

The Gospel of the Cross

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[0:00] Firstly, let me start with a warning. This message may offend. It may upset you from complacency. It could be hazardous to your love of slumber.

! It could cause death to you or to others. It contains timeless truth that is not compromised. It is not a sin-friendly message. The Gospel of the Cross.

The truth may offend, but it is better to be offended now than on the day of judgement when it is too late to do anything about it.

It may offend, but we speak the truth in love. As Paul said, But I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.

Romans 1 verse 16. And my message to you is the same message that we hear in Acts 14. In Acts 14, verses 21 through 22.

[1:24] And it is Paul and Barnabas, disciples, apostles, preaching in this time. In the time of the early church.

And it says there in Acts 14. And when they had preached the gospel to that city and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra and to Iconium and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith.

And that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God. It says that Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel. Gospel means good news.

Confirmed is used here too. It says not only did they preach the gospel, it says then that they confirmed the souls of the disciples. Now some churches use the term confirmed in some kind of ritual that's performed.

That's not what we're talking about here. Confirmed here, it means that the people were instructed and established in their faith and strengthened as followers of God.

[2:39] And so the gospel was preached and people were converted and then these people were strengthened and encouraged to grow in their faith. Now the question is about this gospel that was preached.

Notice that this gospel that was preached called for faithfulness through much tribulation. What does it say? They were confirming the souls of the disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith.

And that they must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God. This was no sugar-coated, mealy-mouthed kind of, ineffective so-called gospel.

Now sometimes there's so-called gospels today that really make no challenge. There's no challenge there. There's no real conversion there.

And some gospel messages, so-called today, are very weak and watered down, where there's no challenge. And in such messages there's no real gospel, there's no real salvation there.

[3:51] It's been toned down and watered down so much that it's syrupy and sweet, weak and self-centered. Some kind of motivational message.

There's some circles where you just get a motivational message. You just as well tune into a motivational speaker as in a message such as that.

It'll do you really not much good at all. And we're seeing this in some quarters where, as someone has put it, the sermonettes to Christianettes in bassinettes.

It's like there's this sense where the people are not growing in their faith because the gospel is not there. It's like in Isaiah 13 that the people are calling for the prophets of the day.

Just give us something that's smooth. Tell us some smooth things. Things that are easy to digest. Something that's easy to get on with. Propheted deceives.

[4:54] And sadly there's people like that in our world today. Ear tickling creatures that just give people what they want. As if God's

message is how to be happy rather than how to be holy.

Rather than how to be saved. Truly saved. And they've made it so inoffensive and neutral and non-challenging that there's really scarcely any substance to that kind of message. And it's a sad accommodation of the crowd. As if it's all about drawing a crowd and pleasing people. And there's people that teach today that Christians are to live lives of luxury rather than lives of sacrifice.

You know it's much easier to draw a crowd when you've got a message such as that. And when they labour this kind of thinking that God's got a plan, a wonderful plan for our lives. And we can just come just as we are. God accepts us just as we are. Now there's an element of truth to that in that God does accept us just as we are. But He loves us so much that He doesn't leave us that way.

[6:01] There's a conversion that happens. He turns our lives around 180 degrees. And He has got a plan for our lives. But it's not about making our lives good. It's about saving our soul.

It's about fitting us for heaven. And making us ready. And living a life that's in the eternal realm already. Here on earth. We can know that wonderful knowledge that we have everlasting life in the here and now.

We don't have to wait for the here after. We can know today that we're saved. That we belong to God. That we are His child. He is our Father. And we are converted.

Made His own. Adopted into His own family. This is the gospel we need. Not some powerless substitute that doesn't have the challenge.

Not some weak and compromised message. But a challenge that speaks to our hearts. And that encourages us to know this real truth. That soul-saving message.

[7:03] Because sadly, it seems that in churchdom today, in many quarters, people are being fed spiritual junk food.

Spiritual junk food. Now, yesterday I had some of my grandchildren come over. And we went, they came over, they had a sleepover. And in the morning, they're all getting up ready for breakfast.

And then they said, they said this to me. They said, oh, let's go to McDonald's for breakfast. Now, I'm not disparaging McDonald's per se. I'm not meaning to knock McDonald's.

But I said, that's rubbish. You know, we don't want to eat rubbish. We want to eat something that's good for us. So I gave them some good cereals to eat. And then we went for a big long walk.

And we got our feet bitten by ants. So that's another story. But they had this sense that they wanted this junk food. And in churches today, there's spiritual junk food.

[8:07] Spiritual junk food. There's spiritual junk food addicts as well. That they want this kind of teaching that has got no nutritional value.

It's like spiritual junk food. And there's a danger for that. Because some Christians are sick because of their diet of spiritual junk food. It's rubbish.

