

Faith Plus is a Minus

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[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 17th of August 2003. The preacher is Paul Dudley.

His sermon is entitled Faith Plus is a Minus. It is based on Galatians 2, verses 11 to 21.

It was Sunday morning and Harry was lying on his bed browsing through a book he had brought the day before. Suddenly the telephone rang.

It was Tom, Harry's neighbour from across the street. Hi Harry, it's Tom. I just thought I'd... Tom, how nice to hear from you. You don't actually usually ring this early, but I'm glad you have because I want to tell you about this excellent book I have just got hold of.

It's really, Harry, will you please stop gibbering about books? I'm calling about something very urgent. As I look out of my bedroom window, I can see smoke coming from under your front door.

[1 : 03] Harry, I think your house is on fire. Well, that is certainly a fascinating suggestion, Tom. I'm really grateful to you for sharing your insight with me this way.

But as this book I have just been reading explains, how can you really be sure of what you see? And can I be really sure of what you mean? A?

Precisely, Tom. A sums it up. As Professor Dubious says in his opening chapter, with the decay of rationalism and logic positivism in the late 20th century Western culture, question marks are all we have to share.

It says on the flyleaf that he's one of the most celebrated postmodern philosophers. And I can quite see why. He puts it all so simply. The fact is, Tom, you and I can't be really certain about anything. You see smoke coming from my front door. And what do you do? You jump to the conclusion that my house is on fire. So rationalistic, Tom. So logical.

[2 : 09] So boringly left-brained. Where is your imagination? Anyone can see you haven't read any postmodern philosophy. If you had, you would realise that it was just a perception of things is totally subjective and relative.

How do you know that you're not dreaming? How do you know that I haven't just burnt the toast? And how do I know that I am correctly interpreting your words? Maybe you are just joking or using a metaphor.

Even if you had access to the objective facts, Tom, which of course you don't. There is no way you can reliably communicate those facts to me. We are each locked in our own private world, you see. Composing our own self-matured metanarratives and thinking they are true. But everyone's truth is different, Tom. No one has access to absolute truth.

So nobody can tell us authoritatively what we ought to believe about anything. The best we can do is just share our private question marks. And as you have so generously done this morning, Tom, it is so kind of you too.

[3 : 13] Harry, I don't know what kind of mystical gobbly gook you've picked up from that New Age bookshop yesterday afternoon. All I know is this. There is smoke coming from your front door.

And while you have been rabbiting on, flames started flickering behind your front room curtains. Whether your postmodern philosopher would call this all a metanarrative on my part or not, I don't know.

All I can say is it certainly isn't a fairy story. Harry, granted that everyone is entitled to his or own point of view and that all perspectives are relative, I just feel that as a friend.

I ought to tell you that is my humble and highly subjective opinion. Your house is on fire. If you stay there more than 10 seconds more, you are highly likely to fry.

For goodness sake, man, throw that useless book in the bin and get out of your bedroom window open. The fire engine has just turned into the road. Can't you hear that siren?

[4 : 15] Or is that just another metaphor too? This isn't some Wittenstein language game we are playing, Harry. This is life or death. We live in a world where there is no certainty of truth.

This little story just illustrates, I think, what our world really thinks at the moment. That there is no absolute truth. That it's all relative.

We're reluctant to be certain about anything. And if you are certain on some things, you're called intolerant. If you are to say that you've got a problem or there's something wrong, you're intolerant. Paul the Apostle, some 2,000 years ago, said that there was a truth, an absolute truth. There is truth in the Gospel.

And not only was there a truth, but he was prepared to defend it and stand up and tell others, not just anybody, Jesus' disciples, that they had got it wrong.

[5 : 28] He was prepared to rebuke Peter. In a moment I'm going to pray. I'm going to pray for us that as we read God's Word tonight, we might learn from Paul.

We might come to an understanding of the truth of the Gospel. But think very carefully before you say your Amen at the end. Because there is a world who dislikes this message.

There is a world who is angry at this message. So think carefully before you say your Amen. You might like to leave your Amen till right at the end of the sermon.

Then you might like to say your Amen after I've gone through what Paul did. Then you might think, yes, no, this is worthy of me taking on, of asking God to help me with it, to live a life worthy of the Gospel.

I'm going to pray now. Let me pray. Father, we live in a world that does not accept that there is ultimate truth. We thank you for the truth of the Gospel.

