

# Simplicity in Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfredo, Georgia. This is the next message in our series on the book of 2 Corinthians, entitled, We Faint Not.

We have with us Brother Tyler Masters. Brother Tyler, come on up. Brother Tyler and Ms. Gretchen have been serving God, and they were in Peru with us, and they have been in Spain and working in North Africa, and it's an exciting change that's happening, and they're members of our church, and I know that many of you still know them, but I want you to get to know them in the time they're here and just love them and get to know them.

And so he's going to preach tonight for about 25 minutes, so I hope you'll open your Bibles and listen up. Well, good evening. It is good to be back home again, and I appreciate the support that you all have had for us over the past couple years as we've been serving in North Africa, and for the extension of your ministry over there.

That's going on now currently in Morocco and, Lord willing, in Tunisia when we get over there here in the next few months. We appreciate the part you've played both in your prayers, your support, and in sending over people.

It's been exciting and encouraging. The Lord's been working through the ministry there, and it's amazing to see how many people out there are open to listening to the gospel. I mean, you think of Moroccan, you think of Muslim countries, you think of people who are very hard and very calloused and very angry or antagonistic, but for the most part, the people are extremely friendly, very open, probably the most hospitable culture I have ever been in my life.

[ 1 : 35 ] And I lived in South America, and South Americans are very friendly, very hospitable, very hospitable, but North Africa takes the cake. I mean, they are some of the most friendly people I've ever met. I mean, you'll meet somebody on the street. Kristen knows this.

She was there with us. You'll meet them one day, talk to them, and you're in their house that afternoon, drinking tea and having dinner with them. They'll even invite you to stay over for, to spend the night with them several nights. It's just an amazingly open culture and very religiously minded, so it's very easy to talk about Jesus Christ with them.

You may think the opposite. Here in the States, I kind of try to think of, like, tricky ways of bringing up the subject. There, they're just, hey, are you a Muslim? No, I'm not. I'm a believer in Jesus Christ. Have you ever read the Bible? No. Would you like to hear about Jesus Christ?

Yes. I mean, it's that easy talking to people in North Africa, and God has really opened up some amazing doors for us while we have served there. Somebody asked about contacts because we follow up on contacts.

One of our outreaches is doing that. As people have written to a website, the Arabic Bible Outreach Ministry online, Michael Hajj, my friend, will send me these contacts and say, hey, this person's interested in receiving a Bible or correspondence courses, and most of them want to meet a Christian face-to-face.

[ 2 : 43 ] And so what we do is we get their email address, phone numbers, talk to them, organize a time that we would go meet with them, and usually just meet in a cafe somewhere and sit down, hand them a Bible, and explain the gospel to them.

And somebody asked me the other day, how do you know if they're sincere or not? The answer is you don't. But you can't live in fear, wondering if they're sincere or not, if people are crying out for help. They say it's not wise to follow up and to not look into it and wait.

Some people wait years before they ever meet with somebody who's requested a Bible or requested hearing about Jesus Christ. But I don't think it's wisdom. I think it's just fear. It's not wise to stand on the shoreline watching somebody drown and say, you know, if they're around in a year from now still crying for help, I'm going to go out and help them.

But I'm not so sure they're sincere. They may not be drowning. And besides, it's really dangerous to jump in and try and save somebody when they're drowning. You could drown too. So they'll say it's wise. I think it's foolish to not give the gospel to somebody when they ask for it.

But you do run the risk of running into somebody who is setting you up. That happened to us about a year and a half ago. I went down to the southern part of Morocco with my friend Saeed, a Moroccan pastor.

[ 3 : 50 ] And we were doing follow-up. We actually went and did a Bible study with his uncle, who's a believer. And while we were in that area, we said, well, we have a few contacts, a few people who have written us or requested a Bible.

So we'll contact them since we're in their area. And then we'll go up to the next city and do some follow-up in the next city, about five hours north of where we were. So we called, and nobody answered their phone. We got really discouraged.

And I'm thinking, man, I mean, these people had contacted us. We came all the way down here. I mean, from where we were in the north to this city was about, like, 16 hours in a bus. So we traveled a pretty good distance, primarily for the Bible study.

But this follow-up, we figured, man, it would be great to follow up with these people now. And nobody answered their phone. Nobody. So, all right, well, I guess we'll just go on up to Azru and do some follow-up there.

And hopefully somebody will answer their phone. And as we were leaving, Saeed called one more phone number, and somebody answered. And the guy said, yeah, I'll meet you at the bus station on your way out. So we went to the bus station.

[ 4 : 47 ] We waited there. And nobody showed up. So Aaron was with us. Aaron, Saeed, and I decided, well, we're going to get our tickets, and we're just going to go on up to Azru and meet with somebody. But as we got on the bus, Saeed got a phone call.

And he answered the phone, and he's looking out. He said, oh, okay, I see you. So he gets a Bible and a CD and a DVD that explains the gospel. And he gets off the bus, and he said, I'll be right back. So I was watching him outside the bus, and he got down, and he met with whoever it was on the phone, and they shook hands.

And normally in Morocco, it's pretty normal for guys when they greet to shake hands and to kiss. I mean, guys kiss on both cheeks. Not too weird, all right, there. But what this guy did was pretty weird. He didn't kiss Saeed.

Instead, he pulled him toward him and grabbed the back of his jacket and started walking toward the bus station. I thought, that is really weird, all right? A kiss is normal. That is not normal. So Aaron actually just got on the bus at that point, and he said, well, what happened?

And I said, I'm not sure, but I think Saeed may have just been taken to that police post there inside the bus station. So Aaron said, all right, well, I'm going to go, and I'm going to follow and see what happens. So Aaron got off the bus and went off and was kind of following and making sure he was in touch with people and trying to figure out what was going on.