It will serve you no good to have such things as that. We need the real gospel. The real gospel. And I wanted to talk a little about, as I said, what is the real gospel?

The real good news. What is the good news? What does it mean? And that's why I started with a warning. Because the gospel is challenging. The gospel is challenging.

Not the substitute so-called gospel. But the real gospel is the gospel of the cross. The gospel of the cross. The gospel of the cross is offensive.

[9:10] It's offensive. It's offensive. It's offensive. It's offensive. Because the gospel of the cross says that all have sinned. That means you. Amen.

The gospel of the cross is offensive. And furthermore, you can do nothing to save yourself. And apart from God saving you, you can do nothing.

And any good thing that you do do, does nothing to save you. Nothing at all. Because the minute you trust in your own good works to save you, you cannot be saved.

We cannot trust in our own good works. That's offensive, isn't it? It goes against my pride to think, wow, I've sinned and I can do nothing about it. It's offensive, isn't it?

And secondly, the gospel of the cross is exclusive. This is not some inclusive message where there's many paths to God. Just take your pick.

[10:14] There's hundreds of them. Hundreds of New Age gurus and philosophies and systems of good works of religion. They'll do nothing for you.

Zilch. Nothing. The message of the cross, the gospel of the cross, it's exclusive. It says that all your good works, even the best of your righteousness, is as filthy rags.

It's just nothing to claim any value in. The religious systems of planet Earth are totally useless to you. Apart from one way.

One way. There is only one way exclusively. One saviour exclusively who can save you. The Bible says there is none other name.

None other name under heaven whereby we must be saved. And if you refuse it, you are eternally lost and bound for eternal damnation.

[11:13] That's offensive, isn't it? It's exclusive. It's exclusive. The gospel of the cross. And the gospel of the cross is not seeker-sensitive.

It's not about you. Sorry. It's not about you. It's about you. It's about him. It's about him. It's about him. The saviour of the world. The Prince of Glory.

Who laid down his hands on a piece of wood. And was nailed and crucified. It's not about any good that you can do. There is none. It's not about you.

About making you feel good. Either. You might actually feel quite bad about this offensive message. The gospel of the cross. It might make you feel lousy.

It's about helping you see your sinful condition. And for you to heed the saviour's call. Your only hope. The gospel of the cross is not seeker-sensitive.

[12:13] It's not about making it palatable. It's not about making it sweet and sugary for you today. The message. The gospel of the cross. It's confronting isn't it? To think of that. That it's offensive.

I can do nothing. I've sinned. It's exclusive. There's one saviour. One alone. And it's not seeker-sensitive. It's not about you. It's about him. It's about his call. It's about listening.

And hearing his call. It's not about an easy road. The way of the cross. The way of the cross. It's not an easy road. It's about self-denial. It's about death.

And denial. It's about a road. A hard road. And it can lead you to tribulation. And trouble. We pray tonight about the persecuted church.

Think of what it means. In some countries. Where stepping across the line. And saying I want to be a Christian. It means death. Literally. Death. For you.

[13:09] It's real. It's real. In some countries. This is real. We can just kind of imagine it. In Australia. This gospel of the cross is offensive. It's about a man who says.

Unless you eat my flesh. And drink my blood. You cannot be saved. There's no life in you. It's about. Of course he's talking in a picture.

A picturesque form there. That we must. Receive him. We must receive Jesus Christ. To be saved. Otherwise there's no life in us.

We must have him. We must have his saving grace. This is the gospel. It is the gospel. And in Acts 14. And in Acts 14. We see.

When the gospel is preached. They confirm the souls. They strengthen. And encourage the people. And Paul says. Get ready. For persecution. He says. Be faithful.

[14:08] And he says. You must through much tribulation. Enter the kingdom. Of God. Wow. That wasn't. Some easy believers. And was it? That wasn't some.

Kind of feel good. Ear tickling message. That was a hard truth. A bitter truth. Paul preached the gospel. Of the cross. The cross. The cross. The cross.

It's the only hope. For us. He preached the cross. With conviction. And power. It's controversial. The preaching of the cross. It offends men's pride.

The cross. It's not culturally sensitive. The cross. It's not idolatry friendly. You know. The people of the day. They loved their idols.

And they wanted to kill Paul. Because they were. He was injuring their trade. They had some good trade going on. Selling the idols. Of the land. This is the gospel.

[15:07] That our Lord preached. In Luke 9. 23. When the Lord Jesus came. People came to him. And he said. If any man will come after me. Let him deny himself.

And take up his cross daily. And follow me. That's Luke 9. 23. It's offensive again. Isn't it? The cross is an offense. He says. Unless.

You deny yourself. And take up your cross daily. And follow me. You count me. My disciple. The cross is cruel. It's ugly.