[6 : 35] We pray for us tonight that as we look at your Word, as we look at Paul and what he has to say about the Gospel, we'll be people who are shaped by it. We are people who are prepared to stand up and claim what is true and what is false, even at the point of being rejected by our world.

We pray this in your Son's name. Amen. It would be good for you to have the Bibles open as we look at this passage from Galatians chapter 2.

We're doing a series on Galatians at the moment and I'm enjoying trying to come to grips with this great book, a book that has so much richness in it.

Paul, at the beginning of this book, is trying to defend his Gospel. He is trying to say, trying to show its character, trying to show what it is and what it isn't because there is a group that he is writing to, a group of people, the Galatians, who are turning to a different Gospel.

And so Paul is trying to show that his Gospel, the Gospel that was given to him, not by men but by God, is the Gospel that they should be following. And as a part of that, he has been showing part of the history, going over part of what has happened over the years to come.

[7 : 54] And tonight we're going to look at the way that Paul recalls his time where he confronts Peter the Apostle at Antioch. You can see there in verse 11, but when Cephas, and Cephas is just another name for Peter, when Cephas, or Peter, came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood self-condemned.

This passage we're about to work through, these next three verses, has been long disputed over. What were the issues?

All these different questions that come up. But there are certain things that are true. The first thing is, is to see that Peter was working in Antioch at this particular moment, that Paul comes to approach Peter.

Antioch is a part, one of the outer regions of, I guess, Israel. And Peter was to work, trying to convert, trying to spend time with the Jews as a part of his mission.

He had a mission to the Jews. And so Antioch, being on the very edge of that, was part of his brief. When he was in Antioch, it appears that as we look in verse 12, some men have come from James.

[9 : 04] James is back in Jerusalem. And James has sent this group up to Peter and have told him certain things, what we don't know. But one thing is certain.

Before these men arrived, when Peter was in Antioch, he would eat with both Gentiles and Jews. He would not distinguish between who he ate with.

Now, this is a big thing for a Jew. For a Jew to eat with a Gentile was a big no-no. The Old Testament forbid it. They were not to eat at the same table.

It would make the Jew unclean. So they were not to do it. But now that the Gospel had come, the Gospel that had set them free from this old way of life, the way of law, they were now free to eat

together.

And so Peter, before this group came, was eating with both Gentiles and Jews. But after this group had come, Peter then withdrew from table fellowship. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision group.

[10:11] Paul acts out of some type of pressure here, this circumcision group. Well, Paul, recognising that there is something amiss here, goes to Peter, we find out in verse 11, and he confronts him.

And in front of everyone, he actually denounces what Peter has done by separating himself. And he calls it hypocrisy. Another way of saying it in the Greek is play-acting.

If you look there in verse 14, Paul says to Peter, If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile, and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?

Well, it seems a little confusing at first. What Paul is saying is, if you're now living like a Gentile, that is, you're not living under the law, you're able to eat with both Jews and Gentiles.

If you live like that, but now are separating yourself and causing the Gentiles to actually separate themselves and be in confusion, Paul's saying, how can you do that?

[11:18] How can you compel the Gentiles to become Jews? Well, there are certain things that we know. What's happening in the background? We've got questions like, who are the people from James?

What did they say? Why were they sent? What's happening back at Jerusalem that they should run to Peter? And who is this circumcision faction? Is it the same men that have come from Jerusalem? Well, as I said, there are long disputes over all the different issues that are involved in this passage, these four verses. After you spend a lot of time looking through Acts and you try and pull the pieces together, the scenario might look something like this.

Peter is in Antioch ministering to both Jews and Gentiles, eating with both Jews and Gentiles. But back in Jerusalem, persecution has broken out.

The church is under great threat. The non-Christians, the Jews who are not converted, are putting great pressure on the Christians. Great persecution has broken out.

[12:28] But also in Jerusalem, there are those Christians who are Jews, Christian Jews, who are more conservative. And for them, they see that Christianity still fits within under Judaism.

You sort of still hold on to your Jewishness as part of being a Christian. That was the more conservative group. And they're putting pressure on the Christians as well. And so there's this great pressure in Jerusalem for the Christians, the Jewish Christians, all of them, to start obeying the law again.

The church is starting to split. Factions are starting to form. And so James sends word to Peter, Peter, word is getting back to Jerusalem that you are eating with the Gentiles.

This is causing huge problems. It's causing huge ramifications. This needs great sensitivity. You need to act with great wisdom here, Peter.

