first 15 verses are basically hi I'm Paul this is a few things about me and these are some of the things I've done and he's trying to make a personal connection and then in verse 16 and 17 he almost models those of you who are used to academia he almost models the universe the abstract that appears at the beginning of academic papers where they try to summarize the entire article in a paragraph and in fact many people don't read articles they just read the abstracts because it's a lot quicker get rid of all the other bump confession is afterwards if that's what you've been doing and pretending that you've been reading the whole paper and Paul actually models this it's almost like an abstract verses 16 and 17

Paul gives an abstract of the entire book of Romans and then after verse 16 and 17 he tries to sell the problem in verses 18 in chapter 1 to chapter 3 verse 20 is Paul selling the problem if you're used to management type of language where you have to first sell the problem before you sell the solution that's what happens 118 to 320 and then 321 which we looked at last week is Paul beginning to outline what the solution to the problem is and chapter 4 that's all part of Paul trying to outline the solution so we're sort of oriented in the book because everything in the book is summarized in these two verses would you read these two verses out loud with me 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 so that's what the whole book is about and it doesn't sound like it's talking about anything like that very much with all this going on and on and on about circumcision but it's dealing directly with this problem how is it that somebody could go to a good church for 30 years a solid church and believe the right things and probably be pretty good at prayer and reading the bible at least if not exemplary at least average in those circles and how can why isn't it why is it that something like that would happen why isn't it that their lives are better well let's let's listen to what Paul says here in Romans chapter 4 beginning at the first verse what then shall we say was gained by Abraham our forefather according to the flesh just pause right off the bat so what's happening here is this when I was in the Anglican

Church of Canada people called me a fundamentalist and it was a slur it was an insult and and one of the reasons that they called me would insult me by calling me a fundamentalist is because I would ask the question what does the Bible say as if that's somehow a narrow-minded anti-intellectual fundamentalist question but the Bible teaches you to ask what does the Bible say so what Paul has just done in chapter 3 in verses 21 to 31 which is just before this is he outlines this these series of images about what it is that God has done for us in the cross how God has acted in a way which is right with effective power to make human beings right with himself and he gives these series of images about it and then the reader might be saying well that's alright that just popped out of his head and Paul who's writing to Jewish and to others he says he really says to himself you might be saying well that's just popped out of your head

[9 : 31] Paul what does the Bible say and that's what Paul does right now he says well I've said this what does the Bible say it's not a fundamentalist question it's a Bible question if you read the Bible you realize that the Bible wants us to ask that question what does the Bible say and the other thing and I'm not going to try to prove it or disprove it right now but it's interesting that when Paul says well what does the Bible say as you read it you'll see that basically he believes that the Bible teaches that when you hear the Bible speaking you're hearing God speaking you know Paul knows all about different authorship and all that but that ultimately there's one divine author of all of the scriptures whether the scriptures are written by Moses in the year 1400 BC or David 400 years later that ultimately even though there were different human authors there's one divine author telling one story one coherent story that begins at Genesis 1 and goes to Revelation 22 and so Paul asks the question what does the Bible say is this whole image that God does something with effective power in a way which is right to make human beings right with himself is this something that the Bible teaches and that's why he says goes to Abraham and he's also going to go to King David he's going to go to the book of Genesis and the book of Psalms so we'll just read that verse one again what then shall we say was gained by Abraham our forefather according to the flesh by human descent because Paul was Jewish for if Abraham was justified by works he has something to boast about but not before God and we'll just pause here for a second because you'll notice as we go through this chapter and a lot in the book of Romans that the word justified is going to keep coming up and in this particular case for justified what it primarily means is an official authoritative declaration that you are right with God so it's not like if I was to say you know to somebody oh that's fine you know your debts are all cleared away you can't just say your debts are all cleared away