Think of the cross of our Lord today. We can only imagine it. We can't really imagine it. Can we? You know. They show pictures of him. As actors.

Dress up. To pretend to be like him. But he was more marred than any man. Yeah. Than any man. It was ugly.

[16:03] The cross. It was a curse. It's a body. Marred. Bruised. Beaten. Bleeding. The cross. It's an instrument of torture.

Now if it was modern day times. Some churches would have an electric chair. Strung up on the roof of their churches. We don't glorify the instrument of torture. No. But we glorify the saviour. Who bore our sins there. On that tree. We don't glorify the piece of wood. But we glorify the gospel of the cross.

We glorify the saviour. The one disfigured. Brutally. And ashamed. Most of all. Bearing our sin there. The ugliness of our sin was nailed there. My sin was there. My sin was there. No. No.

No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No.

No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No.

[17:01] No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No.

No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No.

No. No. No. to suffer the shame the pain of a cross I don't know what your cross will be but he calls you to carry your cross he says carry your cross as someone has said when the Lord Jesus selected his apostles he did not choose from the rich and pampered or even the highly educated he selected the rough unlearned rugged individuals they're probably people who chopped trees down you know the people that were down there at the at the fisherman's deck uh carrying that those nets and and heaving that load that weight they were muscly men rugged men probably a few rugged women there too you know they were they were the rough and tumble of the society weren't they as we know the prostitutes they were received by him and the Pharisee said this man receiveth sinners he receives sinners and he eats with them jesus wasn't afraid he wasn't ashamed to identify with those who came to him the gospel offends it says there's none other name to save you and it says there's an everlasting hell if you refuse him today it says there's a cross the cross on which jesus died for our sins an execution device and he says take up your cross it can mean ridicule for you there's people that have lost family because of the ridicule of the cross the mockery of the cross i know uh without embarrassing but but mustaki's family there was some muslim uh family members and it was a huge uh change in that family dynamic wasn't it you know and that's what it means in some countries when you step over the line and say i want to follow jesus it means a total radical mind shift it means your family will cut you off possibly you'll be mocked and you're on the way to death take up your cross the cross means death the cross will kill you it means death for you the cross will cost you your life what is jesus saying he's saying we've got to be willing to lay our all on the altar as the song goes lay our all on the altar be willing to to count our life as as nothing that we might find his life his eternal life it's an offensive message that you must die so that you may live and think of the gutsy heroes throughout the pages of scripture gutsy men and women heroes of the faith they call to us from the pages of scripture and they tell us about the gospel of the cross william tindale said this tribulation for righteousness is not a blessing only but also a gift that god gives unto none save his special friends the apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer rebuke for christ's sake and paul in the second epistle on third chapter to timothy saying all that will live godly in christ jesus must suffer persecution and philippians 1 he saith unto you it is given not only to believe in christ but also to suffer for his sake this man the man who penned these words who penned the large part of the bible we love today this man tyndale was himself executed by strangling and burnt at the stake he says tribulation for the righteous is not a blessing only but also a gift that god gives to not save his special friends will you be one of these heroes will you receive the gospel of the cross will you be one of these who will go on no matter what as those in 2 corinthians 4 it says of people who have this treasure in earthen vessels and paul writes how the

excellency of the power may be of god and not of us we are troubled on every side yet not distressed we are perplexed but not in despair persecuted but not forsaken cast down but not destroyed always bearing about in the body the dying of the lord jesus friends the gospel of the cross as a christian you may face some great challenges it's not about a feel good message become a christian and everything's going to be fine and easy for you your life's just going to be one easy road just ride the glory train and just take a an armchair christianity where you just everything's done you don't have to do anything i mean strictly you don't have to do anything but we don't have that mindset because he says to you he says to me take your cross take your cross you shall have tribulation john 16 the lord jesus says these things i've spoken unto you that you might have peace in the world you shall have tribulation but be of good cheer i have overcome the world god calls his own people and friends christians here today brothers and sisters in christ know that you will have persecution you shall have tribulation the church of god the heroes of the faith they knew what it was the ones who went to the stake and the rank of torture they knew the faith and they defended it they contended for it the faith once delivered to the saints and it still is here today the body of truth which is the faith the gospel truth and there's a fight on today there's a good fight and paul says fight the good fight of the faith it's truth worth fighting for gospel truth and so i urge you today consider these things there's a story i read of a young mother whose husband refused her to allow her to take her children to church and he was an unbeliever and he threatened to beat the children and on more than one occasion she would leave the house to go to worship and she would hear these these troubles at home and one sunday morning the old rascal told her she was not going to church today and she proceeded to get ready to go to church and he saw she was ignoring his mandate and he became very angry and he got his pistol and held it to her head and said now tell me again where are you going her calm reply was if you pull the trigger i'm going to heaven if you don't i'm going to church you know we've got to step across the line it's the gospel of the cross brothers brothers brothers sisters we've got to be willing to be persecuted for the sake of righteousness and keep keep on in his will where are the heroes of the faith today they're right here you're you're here today the heroes of the faith