Because what you do could affect what's happening back here. Well, under this scenario, it appears that this group from James are just asking Peter to be very careful about the way he conducts himself, reporting about what is happening.

[13:41] And so Peter, in his own wisdom, thinks at his best for him to separate himself from the Gentiles. This is to promote the gospel, he thinks in his own mind.

This is a situation to try and help the pressure back in Jerusalem. He's worried about the circumcision faction, which it says there in verse 12. That is the group of people who are non-converted, the Jews who are putting great pressure and bringing persecution.

And so Peter bows to this pressure and he starts play-acting. Even though he knows he can eat with both Gentiles and Jews, he starts play-acting.

Paul calls it hypocrisy. And he starts separating himself. Well, this has some ramifications for the church in Antioch. The first implication that we see there is that the church in Antioch is starting to split.

It's causing great factions. Can you imagine if you're a Gentile and Peter, who is there, is trying to convert many of the other Gentiles and the Jewish people that are there, starts separating himself from the Gentiles, you can imagine, well, what is wrong with us?

[14:59] We thought there was freedom in the Gospel. You can imagine the split starting to happen. But there are some Gentiles who are feeling great pressure also. Perhaps they've got it

wrong.

Perhaps they do need to come and sit underneath the law. It says here that even Barnabas, Barnabas was led astray in verse 13. The pressure.

Perhaps they need to practice these kosher practices so that they could be like Peter. Perhaps they needed to go back to these things because the Gospel itself wasn't sufficient.

We needed to go back to becoming a Jew. That's where it's at. Well, Paul goes, as we see in verse 11, he goes and opposes Peter to his face.

Paul can see what the problem is. It's a Gospel issue. The long-term effect of what Peter is doing is he is forcing the Gentiles to go back to the law.

[16:02] Forcing the Gentiles to think that if they are to be acceptable by God, that they must do certain things, obey certain food laws, be circumcised.

Paul knows that it is wrong. It is a Gospel issue. He knows that the sufficiency of Christ and what Christ had to do is a threat.

Just stop and reflect on a moment, just what Paul had to do. Imagine going up to one of Jesus' disciples and going up to him in front of all of them, it says there in verse 14.

Before them all, before the group that was there, Paul goes up and rebukes Peter. That is tough. In our society, it certainly wouldn't be acceptable to point out to someone that someone has got it wrong.

Well, in verses 15 through to the end of the chapter, we have a bit of an outline that Paul gives us of the argument that Paul gives to Peter.

[17:10] It's like a bit of a summary. At university, not university, at college, we had to do these silly things called essays. I hated them. They were all blood, sweat and tears.

And at the beginning of each essay that we had to do, you had to write a synopsis. I can hardly spell it, let alone trying to do one. But the synopsis was to give you the bird's eye view of the argument.

It was the idea of sort of, you know, letting you see what's about to happen in the essay. I had no idea whatever happened in my essay, so how was I meant to give a summary of it at the beginning? But nevertheless, you had to write some type of synopsis.

Paul here gives us a synopsis of the argument that he gave to Peter at Antioch. He starts his argument by starting on common ground.

He starts on things that both Peter and Paul both agree on. And then he goes on to the things that are differences. We'll see that in a bit later on.

[18:12] These things are put here, they set up the principles of what is to come in the rest of this letter. So, while it's very short and very condensed and in many ways quite difficult to understand, Paul is going to unpack these verses from verses 15 through to 21 later in the book.

He's going to flesh it out. But he puts it here like a synopsis to help the Galatians understand his argument. So, let's start at, look at, first of all, the common ground that Peter and Paul start on. We see there in verses 15 and 16. We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners. Yet we know that not, we know that a person is justified not by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.

And we've come to believe in Jesus Christ so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by doing the works of the law because no one is justified by works of the law.

The common ground that he starts with, a person is not justified by God by works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ.

[19:21] Now, there are many things that we need to unpack here. What is justification? What is works of the law? What is faith? So, let me start with justification. Justification is the courtroom language.

It is a legal judgment. It's the judicial system of declaring someone who is righteous. Let me give you an example of a person by the name of William Herschel.

As a young boy, William Herschel used to love military music and so growing up in Germany, he joined a military band. But when in the First World War, the nation went to war, he was still in the military and so had to go to war.

He was unprepared for the horrors of war, William Herschel. And so when he was in the heat of a battle, he fled. He fled to England and he began to pursue a life of training in music and science.