I mean George you're just a pastor you have hardly any money you can't cover my debts you don't own the bank you're not my car company you know you're not the student loan organization you can't just say it's alright so the word justified it's as if there's an official declaration by one in authority proper authority with the power to make such a declaration and know whether it's true and in this particular case as Paul unfolds it it's not only that God is able to make that declaration but that he's the one who's actually made it right it's the complete opposite of what we're used to when you're dealing with the insurance company and you're dealing with some little minion who gives little minion types of answers and has very little authority and you just sort of wish you could leap through the phone and grab them by the lapel or the shirt and say I want to talk to somebody who can make a real decision that's going to be right and that's what we're sort of used to in our bureaucratic world but this word justified every time you see it it's an image that comes from the law courts of Rome and it's as if a person who has the authority and the power to make such a declaration they declare that it is right that you are right with the organization that it's right with you now and it's

Paul is saying that God declares as God that you are now right with him the creator and sustainer of the entire universe and the end to which the entire universe he will bring everything to its proper end with the new heaven and the new earth and this very same God can declare for ordinary human beings like you and me in an official declaration you are right with me I have made you right with me in a way which is right it's an official declaration okay let's go back to reading go back to verse two again for Abraham was had this declaration by God that he was right if he had this by works I'm going to talk about that in a moment because it's really important he has something to boast about just pause here for a second if we'll no okay we'll keep reading then we'll go back sorry I'm going to get it can go okay never keep but not before God he has nothing to boast about before God verse three for what does the

Bible say he says what does the Bible say Abraham believed God and it was I'm going to explain this in a moment but counted to him as righteousness and every time you see the word righteousness understand it as right with God it's it's more than just being a good person because God is more than good God is true he is beautiful he is wise he is just he is merciful and right with God you know you can hear a note that's not right and you want to get the note right God is the author of music it's a bigger concept than mere morality that you are right with God who is more than just moral but the true the beautiful the just he's merciful he's the creator he's the sustainer he's the end of our longings and of our yearnings he is sovereign he will bring all things to their proper end and we are right with him in the full sense of who

God is so back to verse 3 for what does the Bible say Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as being as righteousness as Abraham is now right with God verse 4 now to the one who works his wages are counted are not counted as a gift but as his due and to the one who does not work but believes in him who declares that you are right the ungodly his faith is counted as righteousness and just sort of pause here for a second how can God declare that the ungodly are right with him how can God declare that the ungodly are right with him how can God declare in verse 5 that the ungodly are right with him this doesn't make any sense to us doesn't make any sense to us it would be as if a

[16 : 30] Buddhist where Hindu was told that you see that Hindu monk who's been fasting and doing all of these religious observances and has been meditating and doing all of that and then you see this other person over here and they're from the lowest caste and all they do is they rob and they rape and they pillage and that one's achieving nirvana and this one's not doesn't make any sense it's as if a Muslim would say here is this person and they're doing all of these things they've actually learned 7th century Arabic they're following everything in the Quran and there's this person and he has no interest in going to Mecca he eats pork all the time drinks lots of alcohol has dogs does everything that doesn't fast during Ramadan and he is going to heaven and he is not it is as if we heard that there is this person and their great grandfather was a bishop and their grandfather was a bishop and their father was a bishop and their mother was a famous evangelist and they go to church every

Sunday and there's this person and they're drunk all the time and they cheat on their wife and they do they are the one going to heaven George this is wrong that is not how the world works and yet here it is it says in in complete and utter opposition to all religion and all spirituality it says here in verse five who justifies the ungodly his faith is counted as righteousness who declares right with himself the ungodly their faith is counted as being right with God that's a really astounding thing it's a very very deeply astounding thing and if you could put up my first point I can't remember now

I don't know if I wrote it correctly to spirituality and religion it makes no sense that God justifies the ungodly to spirituality and religion it makes no sense that God justifies the ungodly you know at the heart of all spirituality and religion and we make a big difference between this and our culture we say that we are spiritual but not religious but the Bible would say that ultimately if you look at it from a functional viewpoint that functionally spirituality and religion are exactly the same and at the heart of them they believe in works they might believe in very very different works a Buddhist and a Hindu and a Muslim and a Christian might believe in somebody who's spiritual but not religious they might believe in very different types of works but they all ultimately believe in certain types or combinations of works and by that