[ 5 : 55 ] And then Saeed got on the bus again right after that. And I thought, okay, great, everything's fine. So I said, are you all right? I mean, what happened? And he wouldn't look at me. He just handed me a little booklet with addresses, and he said, take this and don't let anybody find it.

I said, okay, I guess not everything's all right then. So I took it and put on my jacket, and I waited, and Saeed got off the bus. And then almost immediately after that, two police officers got on the bus, and they walked straight back to my seat.

I stood out pretty good there. I'm the only white guy sitting on this bus. And they came right up to me, and they said, sir, do you know Saeed? I said, well, yeah, yeah, I do. And they said, we need to see your passport.

So I gave them a passport, and they said, all right, come with us over here to the police post. Grab all your bags. So I grabbed the bags. You know, I grabbed my bags and Aaron's bags that were sitting there and then got off the bus, and we had other bags laying there. And we hauled them all over into the police post, and we sat in there for a little while.

And then finally a police van came up, and they said, we need you guys to get loaded up on this van. We're taking you down to the police station. Okay. So we loaded everything up into the van, and we got to the first police station.

[ 6 : 58 ] And while we were sitting there, what happened was the guy that Saeed called that answered the phone was not the original contact. It was the contact's dad. So when he found out that somebody was trying to evangelize his son, he got a little upset.

So he set us up, met us, and then took us to the police station. Well, that man was sitting there with us in the police station as the cops were filing the report. And the guy was sitting there, and he asked me, he said, why do you have a Bible in Arabic?

So I was carrying my Bible. And I said, well, I'm a Christian, and I'm learning Arabic, and it's very important to me to read the Word of God in the language that I'm studying. And he said, yeah, what is the difference between Christianity and Islam anyway?

Well, I'm glad you asked. So it's Jesus Christ and who he is and what he did. And according to what the Bible says, Jesus gave his life for us and rose from the grave, and that it's not by works that we do, but faith in him and believing on Jesus Christ and his finished work, that a person is saved and able to go into heaven, and that God initiates that relationship through his son.

And he said, yeah, yeah, I've heard something like that before. He said, but this guy doesn't believe it, talking about Saeed. I said, sure he does. Ask him. So he asked Saeed, and Saeed said, yeah, of course I believe that. And he gave his testimony.

[ 8 : 09 ] Well, as he was giving his testimony, the police officers who were doing the report just stopped everything and started asking him questions. They said, wait, aren't you Moroccan? He said, yeah, I'm Moroccan. He said, well, how can you be a Moroccan and be a Christian? Because, see, in Morocco, to be Moroccan is to be Muslim.

They don't even have their religion on their identification cards. Because if you're born Moroccan, you're Muslim. That's the end of it. But they said, how can you be a Moroccan and be a Christian? He said, well, I'd love to tell you.

So he gave his testimony, and he started quoting scripture. And they said, well, the Bible doesn't say that. He said, sure it does. Let me have it back. So they gave him the Bible they confiscated from him. And he started preaching there in the police station to these officers as they're sitting there, asking him questions about his salvation.

Well, as he's doing that, of course, there's a lot of attention being drawn to this room. So officers come in from all over the place, pile in there, and just listen to Saeed give his testimony. And shortly after that, someone in the higher-up authority came in and said, all right, enough of this stuff.

We need to take you to the police headquarters. So they loaded us up again in the van and took us over to the police headquarters. And when we got there, the exact same thing happened. Almost within like five minutes of us being in the police station, they started asking Saito, wait, how can you be a Moroccan and be a Christian?

[ 9 : 15 ] It doesn't make any sense. So he said, well, let me explain it to you. So he got out the Bible again and started preaching Jesus Christ, starting with Adam and the fall of man and the need for a Savior and the promise of a Savior, and went all the way to Jesus Christ and talked about how he was that seed of a woman, how he was the one that came and bruised Satan's head, and now we can have eternal life through him.

And they were just enamored by this. And again, officers all over the police headquarters just started filing into this room, packing in. It was an even bigger room than before, but it was just packed with officers asking questions about Saito and about the Bible.

So it happened even again right after that. They took us to the chief of police, and we sat there, and the chief of police had the same questions. He gave his testimony again and explained the gospel to him. Well, that night, they took our mug shots, and they fingerprinted us, which, by the way, I found out in Morocco, if you ever get arrested, they don't like it when you smile for your mug shots.

I'm not sure why. They kind of like look at it. Is he allowed to do that? I don't know. Don't smile, kid. All right. All right. No problem. I won't smile. But they didn't like that. But that night, they released me. What's really funny to me was that day when we were traveling, I had a bag, a huge duffel bag that was like 60 pounds, chock full of nothing but Bibles and CDs and DVDs for evangelism.

I wasn't even supposed to bring it with me, but I was late for that trip that day, crossing the border into Morocco. So instead of dropping it off at the church in the north, we just carried it with us all over and down in the southern part of Morocco.

[ 10 : 39 ] And this huge bag was with us the entire time. And throughout that time that we were arrested, about 8 in the morning, they released me at about 11 o'clock at night. Not one time in any of those places they took us did they open a single bag of mine.

I mean, they would have had all the evidence they needed against us in that one single bag. And what's really funny is they were releasing me that night. The officer said, man, you have a lot of bags. He said, let me help you with that. So he grabbed the bag with all the Bibles and started carrying it out.

He said, man, this is really heavy. He said, you Americans travel with a lot of stuff. I said, I know. Isn't that crazy? You know how Americans are. So they took me out. But that night they kept Saeed. And I didn't know they were going to keep him.

So I went back and I found out that they were going to keep him overnight in the jail. So the next morning I got up. And jail over there, I mean, it's not a picnic like it is in some places.

They don't provide food for their prisoners. So that next morning I brought Saeed over some breakfast. And so we were able to sit there. And I was able to sit with Saeed that next day, listening to his testimony again as these police officers kept coming in.

