



Message **Transcript**

Trust the Gospel

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Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are, and Lord, for all you're doing. And Lord, we just ask today, Lord, that you would specifically speak to each and every one of us, that you have a word for us. And Lord for what you're going to speak through your Holy Spirit, we give you praise in advance for all that you're going to do. Lord, be helpful to me and be helpful to our church as we listen. And now for all those who are gathered here, who desire to hear God speak, who will believe what he says to you, and will by faith put into practice what he shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word, amen. Amen.

When I was a youth pastor in Chicago, a number of years ago, I remember we did a ropes course one day. Part of the day started out with low ropes course. And in low ropes courses, you're learning team building activities. You're learning a lot about yourself. You're learning a lot about other people, how you communicate, how you don't communicate. It was pretty fun.

And then the latter half of the day was a high ropes course. And the high ropes course, it wasn't as much team building as it was learning about yourself. What I learned about myself is I don't like heights. I remember getting on top of basically a large telephone pole that was about 45 feet in the air, and it was called the leap of faith. And you had to stand there and then jump from the telephone pole, and grab onto some bar that was out there. And you're belayed in, you're totally safe. But my body apparently didn't know that, because when I got up to the top of the telephone pole, my knees just started moving and I was trying to hold them still. And I'm like, "Why is it doing that?" They said, "You're scared." I'm like, "I'm not scared." But I was scared.

Right?

So, I've learned that I don't like that. I don't like heights. Even when I went skydiving, I didn't like it. I just did it to do at once to "get it over with." So, I can say that I did it.

So, when we go on vacation, we went up to South Dakota here, the last couple of years, my kids always want to do a ropes course. And so, I watch because I already know I don't want to do that, because in order to be good at a ropes course, you need to trust the belay that's holding you in. And I don't have any trust in it. I'm old enough now that I don't need to place any trust in it.

And you have to decide in life, what is it or who is it that you're going to trust? And the older you get, you'll find the fewer people or the fewer things that you're going to trust. Because the longer that you live, the more you realize you've been burned before. So, who is it that you can trust?

I mean, as Paul is writing this letter to Timothy, he's telling him as a young man to go into the church in Ephesus, not as an elder, not as an apostle, not necessarily even as a pastor, and instruct the elders and the men in the church, what they're supposed to be doing. And for Timothy, like many of us, when we come to Christ, it says like, "How am I going to do that? How am I going to exercise the ministry that God has for me? I don't know enough. I'm not old enough." It's why Paul has to write them a second letter and tells him, "God did not give you the spirit of fear or a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power and love, and discipline."

Because even for us, after we get saved and God says, "Hey, get engaged in the game and serve me and do this." There's this something that goes off in our heart like, "Who me? I'm not qualified for that. I mean, look at past, I don't have the pedigree for that. I don't have the education for that. God can't really use me." Here's the truth. God can use you. And he wants you to know who and what you can trust.

And if you ever wanted to serve the Lord in ministry and wanted to know who and what I can trust, God has a word for you today. He wants you to know that you can completely trust him and you can completely trust the gospel, and that the gospel can change the world. Amen?

So, if you have your Bible, I want to encourage you to open up to 1 Timothy chapter one. We're going to be in verses 12 through 17 today. And as we look at that, remember, Paul has just gotten done instructing Timothy about these false teachers and how they like to go on and on about endless genealogies, and myths, and blabber about all this stuff. They seem like they're experts, and even though they don't even know what they're talking about. And he was saying, let the word of God be central to everything you do. And now Paul is going to give him the understanding of the gospel, not only in the word of God through the Holy Spirit, but his own personal testimony.

And as we read through this and we're going to highlight four reasons why you need to trust the gospel. Listen to what he says, "I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has strengthened me because he considered me faithful putting me into service. Even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor, and a violent aggressor, yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord

was more than abundant with the faith and love, which are found in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate his perfect patience as an example, for those who would believe in him for eternal life. Now, to the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God be honor and glory, forever and ever." And all God's people said, amen.

And as Paul ends this in a worship, we learn why it is that we can trust the gospel. Why it is that when God calls us to do something, we can trust the gospel. Now, let's be clear on what the gospel is, because if we're going to say gospel, we need to know what gospel means. Gospel simply means this, good news, that's gospel. You can trust in good news.

Now, what's the good news? The good news is that God the Father sent his son to be the savior of the world. The good news is God made him who had no sin to become sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of Christ. The good news is that God so loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him would not perish, but would have eternal life.

The good news is that Christ came and the righteous died for the unrighteous once for all, to bring you to God. The good news is this, you're born in sin. You're separated from God. It's why God seems so far away. It's why you do what you want to do. It's why you feel that you don't measure up to God. And yet God loved you so

much that before you even knew about it, God sent his only begotten son, who became incarnate flesh to identify with the world. And not only that, he fulfilled all the requirements of the law, which you and I have never kept.