I mean we have a basic understanding a basic belief that if we do certain types of things God will owe us so if you're a pagan you might believe that if you do certain types of sacrifices you'll both get God or the gods off your back but at the same time you're not only getting the God or the gods off your back but you're doing certain things that they're indebted to you and for Christians this comes in the form of this sort of basic belief that yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah I became a Christian because I said the sinner's prayer yada yada yada yada yada but the fact of the matter is that we live as if our standing with God depends upon our accomplishments how do I know that this is the case I know that there are people who maybe even left this church after two years because they believed that God owed us a building of our own and if we didn't have a building of our own within two years it must be because we've continued to do something wrong now they would never say that they're too well trained but in their heart they believe that it's the same type of thing that says how is it after

I've sacrificed and I've given all these tithes and I've given all this money to the church and I had that opportunity to sleep with this man and I didn't sleep with this man and I taught Sunday school and I endured the youth group good grief and then this happens to me well once we say that what we're saying is that we've done all these things to put God in our debt we've been working God working the angles and God doesn't recognize that he owes us and goes ahead and does this so I'm finished with God where's the bar or whatever spiritual be spiritual but not religious and and that's very very very deeply rooted that we either do certain things to merit God noticing us or we do things to put

[22 : 03] God in our debt or we make some basic claim of our being connected to the right way well I mean my dad was an evangelist and my grandfather you know he was a pastor and my great grandfather you know he built this church he was his money that built this church and that's how Christianity stops being listening to this you see if that's your understanding of what the Christian faith is then that God justifies the ungodly makes no sense makes no sense whatsoever we're talking about something completely and utterly different but here's the thing you go to a lot of the bars of the city on a Friday night or a Saturday night or maybe if you go you know right I don't know when the bars open at 11 o'clock and you'll meet lots of people if you ask them what do they think about religion they'll go oh what a waste of time those guys and gals they're just completely and utterly self-righteous all they do is just bend themselves out of shape and you know what it's a complete and utter waste of time it doesn't work

I know this guy and he was he went to the right church and his wife went to the right church and they went there for 30 years and then after 30 years of doing all the tithing they did and all the stuff with youth groups and all the right stuff still their marriage ends it's all a waste of time that's why I'm here Jack Daniels my buddy in a football game on screen is not a waste of time the shocking thing is that the Bible isn't agreeing with the Jack Daniels and the football game but the fact of the matter is that the Bible agrees with the irreligious person's assessment of religion and spirituality that's what Paul was doing in chapter 1 verse 18 to chapter 320 and he's going to go back to it here again in a moment that it doesn't work it's a waste of time you can't put God in your debt you can't manipulate God you can't work God you can't do a charm offensive you can't do any of those things it all works it all fails but unlike unlike the irreligious the Bible doesn't just say that in a cynical type of way and then say the best thing to do is just get some

Jack Daniels or something like that and watch football games or whatever it is it turns you on get lots of toys make lots of money make lots of money then get toys like whatever the order is get lots of toys make no money lose all the toys bankrupt whatever it is just the Bible doesn't go to that cynical type of route it says there's another option there's a completely other option that you need to consider that maybe there is a way that God wants you to maybe think about these to realize that spirituality and religion doesn't work but you don't have to despair because there's a God who exists who can act in a way which is right to make ordinary human beings right with himself and maybe God has done something maybe there's news of God having done something and that's what Paul is going to look at so the

Bible isn't promoting irreligion and not being spiritual the Bible dethrones idols the Bible knocks idols off their throne and reveals to human beings the real idolatrous state of their heart and the Bible reveals this in the context of the existence of God who in grace does something that human beings can't do that he provides the way to make us right with him with effective power the Bible is always dethroning our idols revealing our fantasies and illusions illusions the fantasies and illusions of our heart in the context of the reality of a God of grace who acts to make human beings right with himself that's what we see here just look at these verses again verse three for what does the

Bible say Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness now to the one who works his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due and to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly his faith is counted as right standing with God continue reading just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness in other words counts right with himself apart from works blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven and whose sins are covered blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin actually Andrew if you could put the next point up because all of these different words covered forgiven counted they're all financial images God by free grace credits us a right standing with himself