[ 11 : 37 ] And they were just baffled about meeting a Christian. And Saeed told me, he said, the most amazing thing happened last night, Omar, which is my name in Arabic. He said, right after you left, he said, the officers took me back into the police station.

They were waiting for the car to come over to take us over to the jail. And he said, they searched my bag then. They just went through my bag. And they found another Bible, my personal Bible. And then they found a DVD called The God Story.

And they said, what is this? And he said, well, it's a presentation about what the Bible says about God and his desire to have a relationship with man. And they said, well, can we watch it? I said, sure. So they were sitting there waiting for the police escort coming.

So they put it in their computer and they watched The God Story. And afterward they said, well, that was a pretty good DVD. That makes a lot of sense. So then that night he said they took him over to the jail. And he was in a jail cell with other prisoners.

One guy who had beaten up a woman, I think. Another guy that got in a fight with a cop. And one other person who killed somebody driving drunk. And so they're all telling their stories how they ended up in jail.

[ 12 : 36 ] And they said, Saeed, how did you get here? He said, well, I'm a Christian. They said, that is horrendous. How could you do such a horrible thing? You know, repent. You need to get down to repent. Ask God to forgive you for this horrible thing that you've done. And so that night Saeed got to share his testimony with the prisoners there.

Well, the next day as we were sitting there together, I didn't really know how the system worked. But they finished up all his paperwork. And then they took us before what they call the Wakil Malik, which is the king's representative.

Morocco is a monarchy. So he's kind of like the Supreme Court judge. If you really want like a biblical example, it's kind of like what King Agrippa would have been. Because they have the king, you know, Muhammad VI is the king of Morocco.

And then every region has their own little king. Kind of like Caesar and then Herod and the other kings and Agrippa. Well, we went before this king Agrippa. And Saeed, again, got to give his testimony to this man.

And afterward, they called in the guy that turned us in. And the king's representative said, talking to the man, he brought his son. And he said, all right, son, talking to the boy, he said, tell me something about Islam.

[ 13 : 41 ] And the kid said, well, Islam is the best religion in the world. And he said, well, tell me something real about it, something about the religion. He said, well, God gave the prophet the religion to unite all the religions in the world. I said, quote a verse from the Koran for me.

The kid couldn't do it. So the guy looked over at the boy's father. He says, you need to stop wasting your time chasing Christians around this country and start teaching your son about Islam. And he looked over at Saeed. He said, it looks to me like you're a real Christian.

So I don't understand it or why you would do it. But I guess you're really a Christian from what you've told me. I said, so we're going to register you officially as a Christian and you and your friend can go. So we took off, you know, walking out.

Like, that was pretty cool. And so we went to the bus station. Saeed said this. He was so happy, so excited. I mean, he just spent like two days in the police station and one night in the jail. And he gets out. And he had the audacity to say, he said, that was the greatest experience of my life.

That was the greatest experience of my life. He said, we came here expecting to meet three people in secret and share the gospel with them. But God had bigger plans. He wanted the entire police force, the chief of police, and the kings represented himself to hear my testimony and to hear the gospel explained right there in the courthouse.

[ 14 : 49 ] God is so good. And he has a plan for all of us. And how could Saeed say that was the greatest experience of his life? When we think of the greatest experience of our life, we think about, you know, marriage or we think of when our children were born or something, you know, crazy awesome that happens to us.

Wonderful. You know, we got a million dollars in the mail, right? That happened to Jeff Bush the other day, right? Yeah. So we think of something that, you know, fantastically positive that happens to us. But Saeed said, I cannot believe I had an opportunity to share Christ with these people.

How can someone actually say that? How can someone say in jail, in prison, I was able to see the glory of God? I just am so happy to be able to go through that. I think Saeed understands a principle from the Bible.

Look at me in Philippians chapter 1 tonight. I'm going to look at this quickly. Paul is writing to the church in Philippi. And this is, I love this letter because it's one of the few letters, if not the only letter that I know of that Paul writes, where there isn't a major doctrinal issue with the church.

There's not real problems. But what happened is this church in Philippi, which is in the region of Macedonia, sent a man, Epaphroditus, to go over and take care of him. Now, it's likely this is one of the churches in Macedonia that when Paul was talking about that they gave beyond themselves.

[ 16 : 01 ] It was likely one of those churches, if not the church he had in mind, talking about the church that gave beyond their ability to give. So Epaphroditus goes over there and tries to help Paul, and he gets sick and almost dies.

And Paul is sending this letter back by the hand of Epaphroditus to the church. And he's basically telling the church, really, don't be discouraged.

And he deals with one issue, you know, two women fighting in the church and some kind of issue that comes up. You know, this is all talked about, like, don't let there be divisions, all right? Let there be unity between these two women. Some bickering. But it doesn't even necessarily say it's like a sin issue or a doctrinal issue.

Just that there's division. And this letter is encouraging them to be unified. But this entire letter, it treats one concept, this idea of joy. Joy. True joy. And I'm not talking about happiness, you know, because we can be happy one minute and sad the next moment.

It's not an emotion like that. It is a fruit of the Spirit. It is something that is constantly with us. And what Satan wants to do from a Christian, he can't take our soul, but he can work at taking joy. He can work at making us not live out that joy that's within us.

[ 17 : 06 ] It's in every Christian. We need to let it live and flourish from within us. And so Paul is writing to this church, and he's saying, don't be discouraged. He said, don't be upset because I'm not upset.

Don't be sad or don't be so downtrodden because of my condition because I'm not. So why should you guys be upset about this? I'm fine, and I'm rejoicing in the Lord, and I'm full of joy.

And in Paul's situation, he's been through some amazing trials in his life. I mean, he was beaten on several occasions, stoned almost to death on another occasion. After being flogged close to death several times, he was then shipwrecked.

And all kinds of really bad things were happening to Paul in his life. And even as he writes this letter, he's chained to a Roman guard. I mean, he has no privacy. He is in jail. And he's writing this letter telling this church, be encouraged, be uplifted, be happy, be joyful.