A new country, a new start, but the ramifications is, back in his country, the penalty for him, for his desertion, is death. Well, his music abilities did grow and he became quite famous and things were going quite well for him.

[20 : 39] But King George knew about Herschel's past life, of the desertion from the army and he summoned the great musician. The great scientist appeared before the royal court.

Well, you can imagine Herschel just so nervous. The kings called for me. You can imagine him standing outside, just waiting outside the court, waiting to be called in.

What will happen? Well, after some considerable time, a king's servant came to Herschel and handed him a document. The document said, told him, told him this, I, George, pardon you of your past offences against our native land.

George, King George, that is, had pronounced the verdict that there was to be no condemnation. It was a legal judgment.

All that he had done wrong, King George is wiping the slate. But more than that, as he read through the document, because of his outstanding service, he was to become Sir William Herschel.

[21 : 49] He was to be knighted. He'd gone from being a criminal to having a place of great honour and dignity. He deserved death from his country, but now he enjoyed a good relationship with that country and that king.

This is a bit of a picture of justification language that we have in the Bible. It is of God looking at us who are sinners, who are under his condemnation, who are under his judgment.

God looking at us and passing the verdict, not guilty. But it's not just getting the not guilty verdict.

Justification, being justified, being that legal judgment side of things, not only is it just having your sins forgiven, you also have been brought into a favoured relationship with God.

justification. This sort of captures a little bit, it's only, I guess, a little picture of what justification is. It has many flaws in it.

But this is the point that Paul is talking about here when he talks about justification. Justification is the declaration by God. It is a verdict of no condemnation, declaring a person to be in the right, right relationship with the law and the lawgiver, that of God.

[23 : 21] Well, the only reason why that justification can happen, that verdict can be given, is because of what Jesus Christ has done. This comes in as a part of the next part, faith in Jesus Christ.

You see, it's because of what Jesus has done. He is the one who takes the punishment for us. God is able to justify us, declare us right before him because the punishment that we deserve is meted out on Jesus Christ.

He is the one who takes that punishment for us. Therefore, for us, we need to trust in Jesus. We need to have faith in Jesus.

He is the one and the means by which we are justified. Therefore, Paul says here, it's not works of the law. It's not the law itself that justifies.

It's not even doing the law that justifies. Paul grew up himself as a person who put great faith and great trust in the doing things of the law.

[24 : 28] He was one who trusted in these things. For him to be justified before God, to be right with God, you had to do. If you did all these things of the law, the works of the law, that would justify you.

But Paul says, no, we're not justified by doing. We're justified by what has been done. So, this is the first point that Paul made with Peter.

We stand on this common ground, Peter. Both of us know that we are not justified by works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. We can see that in verses 15 and 16 as we've just read.

But then in verse 17 we then go into the points of disagreement. But in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners.

Is Christ then a servant of sin? Paul brings up the question, the question that would be fired at Paul. The question of, well, if as a Jew we need to recognise that we are sinful before God, if the Gentiles who are Gentile sinners, he describes them, are sinners, and if we're all coming together under Christ, does that make Jesus a servant of sinners?

[25 : 52] Perhaps he has in his mind also the idea that people have in mind the idea that, well, if you get rid of the law people are going to be really sinful. What's going to stop them? from sharing a table between Jews and Gentiles?

What's going to stop them from doing these bad things if we get rid of the law? Sin is going to increase. Therefore, Jesus, well, he's only the servant of sin. He encourages law-breaking. But Paul screams out, absolutely not. That's ridiculous. Christ is not a servant of sin.

He does not promote law-breaking. And he gives in verses 18 through to the end a very highly compressed explanation why Christ isn't a servant of sin.

Why verse 17 is so ridiculous. Let's have a look there in verse 18. But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor.

[26 : 56] Paul has just argued a moment ago that the foundations of justification, the foundations of being right with God, is Jesus Christ, having faith in Jesus Christ, not works of the law.

The works of the law won't do it. It's all agreed upon. But once you've become a Christian, what if you then start going back to the law? You start laying another foundation.

You see, Paul recognised that his original foundations of obeying the law, doing the law, that was a faulty foundation. It didn't work. He needed Christ's foundation.

But once having Christ's foundation, you then add another foundation. I don't know if you've seen buildings being built. It's important to get your foundations right. Paul's said we've got the foundations right, but what if I start building another layer of foundations?