[27 : 42] God by free grace credits us a right standing with himself what happens if you owe me ten thousand dollars and I forgive the debt I forgive the debt in a sense your ten thousand dollars you've given a different credit of being debt free the debt is covered and the word counted is it's one of the interesting things about this Bible translation that I'm using it was a bit different in Ken's a bit different maybe if you're using the NIV the New Living Translation one of the high values of the version I use here when I preach it's an essentially literal translation and one of their high values is if there's the same word in the original language all the way through something they try to use the exact same English word all the way through to help you understand what's going on underneath the text in terms of the original language sometimes it means it's a little bit harder to explain but the word counted is also translated as credited and it's a bookkeeping term so it's like if I say you've done something bad it's going to count against you it can be used in a negative sense but it also means something good if you call up and you make a complaint about a bill payment they'll say okay we've credited your account and we've put the money back in and that's the image behind this this idea it's a financial image one of the things about the

Bible is that the mystery of what Jesus accomplishes for us on the cross it's a profound and deep mystery and the Bible will use an image of the law courts of being acquitted and then it will use an image as if you do something to satisfy the proper anger that somebody has against you and then it will use an image of as if you were a slave and somebody pays for your freedom from slavery and then it will use an image from personal relationships about being reconciled and then it will use the image of being an orphan and not having a mother and father and being adopted and then it will use an image of accounting as if you have no money and God does something to cover the debt to pay the debt to forgive the debt and God the Bible the mystery of what Jesus accomplishes for us on the cross is so deep and so far reaching that the

Bible tries to use about 12 13 14 different images to try to help us to enter into the mystery of what God accomplishes for human beings in a way which is right to make us right with himself and in all of these images it's not that all of a sudden you're supposed to wander away and who's he paying or who's this doing it's as if at certain times in your life if you're struggling with people living under anger then the image that the death of Jesus upon the cross is it frees you for those of you whose record is as long as your arm and is in constant legal trouble the image of being acquitted is something that can grip you I can well imagine that if you're a prisoner in jail and the message you're going to preach the gospel you might want to constantly use this image of acquitted and for those of us who say they're saying as out

I've just lost my job I'm completely and utterly overwhelmed with finances the image of Jesus his death upon the cross being something that is credited to us so that we are now dead free before God is a powerful image and the Bible gives image after image after image of all trying to open up and help us to enter into the mystery of what Jesus accomplishes for us on the cross and so the image which is here is this imagine in the ancient world the time that the Bible was written if you went into debt and you couldn't pay you didn't go to Doyle and Salusky or whatever their name is and get out and just go bankrupt no you would become a slave you owe somebody fifty thousand dollars that you can't pay you don't just lose your house you lose your liberty so imagine in a time that imagine that you're in a culture where that happens and you owe you know you're a poor widow and you have you just have your daughter and there's just the two of you and you owe hundreds of thousands of dollars you know maybe your husband racked up the debt and then he died but the debt still stands you owe hundreds of thousands of waiting for them to come and put you and your daughter into slavery and if you're that person that elderly lady that you might think it would be alright if they would just even take me but the idea that your daughter would also be sold into slavery for the debt would be an overwhelming experience and imagine one day you go and you hope that you know it's going to be any day now that they're going to take everything away from you and you go and you just hope that you might be able to get that one little tiny bit of extra credit because you just need a little bit of food for this day and you're just hoping you can get that little bit of flour that little bit of sugar that little bit of oil so you can maybe have one last meal with your daughter and you and your daughter go before they're going to come and take you away and you go and you're really really worried and you're weighed down with doubt and the guy you go in and the store owner doesn't frown at you but smiles at you and welcomes you in and you get the stuff and you start to say to you know

I'm going to try to pay it back and he says you don't have to worry about it all of your debts have been covered all of your debts have been covered every one of them you're completely and utterly free go ahead and order whatever you want and you ask who did this and he says this you know that powerful Lord that you see going by here he he did it he paid all your debts that's the image which is trying to get to you here you're still a widow you're still poor all your debts have been paid and you see here if you get nothing out of this in terms of the app you see here's the thing and you know maybe if I keep going but if there's only one image what difference does the gospel make in terms of how you live your life can be seen in this particular image because if before the debt if that widow and her daughter had said you know