I'm joyful. You need to be joyful. And this letter here at the very beginning, he's expressing his joy and where he finds his joy. And I don't have time to go through the entire passage, but there is one key phrase I want us to look at here.

[ 18 : 09 ] After we see that there's joy in fellowship in verses 1 through 6, there's joy in true love in verses 7 through 11. And here I want to look at this joy in opposition and in death.

Verse 12, it says this. He says, But I would you should understand, brethren, that the things which happen unto me have fallen out rather into the furtherance of the gospel, so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places.

And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ, even of envy and strife, and some also of goodwill.

The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely supposing to add affliction to my bonds, but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then?

Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice. Yea, and I will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayers and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.

[ 19 : 23 ] And here's the key phrase, For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. And we went through this, and he's talking about rejoicing in opposition.

It's amazing the opposition he went to. He had opposition from without. He had unsaved people, unbelievers who hated him. He was a nuisance to them. He was a mar on society in their eyes, and they were the ones who flogged him and beat him.

The religious crowd did. Unbelieving religious crowds. And he was in this prison because of unsaved people's contempt for him and his message. And in spite of this, he kind of almost is tongue-in-cheek saying this, that, hey, the entire palace is heard, you know.

They're calling me the enemy of the state, enemy of Rome, that I'm against Rome. But now the Roman guards have heard. The imperial guard, the praetorian guard, these men that are chained to me, they hear the gospel constantly.

24-7 he had somebody chained to him. And he was preaching to people. People would come to him, and he would preach while he's in prison. And the guard heard it. And the people would go home, and that guard would be left with him that night. It's funny, at the end of the chapter even, or at the end of the book in Philippians 4.22, he's saying, yeah, all the saints salute you, but especially those of Caesar's household.

[ 20 : 36 ] It's kind of like saying, yeah, you see, these people were really evil for me. But now these people in Caesar's household are these Roman guards, these people who are part of the central government. They are now believers, and they're carrying out the gospel.

You see down in verse 13, he talks about that, that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and all other places. So what happens is these influential people in the country, and this imperial guard was extremely influential in Rome, that they would leave there believing, and then they would carry it into other places.

And the gospel was spreading through his witness there in prison. So in spite of the opposition from without, without the church, those who were unbelievers, people heard the gospel and were saved, and then carried it to other regions.

But then he had another opposition, which is excessively frustrating and can be very discouraging for a Christian, but unfortunately is very common. He had opposition from within. Verse 14 and 15 says, many of the brethren in the Lord waxing confident by bonds are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

There was a problem with cowardice. People were afraid to preach in the name of Jesus Christ. And when he was preaching, people were quiet, and they're saying, no, Paul's not wise. You know, Paul's really, really shaking the boat.

[ 21 : 44 ] And if he's not careful, he's going to get the whole church kicked out of the country. He's going to cause all kinds of problems in our country. And the believers, we're not talking about lost people, the believers were scared. He says, now that I'm in prison, those people who were cowards before are now preaching the gospel boldly.

Praise the Lord for that. He's not saying, well, now I can't believe that God will bless that man's ministry now. And you understand, he was against me. Paul didn't care. It says here in verse 15, some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of goodwill.

Listen, there are people out there who are so jealous of Paul's ministry, they couldn't stand him. And when he was in prison, they were praising God that he was, right, now he finally gets what he deserves. But he wasn't talking about them preaching another doctrine, another gospel.

What he's saying here, they're preaching Christ. I mean, they are preaching Jesus Christ, and now they're bold, thinking it's going to add to his affliction and make him upset that he's in prison and can't do it. And they're free and they can. And Paul says, praise the Lord.

Jesus Christ is being preached, and I am pleased with that, and I am excited about that. And then some people are genuine in that. In verse 18, it's a great phrase. It said, what then?

[ 22 : 48 ] It says, so what? So these people are really not preaching Christ because out of sincerity of their heart or not. So what? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice.

Yea, and I will rejoice. Why is that? How could Paul rejoice in such a situation? He says down in verse 1, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain. Tonight, for you to live is what?

Is it a business? Financial success? Is it your family? If it's anything other than Christ? You say, well, what do you mean? Now, if I'm living for it, I'll tell you what.

In Jeremiah chapter 2, verse 13, God says he has two problems with his people. Number one, he says, they have turned from me the source of true waters. They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters.

And then, that's the first problem. So they turn from God when they say that we find our satisfaction. God has built in a craving inside of us that can only be satisfied by him. But then, what is idolatry?

[ 23 : 48 ] We stop seeking after him to fulfill that or satisfy us. And then it says, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. They started seeking after that satisfaction in something else.

Whether it was a God or whether it was their business, whether it was their family, they thought they were going to be satisfied by this other thing. So they turned from God and turned to something else, hoping it would satisfy that craving, only to find out that cistern can't even hold water.

So they're more and more and more and more frustrated than they ever were before because that cistern cannot provide the means to satisfy that longing in their soul. Only Jesus Christ can do that. For you to live is what?

To put it in the words of the great theologian George Bailey, if you do not say, for me to live is Christ, if it's for me to live is anything else, you'll end up a warped and frustrated old man.

That's what you'll end up being. Because nothing will satisfy you. Only Christ. What is it that drives you? Why do you do what you do? If you're seeking for that satisfaction in anything else, it's idolatry.

[ 24 : 50 ] Love Christ and be fulfilled with him. Say good. If you enjoyed it, say amen. Come back up. Y'all got any questions for Tyler?

Gretchen, why don't you come up? Let's see if we got any questions for you too. And if you were here this morning, you heard some Arabic, but maybe you got a question. They're your missionaries out of your church. And you can ask Gretchen a question or Tyler a question.