And they're the weak foundations, the foundations that don't actually work. What does it say about the foundations of justification by faith in Christ?

[28 : 02] It's saying we don't trust them. It's saying that they don't work. You actually need Christ, plus you need to top it up a little bit. You need something extra.

You need faith in Christ, plus you need these bits of the law. If you've got these bits of the law, well then you'll be fine. How ridiculous. Once having a firm foundation, then adding shonky foundations on top of that.

And Paul says, if I rebuild it, I am a transgressor. He then goes on in verses 19 and 20 to talk about how he's gone from life to death in relation to the law.

He talks about there how he was originally living a life under the law with all its commands, all its temptations to disobey God, all its legal requirements.

That was the way of life under the law. But Paul says he dies to that. That way of life, of living that way of life, of doing the works of the law, he's died to that way of life, that's finished.

[29 : 12] And now he lives to God. Look there in verse 19. For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God. How does he die to that way of life? How does that way of life finish?

Look there in the next part. I have been crucified with Christ. When Christ died on the cross, he was the one who took the legal requirements upon himself.

He was the one who took the punishment. He is the one who has set us free from that way of life. Paul can then say I've died to that way of life. I now live to God.

Well how does he live to God? What does it mean to live to God? Well as we look in verse 20 it says and it is no longer I who live but it is Christ who lives in me and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God.

How has he lived now? He lives a life in Christ. Now the common view of living in Christ is the idea that Christ lives in us by his spirit which is true in scriptures.

[30 : 21] You look in John, John talks about the fact that God's Holy Spirit does come into our life but I think Paul is talking about here not that so much but looking at the fact that when God looks at us if we are justified by faith in Christ he is looking at Christ's life, a perfect life, a life that has been forgiven.

He lives a life of faith, a life of putting his whole life in the hands of God, trusting him in every area. This is what it means to live to God.

Paul counted his life as Christ's life. Well Paul breaks out after reflecting about what Christ has done, he breaks out in a bit of praise and he says there at the end of verse 20 the Son of God Jesus who loved me and gave himself for me.

What God has done for him through Jesus Christ, how Christ gave himself and loved Paul. Well right at the end in verse 21 Paul gives the punchline, he gives it all, brings it all together in verse 21. He says I do not nullify the grace of God for if justification comes through the law then Christ died for nothing. What is at the heart of this issue?

[31 : 53] The sufficiency of Jesus' death on the cross. If you start going back to the law you're saying that Christ died for nothing.

there's no point in Christ dying. The gift of God, God giving his only Son to die on a cross, nothing. It nullifies it and Paul doesn't want to do that.

Paul wants to stand up and be very clear that Christ did die for something. It is through what Christ has done that we are justified. well what are the implications of this passage that we've just read? Well the first thing we need to look at is this passage in the context of the book of Galatians. Here Paul is making it very clear that the gospel that he preaches is from God not from Jerusalem.

The fact that he actually goes to not Jerusalem but Antioch to confront Peter shows that he's not reliant on Peter or any other man-made institution for his gospel.

[33 : 05] The gospel that he has and that he stands up for and that he sees the implications, that gospel comes from God himself. The second thing is that Paul records this so that the Galatian church may see positive and negative examples of how to deal with this problem.

The problem of how do we sit with the law? Paul gives this example of the way that he was prepared to stand up. And in the process of trying to promote a positive example of himself, he's also giving a positive example of what the gospel is.

He's giving the character of the gospel. And let me highlight a few things about the character of the gospel that we learn from today's passage. Nothing is more important than it. Not even unity within the apostles.

But unity is a big word nowadays, isn't it? We need to be unified. We need to make sure that if we're all unified, that's where it's at. Well, Paul was prepared to break down unity because the gospel is more important.

It is more valuable. It is peerless in its worth. It is something that has been brought about by the love of Christ. It is the means by which a person is freed from their sins and their consequences.

[34 : 31] Nothing could be more important than that. You start playing around with the gospel. You're starting to play around with people's ability to be free.

A person who is able to be set free from sin and its consequences. Without the gospel, people are eternally condemned. But positively, there is great assurance in this.

This gospel is of such great importance and great worth. It also gives us great assurance. It's not up to what we do, but what God has done. If it was up to us, we'd all be the time thinking, have I done enough?

Have I fulfilled all the little parts of the law? God has done it all. We need to make sure, therefore, we are people who are eager to preserve it, zealous to see it undiluted.