[35 : 09] I have a couple of apples and we have this tiny little bit of oats and a tiny little bit of oil and tiny little bit of sugar and maybe if I make some apple crumble and walk up to that powerful Lord and give him that he'll say I'll pay a hundred thousand dollars in debt that's religion and spirituality what does a gospel shaped life look like the widow goes home all she can do she's just overwhelmed with shock at what the Lord has done there's nothing she can do to pay a Lord like that back all of her life if she just gave every penny she got she'd never be able to pay him back she would always be in his debt for what he's done freely and graciously to her but she might say to her daughter I'm going to make some apple crumble and in gratitude for what he's done I'm going to give it to him that's the difference the gospel makes as the gospel grips your heart that's how you serve at the door that's how you serve the coffee that's how you love the kids in

Sunday school that's how a pastor is to understand his job on a Sunday morning that's how Jen is to understand what she does when she leads the singing that's how we understand bringing some apple crumble to our neighbor or giving some food to the poor or helping missionaries in Africa or China not hoping that our apple crumble will make the Lord have favor upon us the guys in the bar will all be right it's a waste of your time but if God acts with effective power in a way which is right which is characterized by grace and mercy and love to wipe away all of your debts then maybe you'll take your apple crumble and ingratitude operate and that's how you try to learn to live your life that's why churches need to hear the gospel that's why religious people and spiritual people need to hear the gospel because we need to get it out of our head that we're somehow or another putting

God in our debt by giving him apple crumble and start to learn that once we're gripped by the gospel and what Jesus has done on the cross how can I not just offer him some apple crumble and thankfulness and gratitude isn't that just a wise and freeing way to live so what does faith look like very very briefly let's we'll just read through the text I wanted to bring a couple of things out I'm mindful of the time but how do you receive that faith how do you receive that like George are you saying that I have to have a particular emotion to receive it do I have to know the right things to receive it do I like what how do I what is this faith stuff well let's look at verse nine is this blessing only then for the circumcised or also for the uncircumcised and what you do here is you take out the word circumcised and you put in religious or spiritual or church goer and take in your own denomination is this only for the the reformed

Presbyterians is this only for associated gospel is this only for Christian reform is this only for Anglicans is this only for Pentecostals or is it also for the people who wake up every morning with a hangover and then go to a bar later on in the day we say that faith was credited righteousness to Abraham as gave a credit of righteousness to Abraham how then was it counted to him was it before or after he had been circumcised in other words was it before after you know what Abraham was a worshipper of the moon God when God called him up until God speaks to Abraham and Abraham believes God's promise Abraham worshipped the moon God didn't look down on the planet and see who's the best living person on the planet I'm going to pick him he picked a guy who worshipped the moon who worshipped the moon he can pick a guy who worships the moon he can deal with you and me that's what that's what Abraham that's what the

Bible is saying and you know you can go on and read it later on I'm going to sort of ignore some of my points Andrew I think it's just sort of the right time to do it but God's grace and my response to him if you could put this next point up Andrew God's grace and my response to him by faith fit together like a nut and a bolt God's grace and my response to him by faith fit together like a nut and a bolt nothing else fits with God's grace nothing else because you see at the heart of faith is this willingness to come empty handed you just trust and believe what God has done what he's done for you in Jesus and you come to him empty handed and at the heart of the Bible's understanding of faith is Andrew if you could put up the next slide saving faith believes God's promise that he has provided the way for human beings to be right with himself saving faith believes God's promise that he has provided the way for human beings to be right with himself so faith is not a type of works it's not an emotion it's not an illusion it's not believing in fantasies so it's not like you're trying to screw yourself up and having a particular emotional experience or believe something that's not true as we'll see in a moment because we're going to say this verse together it's rooted in history it's rooted in the truth it's rooted in reality it's rooted in a historical event it's rooted in an understanding of God speaking to reveal to human beings the significance of the event and it's not only about the significance of the death of Jesus upon the cross but it's it's connected to the fact that he really did rise from the dead that that that lawyers and others who've gone and really studied it to try to disprove the resurrection from the dead and they've come away believing in the resurrection of the dead it's something that engages the mind it's looking at your life in the context of the of the fact that there is a real