And if you don't, I'll ask a couple since I got them up here and I don't want to make them feel funny about it. Has anybody got a question? All right. Yes, ma'am. How did the Lord lead you to Tunisia? How did the Lord lead you to Tunisia?



Step up the microphone, please. Long story short, we started praying about the next step in our ministry after we finished language school and working with a local church there. And in fact, a church that was not there before when we first arrived sort of formed in our city.

And so we prayed about other options. And after doors closing in other regions of Morocco, the Lord challenged me to go beyond my comfort zone and look in other areas where we have a need but very few workers. And like I said earlier that we have over 100 contacts in Tunisia with no one to follow up on it.

[ 25 : 57 ] So after praying about it and really seeing the Lord's face, I would believe that he would have us to go there to follow up with these people. All right. Anybody else have a question? Brother Jeff. What is Saeed doing now?

Saeed, I believe, is starting a church in Marrakesh in the southern part of Morocco right now, not too far from where he was arrested. Okay. Anybody want to question Gretchen so she doesn't just feel funny standing up here?

Who has a ladies question for Gretchen? Yes, ma'am. How did the Lord work in your heart? Is there anything that has to be in your heart? I'm repeating the questions because people watch.

The question is, how did the Lord work in your heart because of their arrest? Correct? Yes. That's a really good question because that was the first of my experiences that the Lord just showed me himself through that whole thing.

Brother Gardner called me from Ireland. And he was with the Snows at that time. And I answered the phone. And I just got home with the kids. And they weren't down for their nap. And so, you know, we did small talk. And then all of a sudden he said, Tyler just got arrested.

[ 27 : 05 ] And I was like, can you say that again? So, but that whole week, Tyler had been gone for the week. And all of that week, it was kind of one of my first.

I've been home alone for a while, a couple times, one or two times before that. But it was the beginning. So, we didn't really know anybody there. And so, when I was left alone, I was left alone. I did not talk to another adult unless I went to the store and talked to somebody there.

So, it was kind of tough in that situation. And the Lord was really, really teaching me to rely on him as my best friend. And showed me that I didn't need to depend on Tyler for that best friend.

Even though I love Tyler and he is my earthly best friend. But he showed me that God is my best friend. And he was there with me the whole time. But that week, he just kind of prepared me.

I guess I'd been asked by different people here and there, what do you do to prepare yourself in case something bad happens? You know, we work with Muslims and everybody here is all, you know, you've all heard it.

[ 28 : 06 ] But that week, the Lord showed me what I should do. And so, that week, I was going over a verse with the kids. And it was, what time I'm afraid I will trust in God.

And every night, I would go to bed. And I couldn't get a hold of Tyler. I didn't get to talk to him all that week because we hadn't figured out the Spain-Morocco thing and how to call each other and talk and stuff. And so, I just had to trust the Lord that he was okay.

And I wanted to talk to him so bad, but I just, you know, had to just give it to the Lord. And that week, I needed that verse more than my kids needed that verse. And so, when I got that phone call, the Lord had showed himself all throughout the week and doing little things for me.

And they sound silly to you, but they were big deals for me. And just showed me, I'm here with you. I'm not leaving you. You are not alone. And so, when I got that call, I was like, let me put my kids down and we'll talk about this again.

And so, I put them down for their naps and their whatever. And so, then I got back on the phone and he told me what had happened. And I was like, okay, well, they're just going to kick him out. And that's just all that's going to happen.

[ 29 : 06 ] Everything's going to be okay, right? But honestly, in that moment, I can't even describe. I was nervous and kind of scared. But at the same time, I had this overwhelming joy.

And Tyler talking about that, and I'm not saying that because he said it. I mean, that is what I had. It was peace, whatever, but it was joy. Like, I could not believe that God was allowing us to experience this so early on and to see, okay, God, you're doing something.

And this is from you and it's going to be okay. And I remember people calling and saying, oh, we can, I had several offers. I think Mark offered to have Amy fly out and Lori Holt was going to fly out.

And I was like, it's fine, guys. You're all overreacting. It's really fine. And that's how I genuinely felt. I couldn't understand why everybody was making such a big deal out of this. And so then just that whole day, I just felt like surround, like just the Lord was just holding me up.

Like I couldn't, I cannot explain. It was not me. So then that night I got the phone call that Tyler had been released. And so that was good. And then we're still praying for Saeed and didn't know what was going to happen with Saeed. And then that next day, I think we, or next day we got the call that he was okay.

[ 30 : 15 ] And then at that point is when the, like my flesh just kind of like the Lord held me up as long as he had to. And then I really saw who I truly was. And that's where I just kind of fell apart. Like, okay, I'm done.

Everybody's okay. So now I can cry. But it was just awesome because I was discouraged seeing how, I guess, seeing my human nature come out, my sin nature come out, and that frustration and fear and worry all come out afterwards.

But looking back, I see that it just proved to me that it was God that did it. It was so not me. I'm not capable of that. But it was completely the Lord. So I just praise him. And that's one of my favorite experiences, even though it was tough and it's probably weird to say.

But it was, I've never seen God so real in my whole life until that moment. So it's a blessing. One more question. Is there one more? All right.

How about a round of applause? Let them know you love them and are praying for them. Take your Bible and go with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 11. And I want you to write a phrase down in the margin of your Bible on a sheet of paper somewhere.

[ 31 : 19 ] It's one of the most fantastic phrases you'll find in your Bible. 2 Corinthians chapter 11, the simplicity, the simplicity that is in Christ. Simplicity in Christ.

I want to talk to you a little bit tonight about salvation, a little bit about what was going on at the Corinthian church. 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 1. Let's read down to verse 6 if you would.

The Bible says, Would to God you could bear with me a little in my folly and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy. For I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

But I fear lest by any means as a serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your mind should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For he that cometh preacheth another Jesus whom we have not preached.

Or if you receive another spirit which you have not received. Or another gospel which you have not accepted. You might well bear with him. For I suppose I was not a wit behind the very chiefest apostles.