We need to be people who are lovingly committed to make it known. This week, my daughter hit her head on the side of a wall. I was out and my wife called me up and she said, oh, Paul, I think you'd better come home.

[35 : 43] Georgie's just hit her head. There's a bit of blood. I haven't been able to look at it yet, but I think you should come home. So I came home and the gash is about that long on the side of her head and I said, look, we'll probably need to get this stitched.

My daughter is two years old. So we arrive at the hospital and the doctor says, we've got two ways of doing this. One is we can give her a local anaesthetic all around where the gash is and then stitch it up or we can just stitch it up without any local anaesthetic.

Now, he said, you know, if we go with the local anaesthetic, she's going to have to get hit four times around the hole, but I'm only actually going to put one stitch in. So therefore, it's just one hole and then another hole on the other side.

It's, you know, and I thought, so I'm sort of sitting there trying to think, this is my daughter. You know, how can I do this? And in the end, he assured me it was only going to be one stitch. So we went ahead and I had to hold down my little daughter's head while she screamed and screamed and screamed while they stitched her head.

And at the end, I was physically ill. I was on the point of tears. I couldn't talk. And the doctor told me I had to go and lay down. I love my little girl.

[37 : 03] I would protect her at any cost. I was gut-wrenched seeing her go through so much. I am so passionate about my girls.

Do we have this same passion for the gospel, the same love, the same commitment that we have for people, for God's word, for God's gospel?

The second point that I want to make tonight is that not every issue is a gospel issue. Not every issue warrants a rebuke. The New Testament makes it fairly clear that there are three things that cannot be stood, that are gross sins that are worth excommunicating a person from a church. That is, asking them to leave the church. Three things that perhaps warrant a very strong rebuke. The first is gross teaching that jeopardises the gospel itself.

Paul has highlighted one of the issues tonight. Faith plus something, it's a jeopardises the gospel, undermines the gospel. If you've got gross teaching like that, we need to rebuke it.

[38 : 18] Gross moral disobedience. Gross lapses in the way that we live our life. It's an obedience issue here.

Gross sins, unrepentant sins cannot be tolerated. And the last one is persistent, loveless divisiveness. These are issues that we are to take seriously.

Paul took it seriously, the issue of gospel. But the implications of the gospel is seen in these other two areas. But what about all the other issues? Tonight we saw the issue of what about the doctrine of whether my pet's going to be in heaven or not?

What about women bishops? There are so many issues. How do we work out these issues? Where do we stand up? Where do we not stand up?

These are issues that we need to sit down and wrestle with and work out very clearly what are the issues we need to be standing up. Which ones undermine the gospel? I'm not going to give you any answers at the moment.

[39 : 25] Sorry. The third one that I want to say is that, I'm sorry I'm going so long, I've got two more points and now I'm finished. The second last point is that the most dangerous areas that we see in the church, they're the ones that often go unseen.

Peter thought that he was doing what was right by the gospel. But the long term effects was having huge ramifications on the gospel itself. We live in a world which is very subtly undermining the gospel.

We live in a world where there are many Professor Dubiouses, and their books, trying to sell postmodernism and pluralism. Trying to undermine the authenticity and the authority of God's word. Where postmodern spirituality and truth, well postmodern spirituality that's where it's at, but in truth well how can we really know the truth? Challenges to the uniqueness of Christ.

These are all little subtle errors and we need to be mindful of them. The last one is that of tolerance. We live in a world where we are to be tolerant, where you should never disagree with anyone.

[40 : 37] But Paul here is a person of tough love. He is prepared to speak out in truth and in love. We are a world that likes to avoid conflict.

Let me finish with a little illustration of this. I spoke last time I was here of the power and abuse seminars that all Anglican clergy have to go to at the moment. It's part of this process of trying to help the clergy see the seriousness of abusing power, particularly in the area of sexual sin.

And in one of these groups a friend of mine was speaking to a minister and he said to my friend that he abused his power because he was preaching the gospel.

He was telling people that they needed to repent of their sins. For this minister of a church, he thought it was sinful, it was offensive that he should preach this gospel.

At the beginning I said that I prayed that God would help us live lives that would be radically different from our world. I pray for us now that we will indeed be people who stand up for the truth of the gospel.

[42 : 03] Let me pray. Father, we thank you for Paul. We do thank you for his example. And we do pray, Father, that we will be people who stand up for the truth.

We pray this in your son's name. Amen.