[42 : 15] God who really exists who can act in a way because there's no reason why God can't be generous to us and deal with that debt that we cannot pay ourselves and he would absorb that debt he would forgive that debt he would pay all that's responsible for it to be paid and that he would offer this to you to come open-handed to be made right with himself because of what he's done for us with his son's death upon the cross the last verse and a half of Romans 4 Andrew do you put this up on the screen I've just paraphrased the first part of it to get at what the Greek is saying and I would just like you if you could read this with me right now accredited right standing with God will be given to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification what is justification means declared right with God can you read this with me again accredited right standing with God will be given to us who believe in him who raised from the dead our Lord our Jesus our Lord who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification that's the gospel message and as this message grips our heart as we receive this message and believe that God is true to his word and good for his word I am always ungodly there will never be a day in my life where I've accomplished so many good marks and so many good works that God looks down and says whoa I owe

George today that'll never happen every day I don't know I'm I'm not as loving to my wife or my kids as I should be and I I think bad thoughts about people who drive and you know I do other types of things and I'm going to stop right now before I really get myself in trouble but every day my I am ungodly but my faith in Jesus which see this is the wonderful thing this justified word this is an end of time word this is George if Jesus doesn't come back and George lives to be a hundred and five that when I die God then declares me that I am right with him God then declares me that all of my debts have been dealt with on the cross by Jesus all of my future is covered all of my future is covered and I can know that declaration of God today and live in light of the future declaration of God today and learn as I'm gripped by the gospel to live a life of gratitude and that's that as it as this as this grips us it it shapes how we view Christian service it it shapes how we view our neighbors it it grounds acts of selflessness it starts to make us less defensive when people point out our failings and which are many because we

God knows all about that and they've all been dealt with on the cross and I have a credited right standing with God not an accomplished right standing with God but accredited and it and it starts to mean that I can look at these idols that I put my trust in my faith in and I can say God I thank you so much for crediting me with a righteousness apart from these idols get them off my heart get them out of our church get them out of my imaginations dethrone these idols that as the gospel grips us we can live a grace-shaped life to the glory of God let's stand you know the mission statement of this church is to make disciples of Jesus gripped by the gospel who live for your glory and that's a mission statement you can pray and if you have never given your life to Jesus or if you're uncertain as to whether you have you know if you just say Andrew could you put up that scripture sentence back up again for us the last one that we just looked at you can just pray that just say father what those things are I believe you that you do this grip me with the gospel I want to be yours grip me with the gospel and God doesn't just God I mean one of the wonderful things about the gospel is when we put our faith and trust in Jesus God comes in that declared righteousness is something that you can know for yourself today and God doesn't just declare this righteousness he gives you his Holy Spirit his Holy Spirit comes and dwells you and lives within you but there's no better time than today to call out to God and say God I want to stop trying to be religious and spiritual I believe that what Jesus did for me on the cross means that my debts are all gone that you declare me right with you and I have no other standing before you other than that for those of us who've been Christians for a long time say father you know the idols that I've been struggling with you know I'm slipping into thinking my performance is what makes me right with you father forgive me for this make me a disciple of Jesus gripped by the gospel who lives for your glory our heads in prayer father for those using their own words to call out to you to be your child I ask that your Holy Spirit would flood into them at this time and help them as they do that important business with you in their own words in their own heart father may your Holy Spirit flood into them as they as they call out to you and trust Jesus and father for for all of us you you know how we can still be ungodly you know the idols that beguile us you know how easily we slip into thinking that our performance is what makes you love us so father we ask anew that you would make us disciples of Jesus gripped by the gospel so in gratitude and not in presumption but in confident gratitude humble confident gratitude we might learn to live our daily lives for your great glory and this we ask in Jesus name amen take a posture of prayer as

I think it's Ross is going to lead us in some intercessions you