And for those of you who say, "I've kept some of them." Let's go back in here last week's message. You've broken every single one of the 10 commandments over and over, and over, and over again. And that the law was given in such a way, so that we would understand that Christ is righteous and we're not. That he's holy and we're not. That he would be a tutor that would point us to Christ, so that through the law, we would become conscious of our own sin and give our lives to Christ.

And here's the really, really good news, no matter who you are, whether you're male or female, or regardless of your skin color or nationality, or upbringing, Jesus Christ came and he paid the penalty for all your sin, died on a cross and was buried, and rose from the dead, so that you, by faith, through repentance and faith, through turning from your sin and turning to Christ, no matter who you are, you can be saved and saved to the full. You can have a relationship with God. You can know that all your sin, past, present and future is completely taken care of. And you can have the God of the universe live inside of you. It's Christ in you the hope of glory.

When we talk about the gospel, again, we're not just talking about some facts that you need to believe. We're talking about the fact that when you believe the truth of God's word, that God himself comes to live inside of you. Amen? That's unlike any other promise you're going to hear anywhere in the world. That's the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, let me give you four reasons why you need to trust the gospel of Jesus Christ, that come right out of the text this morning. And the first reason is this, the gospel completely transforms our lives because God is powerful. The gospel completely transforms our lives because God is powerful.

Notice how Paul starts. He says, "I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord. I thank him." There's gratefulness going on in Paul's heart, but there's a gratefulness not just that Jesus Christ has saved Paul, there's gratefulness that he's saved everybody, that he's saved up until that point, because he's our father. He's our Lord. When we pray the Lord's prayer, it's our father who art in heaven. It's not my father. It's our father. And Paul is so grateful to the Lord Jesus Christ, because Paul is going to tell you that he wasn't born into this. And none of us are born into this. All of us are born separated from God into sin. He says, "I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has strengthened me because he considered me faithful putting me into service.

Now, you ask the question, why would God put the Apostle Paul in the service? You want the answer? Because everybody God saves, he puts into service. In case you're wondering, "I'm thinking about serving." Stop thinking about it and just do it. Right? I mean, everybody that's saved is saved for the purpose of serving Christ's church and advancing his kingdom. Everybody is. There's no sideline Christians. It's not that God will save some and say, "Hey, they're really gifted. We'll use them. And I'm going to save others. And we can't really use them." No. Paul is thankful because the Lord, God who saved him is the one who gave him the strength to do the service for

which God has called him to do. And every single person on the planet who has been saved has been saved for the purpose of serving in your area of gifting the church of Jesus Christ for the advancement of the kingdom of God. Amen?

And so, Paul is thanking God for this, because he was strengthened and put into service, even though what? "I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor, and a violent aggressor." Now, what does that mean? A blasphemer is somebody that would do this, speaking boldly against Christ and all the people who believe in him. That's what a blasphemer is. The Bible says that the blaspheming the Holy Spirit is the only unforgivable sin. But what does it mean to blaspheme the Holy Spirit? It means to attribute the works of Jesus Christ to the works of the devil. Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is to not believe that Jesus is the Christ. You say, "Well, I was at the time I didn't believe that." Yeah, but you repented of that and you trusted Christ. All sin is forgivable. But if you go to your grave believing that Jesus is not the Christ, that is unforgivable. If you go to your grave believing that Jesus death on the cross doesn't mean anything personal for you, that's unforgivable.

The only unforgivable sin is unbelief. So, if you don't believe you've got to be brought into belief. And Paul says, "Here's what I was. I was a blasphemer." What did Paul spend his waking hours later in his life doing? Waking up in the morning, speaking bad about Jesus Christ of Nazareth and speaking bad about all of his followers all the time. He was hostile to Jesus and the church. That's who he was. Not only that, he was a persecutor of the church. The word is like a task master or a slave driver.

We know from the scriptures that even when Stephen, who gave a great

testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ and convicted the hearts of the religious leaders of the day, he gave such a good testimony that he was stoned for his faith. When he was stoned for his faith, we see Saul of Tarsus, this Paul, that was a young man. All the older men were bringing coats, laying them at his feet, so that they could wind up and get a better throw at Stephen. And the Bible says that Saul was giving approval to his death.

Now, think about this, Paul was persecuting the church. He was on his way when he met the Lord to Damascus, to do what? To persecute the church, to drag people out of the church, to have them beaten, to have them whipped, to have them dragged into prison, to have them killed. That's how he spent every day. And notice what else he says, "I was a violent aggressor." So, if those two things weren't enough, here's what violent aggressor means. Somebody who is brutal. Somebody who is rash. Somebody who is an executioner. Somebody who takes pleasure and delight in seeing other people get hurt. That's what Paul said. So, when Stephen is being stoned and Paul is giving approval to death, he's saying, "That's awesome."