[ 32 : 26 ] But though I be rude in speech. Or that means he doesn't speak well. Yet not in knowledge. We have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things. Would you bow your heads for a word of prayer?

Father, I pray two things tonight. I pray that if there's somebody in the room that is not a believer, have not put their faith in you, that tonight they would see the simplicity that is found in Jesus Christ.

And that tonight they would put their faith in you. And what you did on the cross, dear Jesus. Please touch hearts, Holy Spirit. I pray for Christians, dear God, that can often step all over the line into adding something to the gospel.

Either before you get saved or after you get saved. And God, they take away the simplicity. And I pray that you would help us tonight to find the simplicity that is found only in Jesus Christ.

I love you and I thank you for the privilege of serving you. In Jesus' precious name, amen. Paul begs the Christians to listen to him. Look at verse 1. I would that you would bear with me.

[ 33 : 26 ] Now you've been listening to me. He says at the last part of the verse, Indeed, you do bear with me. You've been listening to me, but I've got something else to say. Please pay attention to what I got to say. You listened to me in that first letter.

Now listen again. By the way, you've been listening to some of those Judaizers. They've been coming down and talking to you down in verse 4. And you've been kind of putting up with them and tolerating them and bearing with them and listening to them.

So I really want to ask you to listen to what I got to say. So I want to show you three things tonight out of 2 Corinthians chapter 11. And they're extremely important to every one of us. It's obviously the word of God.

And we've obviously arrived here. Verse by verse, we've gotten to 2 Corinthians chapter 11. And look if you would. The first thing is Paul is concerned that they're allowing false doctrine into their church heart.

Just write this down. Worried about false doctrine. Paul was worried about false doctrine getting into the Corinthian church. He was very concerned about that. Verse 1, he said, bear with me.

[ 34 : 23 ] Verse 2, I'm jealous over you. He said, I want to give you as a chaste virgin to Christ. And I fear that the serpent, the devil, the same one that messed up Eve, has come in and he's going to get you away from the simplicity that's in Christ.

So I'm going to take just a minute. We're going to go over the plan of salvation. Did you know it's a simple plan of salvation? Did you know that the message was very simple? Paul had led them to salvation in Christ.

Religion is a very complicated thing. Even Christianity is a complicated thing because it's often not biblical Christianity. And there's so many things that have been added to it. But here, I want to remind you of the simplicity that's in Christ.

And you know every one of these verses. But if you don't use them already, write them down. The first thing the Bible tells us is that we have all sinned. Look, if you would, at Romans chapter 3, verse 10. I'm sure Patrick can keep up.

Watch these verses. Romans 3, 10. Would you read that verse with me? You already know it well. As it is written, none righteous. The Bible is very clear.

[ 35 : 23 ] This is a simple truth. The Bible is very clear. There is simplicity in Christ. And that is man has sinned. Not one person is alive who hasn't sinned against the holy God.

In verse 23, it says, Romans 3, 23. For all have sinned that come short of the glory of God. We don't make it. We might be good, but we won't be good enough.

We might be the nice people, but we're not good enough. Now, everybody, the first thing you know, the first thing you've got to know, the first thing you have to realize is this. We have sinned against the holy God.

And cultural Christianity might help you to think that you're a pretty good guy. But the truth is, if you don't pretty well know that you are really bad off and you are really sick, you're not really saved.

Just to be honest, you didn't need to get saved. You are already all right on your own. And salvation is that you were in trouble and you got help. And so the first main truth we all learn is that we have sinned against the holy God.

[ 36 : 21 ] We were long ways from God. We were dead without Christ. There was no way we could get to God. There had been a great division between us and God. In Isaiah chapter 53 and verse 6, one of my favorite verses in the entire Bible.

Look at what your Bible says in Isaiah 53 verse 6. All we like sheep have gone astray. In other words, we have done what we wanted to do. We have turned everyone to his own way.

All of us got our own opinion. Human beings have their own opinion. All the human beings are saying, hey, I got my idea what salvation is. I got my idea what God is. I got my idea what's right and wrong. And I think I got my ways of thinking about it.

And you got your ways of thinking about it. We all got our own ways. And he said, hey, he said, hey, all we like sheep have gone astray. We've turned everyone to his own way. But look what the Lord did. And the Lord laid on him, Jesus, the iniquity of us all.

Did you know when I stepped out of the way and you stepped out of the way and all human beings have stepped out of the way, all have sinned and all have come short of the glory of God. And there's none righteous. Every one of us deserved death and hell.

[ 37 : 21 ] But God took our sin and he placed our sin on Jesus. And Jesus bore our sin and died in our place and received the just merit, the consequences, the punishment for our sin.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 21, which you have gone over with me several times because we're in this book, it says, for he hath made him, Jesus, to be sin for us. That we, that who knew no sin, Jesus knew no sin, but God made him to be sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

And so God took Jesus who'd never sinned and God put our sin on him and made him sin and let him carry the price of sin. And he took me, a dirty sinner, and he, he took God, Jesus's righteousness and he put it on me.

Real simple truth. We just accept it and believe it. And that's this, I sinned, Jesus paid the price. I sinned, Jesus paid the price, and I am trusting him for what he did.

In Romans chapter 6 and verse 23, the Bible says, The wages of sin is death. The wages of sin are death. Everybody who has sinned will die. Biblically, that death is, they will die and they will suffer the consequences.

[ 38 : 31 ] Death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire in Revelation chapter 20. And all of sin and all of sin, all of sin and the wages of sin is death. But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ the Lord.

God gives me a gift. I don't earn it. I don't deserve it. Salvation is not because of my merit. It's not because of my goodness. It is the work of God in my life.

Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8 and 9. The Bible says, For by grace are you saved through faith and not of yourselves. It's a gift of God, not of works. Lest any man should boast. Everything.