in the 21st century you are it you are god's people you that know him and you that are come will come to know him you are the heroes of the faith believe the gospel of the cross look to the heroes of the work people like job a godly man job he was patient persevering he held on satan said i don't think you've got one man on planet earth who will be true to you god said yes i do job satan you can't kill him but you can do just about anything else to him that you want and i'll prove that he's a faithful man i'll show you what i can have i can have a man who's totally committed to me and satan went after job he destroyed him in every way possible he took away his family he killed his children he took away all his crops his lands his possessions his everything that he owned he gave him a severe a serious disease and in it all job endured he did not waver he endured he complained now and again mostly about his foolish friends who were giving him bad advice and his wife was trying to get him to curse god and die he refused to do it he said though he slay me yet will i trust him the lord gave the lord takes away blessed be the name of the lord a hero of the faith he endured he cried out to god and he said though he slay me yet will i trust him and if this body is destroyed the worms that destroy this body yet in my flesh shall i see god a hero of the faith he knew the gospel of the cross and then we see paul what an example paul is in 2 crinthians 11 verse 23 there's a whole list of things that we could sum up like this of the things that he endured labor imprisonments beaten countless times in danger of death often five times he received 39 lashes three times he was beaten with rods big heavy sticks once he was stoned almost to death three times he was shipwrecked he spent a night and a day in the sea on frequent journeys dangers from rivers from robbers from countrymen from gentiles in the city in the wilderness in the sea dangers among false brethren labors and hardships many sleepless nights hunger and thirst often without food in the cold without clothing and a concern for the churches where are the heroes of the faith today where are those who will hear and obey the gospel of the cross who will trust him trust him no matter what will find a crucified and risen savior and take up their cross and follow him as moses rather to suffer affliction with the people of god choosing that rather than the pleasures of the day friends i urge you today to follow christ the crucified the risen savior follow him today in hebrews 11 we see the heroes of the faith in part it says verse 36 through they had cruel mocking scourging bonds in other words chains imprisonment they were stoned they were sawn asunder they were cut in half they were tempted they were slain with the sword they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins destitute it means they were poverty-stricken afflicted tormented of whom the world was not worthy

they wandered in deserts and mountains in dens and caves of the earth where are the heroes of the faith the world was not worthy of the faith today i read this of some persecuted christians [29:43] in chinese labor camps pakistani jails sudanese villages countless believers pay the ultimate price for their faith in sudan christians are enslaved the slavery today of christians in sudan in iran they are assassinated in cuba they are imprisoned in china they are beaten to death north korea is just amazing what goes on there in more than 60 countries worldwide christians are harassed executed tortured because of their faith 200 million christians throughout the world live in fear of the secret police of vigilantes of state oppression and discrimination hundreds of millions of christians are suffering because of what they believe in acts 14 the gospel message was exhorting them that they continue in the faith and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of god now the prosperity gospel wouldn't do them much good in some of those countries here today jesus didn't come so you could get a rolls royce or have some flashy house he came to give you life life more abundant are you ready for tribulation it could come really and truly it could come in australia it could come right here it could come are you ready will your faith falter when the tough times come will your faith falter then will you lay down your cross then it's too heavy too hard too rough are you ready for tribulation i urge you today take heart that there's a wonderful savior and his name is jesus christ the lord and he says to you come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden and i will give you rest rest to your souls urge you i urge you today and come to him no matter what the cost there could be a cost to you maybe it's just the cost of your pride the cost of saying i have sinned and i need to save you and i cannot save myself sometimes it's the hardest thing to just admit that isn't it the trial of your faith being much more precious than of god that parish should though it be tried with fire might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of jesus christ the believer's faith must be tried the believer's faith must be tried and to try something needs to prove it to test it perhaps you've made a christian profession of faith and things have got a bit hard for you perhaps you've backslidden perhaps doubt and unbelief has consumed you and and blinded you come to him come to christ today come to christ today no matter what the cost no matter what the price no matter what and no matter what the trial or temptation might be no matter what the fire might be that faces you it could be mockery from the people that you love the most from your dearest friends and family that could be hard for you but he says to you take up your cross it doesn't matter it doesn't matter how heavy and hard that might be for you you cry out to him today cry out to him draw near to him

i urge you to believe the gospel of the cross it's the good news the good news it's not about feeling good it's about his saving power it's the power of god unto salvation to everyone that believes do you trust him do you believe i urge you today to trust him trust him now let's pray do you trust him now let's pray