Now listen, when we sing those songs and we praise him, we do that because we know that we deserve death and we deserved hell. And there was nothing good in us and no reason God should have forgiven us.

And no reason we should be able to go to heaven except this. God loved us. And God sent his son and Jesus bore our sin and paid our sin debt. And here's what was going on that was worrying Paul.

[ 39 : 27 ] The simple truth. Are you ready? As simple as this. It is that you sinned against the holy God. Jesus paid your sin debt and you can receive the gift by placing your faith and trust in Christ. And Paul had gone to the Corinthians and Paul had gone to others and he had shared the gospel with them.

So these guys were coming down from Jerusalem and they were bringing another doctrine. And they were trying to say it's okay to believe in Jesus. Yes, you need to believe in Jesus. But you got to add all these other things.

They took away from the simplicity. It wasn't simple anymore. It wasn't simply know I'm a sinner and know that Jesus paid and I'm just accepting a gift. It wasn't simple just by faith for by grace or you say through faith.

It wasn't simple like that anymore. All of a sudden it was, yeah, you do have to believe. But there's a whole lot of stuff added to it. Paul said, you guys seem to maybe listen to these people and I want to make sure you get that straight.

By the way, there was a problem in churches that Paul dealt with. And it's a problem that's real in our churches. If you're not saved here tonight, you need to know that he died for you and you can be saved.

[ 40 : 27 ] But if you are saved, you need to realize that our salvation is not works dependent. A young man came up to me this morning and he said, how much of this is performance based? And I said, none.

He said, but I, he said, you said he was pleased with me. But then today you said, we want to please him. And I said, I said, I want to please him, but he's already pleased. He's pleased by what Jesus did. I do want to please him, but I please him.

He loved me while I was still a sinner. He loved me before I ever loved him. And I want to please him just because I love him. But he's always pleased with me, which is kind of a hard thing to understand. But he loves me.

Galatians chapter three, Paul had the same problem. And he said, oh, foolish Galatians who had bewitched you that you should not obey the truth before whose eyes Jesus has been evidently set forth crucified among you.

He said, I don't get it. I came and I showed you Jesus and I showed you him crucified and I showed you him dying on the cross. Verse two, and how did, who bewitched you?

[ 41 : 27 ] Who got you off track? Verse two, this only what I learned of you received you the spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith. Are you so foolish having begun in the spirit? Are you now made perfect by the flesh?

And so somewhere along the way he said, they had gotten away from, I am saved by grace and I'm saved by trusting God. And I'm saved by what God did. And it's all a God thing down towards me.

And they got focused on man and what he was doing. And so it's awful easy to fall into legalism. It's awful easy to become a Pharisee. It's awful easy to become real guilty all the time because you know, you just don't measure up.

You got saved and you still aren't good enough. And you have to just realize, hey, it's not about me being good. Although God's going to work in me and carry me forth to grow and mature in Christ. But the truth is my relationship with God is not based on how good I am.

It's based on how good he is. That's the simple truth that he was trying to tell them. He said, how do you guys started by just trusting Jesus? And so many of us, we started a long time ago.

[ 42 : 25 ] We were very simply like a child excepted Christ. We have turned Christianity into a list of rules. We've turned Christianity into works of our flesh and things that we do. And we think now that by what we do, somehow God's pleased.

But it's God who did the work. Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6. The Bible says, being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it under the day of Jesus Christ.

Did you know a long time ago the Lord showed me my sin? And that's where he starts. He starts by making you realize how dirty you are. He starts by making you realize you sinned. You come to a point in your life when you realize, I really am in trouble and I really need God to do something in my life.

If you've never been to that place, you can have prayed the prayer all you want. You can have been baptized all you want. You can join all the churches you want. But it won't make any difference. It starts with, man, I am really in trouble.

I really need God. And that's what happens when we get there. And so he did that. He showed me that. And here's what he said. He began that good work in me. It was him that convicted me.

[ 43 : 27 ] It was him that said, Austin, you sinned. It was him that showed me my need. And after he showed me my need, then I trusted him. But you know what? It was him that started it. And it's he that will carry it.

It is him that he that will carry it all the way through. Colossians chapter 2, verse 6. He says, as you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in him. How did you get saved?

You got saved. You sang a song like, just as I am. I come just like I am. I come broken. I come needy. I come begging for help. I have nothing in my hand that I can do.

And that's how you came to God. Paul said, that's how you came. That's how you keep living. It's never about, well, I got saved and now I'm good. Now I'm good enough. And God's pleased me because I'm good. It's always he's good.

Did you know that when he saved you, here's the simple things. He saved you completely. And you are now complete in Christ if you are truly born again. The Bible says in Colossians 2.10.

[ 44 : 22 ] And you are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power. So I just want you to listen to this tonight. Give you two more things real quickly. We need, we ought to understand the gospel.

You know, we don't want to just learn the Bible. I want to know that I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ based on realizing my sin need. And realizing that he did a work in my life.

And realizing that he convicted me of my sin. And realizing that he saves me. And realizing that he keeps me. But there was another trying to win their heart. Somebody else was trying to get them away from Jesus.

Look at verse 4. 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 4. For he that cometh, there's somebody else coming. But another guy has been coming and he preaches another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel.

You ought to underline that in your Bible. Another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel. There are a lot of people using the name Jesus. They're preaching a different Jesus.

[ 45 : 18 ] It's not the same Jesus. It's, they're preaching another gospel. It's another gospel. It's not the real gospel. They're not telling the truth. See, there is no other Jesus but the real Jesus.

Others might come in his name and others might claim his power. But he's the only Lord Jesus Christ. God in human flesh who came from heaven. That other spirit, Satan himself.

Boy, he is trying to get us away. In Galatians chapter 1 and verse 6, the Bible says, I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace, unto another gospel.

Now listen to what they did. They got saved, trusting Jesus. And I've fallen for this big time in my past. I was saved by knowing it was God doing a work in my life. And then as I moved along in my spiritual life, I began to really think, watch, really God's only pleased with me by how I perform.

I thought God's love towards me was based on how good I was. I thought God's love for me was based on how well I performed and what I accomplished in my life and how much I left sin and how much I followed Jesus.

[ 46 : 17 ] But God's love for me was never based on that. I love him because he first loved me. It was him. It was he that came and did the work in my life. He saved me.

He changed me. The Bible says God commended, God showed, God proved his love toward us. And while we were yet sinners, still sinning, Christ died for us. And so the devil would turn you away to another gospel, a false gospel.

And regular, are you ready for this? Christianity is full of morality. But morality is not the gospel. There's a list of what you ought to do and what you ought not do.

And you could easily begin to think, if I don't, don't, don't, don't, and I do, do, do, then maybe God will be pleased. But that's not what it's about. It's not a list of rules. It's not a list of things that you accomplish.

It's what Jesus did. And it was Satan that was trying to turn them from Christ. Look in verse 3. I fear lest by any means the serpent beguile you, like it beguiled Eve through his simplicity, so your minds would be corrupted and taken away from the simplicity that's in Christ.

[ 47 : 20 ] From the very beginning, Satan's trying his best to get you away from this. Satan wants you to realize, hey, you're not that bad. There are religious leaders today that stand in pulpits and say, you've not sinned.

And they say sin's only a bad self-concept. And they will redefine the word for you because they don't want you to realize you did wrong and failed a holy God. And you are dead and wicked and filthy and dirty and deserve to go to hell.

And they'd do anything to change that message. There are those that would come along and say, hey, hey, if you don't eat certain foods, and if you honor certain days, and you keep certain rules, and they keep adding to the gospel.

And it's the devil trying to do that. The devil would just as soon you'd be super religious as super drug addict pedophile. All he cares about is you stay away from Jesus.

He would love to have you be the most moral person on the planet. He would love to have you be the most religious person on the planet. He would love you to go to church on Saturday with the Seventh-day Adventist, go to church on Sunday with the Baptists, and go to another day with Jehovah's Witnesses, go another day with the Mormons.

[ 48 : 22 ] He'd just go to church all the time. He'd be real happy. Just as long as you don't know that it was Jesus who paid it all, and Jesus who bought our salvation, and Jesus that saves us.

Satan would do anything in his power to get you away from believing in Jesus Christ and what he did on the cross. He is subtle. He works in imitations and counterfeits and fakes.

He takes always some truth, always some truth, and he mixes it with lies. He gets enough truth in there that it always looks good. You know, religion's a beautiful thing, really.

You can look at them, and sometimes they're dressed in long, flowing robes, and they're beautiful, and they got incense and special songs and special incantations. You can look at all the religions all around the world, and they all got something pretty about them.

The Lord stands, pack, and says, I want to puke. This makes me sick because there's only one thing. Jesus. He is the author and the finisher of our salvation. He bought your salvation.

[ 49 : 20 ] And so tonight, two things. Number one, if you're not saved, why don't you trust Christ tonight? Really? You say, well, hey, brother, everybody in this room is saved. We all are saved. You know, the truth is it's so easy to say that, isn't it?

Did you come to a place in your life that you realized you needed Christ? Did you come to a place in your life when you said, I failed God? And it's a hard thing to say. Our pride wants to rise up and say, no, not me.

I've never been a really bad guy. Did you know I've been in church all my life, and I got saved before I turned eight years old? I've been in church all my life, and it would be easy for me to say I've really been a pretty good guy, but in the Lord's eyes, I sinned against him, and as wicked as anybody else, I deserve hell.

I was as far from God as anybody else, and if he hadn't have come to me, I wouldn't be saved. That's what salvation is about. Did you realize that? Did you realize that there was no way you could fix things with God, but Jesus could?

Did you trust him? And as a believer, then I ask you this. How many of you have fallen into some trap that keeps you under a yoke of bondage that keeps you feeling less than or more than somebody else because of some list of rules you made up?

[ 50 : 25 ] It's salvation through Jesus. Paul says, guys, I'm worried because the truth of the gospel is real simple. It's all one word, Christ.

It's the simplicity that's found in Christ. What's the answer? Jesus Christ. What's the answer? Jesus Christ. What about this? Jesus Christ. It's a one-word answer.

Jesus paid it all. Now, are you saved? If you are saved, praise the Lord. And if you're not, why don't you admit it to God and say, look, I realize I've sinned. I realize I need to be saved. And if you are saved and you know you're saved, would you look and see if you've developed some sort of performance-based Christianity?

Would you look and see if you've allowed religion to even make you kind of a bitter, cantankerous person or a real cynical, pharisaical person? Would you find out this? Our only answer is Jesus.

That's it. That's part of his prayer. Father in heaven, I love you, and I thank you for the chance to be in your house tonight. And I thank you for the simplicity that's found in Christ. And God, you know I love these people, and I want to know that they know that they're going to heaven when they die.

[ 51 : 34 ] And God, I would pray that your Holy Spirit would convict. Holy Spirit, would you please do your mighty work? Shake them, wake them, break them, make them realize that they need to put their trust in you and what you did on the cross of Calvary.

I beg you, Lord, to convict them. I beg you, Lord, to not let them rest until they see their sinful condition. If they've never gotten that far, I pray that they will and they'll trust you.



Then I thank you, dear God, for what you're doing in the lives of Christians. But some of us, Lord, have stepped off into a rules-based, performance-based religion that think that your love for us depends on what we do.

I pray you'd shake us in that too and help us to trust you and look to you and believe in you and watch for what you're doing in our lives. God, help us to find the simplicity that's in Christ.

You have been listening to Austin Gardner, pastor of Vision Baptist Church. For contact information, location, service times, or more audio and video recordings, log on to [www.visionbaptist.com](http://www.visionbaptist.com).

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