Now, I've never seen somebody stoned to death. I have seen somebody get beat up before. And have you ever seen somebody get beat up before? It's brutal to watch somebody get beat up. The Apostle Paul in his pre-Jesus' days was watching someone get, not only beat up, getting stoned to death, breathing their last, not being able to see straight because they have blood pouring everywhere. And he's saying, "That's awesome." That's why Paul says, "Hey, listen, I understand the power of the gospel. The gospel has the power to transform anybody's life anywhere at any time."

Amen?

Now, I won't ask you to raise your hand on this. This is a rhetorical question, but just think about this for a minute. Do you have anybody in your sphere of influence, someone that you know, or someone that you know of that you may not even know, that you would say in your heart while you might not mouth it out loud, "There's no way they would ever come to Christ. God can't save them or he could, but he won't." That's the Apostle Paul.

Friends, God can save anybody, anywhere at any time. Why? Because the gospel has power, power. We're not just dispensing facts, we're dispensing the truth. And in the truth of the gospel, the Holy Spirit brings power and conviction. It's why people get saved. That's why you don't need to fear nonbelievers when you share with them. Because even if you say, "Well, they never responded." They heard. The Holy Spirit is convicting them of sin, righteousness, and judgment. It's why when you come to church, even as a believer in the gospel, you are still convicted of your sin and God's righteousness, and God is still growing in you. That's the power of the spirit. That's why Paul says, when he talks about the gospel, he goes, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel, in Romans 1:16, "For it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."

In order to be saved, it takes the power of God. In case you were thinking, "Well, it didn't take that for me. I've just always believed." You're wrong. You're dead wrong. You were born dead in your trespasses and sins. And it would only be the power of

God that could set you free. Even when Paul writes to the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 1:18, he says, "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing."

Here's what nonbelievers think about Jesus in his cross, "Stupid, dumb. You can't really tell me that Jesus is the only way to heaven. You can't really say that his death on the cross was for everybody. That's silly. That's foolish. That's totally unwise." But the verse goes on to say, "But for those of us who are being saved, it's become the power of God."

The cross of Jesus is not foolish. It's the power of God. Every person that's ever taken a breath in this world will one day understand that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father. Amen?

But even as Paul talks about his preaching to the Corinthians, he talked about it like this. We talked about last week, those false prophets, they tell stories. They quote books. They talk about genealogies. They try to make themselves look smart. That's not what the Apostle Paul did. He says in 1 Corinthians 2:4, "My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power." He writes the same thing when he writes to the Thessalonian church in 1 Thessalonians 1:5. And I want you to hear this, so that you understand what I'm talking about.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:5, he writes it like this, "For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit with full conviction." That means if

we're foolish enough to preach the gospel, that God will do the work he wants to do. Because in John chapter 15, verse 16, he says, "For you to not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you go bear fruit." In case some of you falsely think that you've found Jesus, you didn't find him. He had his eye on you long before you ever went looking for him. And the only reason you ever went looking for him was his grace drawing you to himself. It is God that does the work. And when we're faithful in our teaching, we're faithful in our sharing, we're faithful in our proclamation, God saves people. He does it all the time here when we're faithful.

I was talking to a friend of ours who was with her daughter on Friday night, who's eight years old, who I've known since, before she was born, goes to our church, who said to me, "Hey, our girl sat in big church this weekend. And she was there and she told me what happened." Sunday night, she goes home and tells her parents, "Hey, I want Jesus in my life. I want to know that he's real." And she accepted Jesus in her life. And my heart starts beating and pounding like, "That's what we're all about." Amen. I didn't know God did that. God did that. How did he do that? Through the power of the proclamation of the word of God that reaches the hearts of people.

Friends, when you share the gospel, there's a power in your sharing. "Yeah, but this guy at work, I mean, he'll never come to..." You don't know that. "My family, they just have so many people. My friends are in..." You don't know that. When you start telling the truth, then you have a story.

Now, let's talk about testimony for just a second, so we know what the power is. When I got saved, when I was 18 years old and went off to the University of Illinois,

here's what I thought testimony was, because I went to a ministry and for the first three weeks they gave testimony. And testimony, I thought, my takeaway, nobody ever told me what a testimony was. I grew up in a church, I don't know that we had any, but I thought it was this, based on what I'd heard, "Here's all the really, really, really bad things I've done, then I met Jesus who died and rose. And now my life is miserably boring, but I'm a Christian." And I was like, "I don't have that story."

I mean, I was a decent kid. I did some stupid things, but I didn't have that really far out story. And so, I left after three weeks. And here was my thought, "I need to go get a testimony because I don't have one." They asked me to give mine, I said, "I don't have one." And I went and tried to build one over the course of three years. But that wasn't the testimony. The testimony is not the bad things you do. The testimony is what Christ has done. Meaning, if you're four years old and you've trusted Christ, you have a testimony. And the testimony is not just what he's done, it's what he's going to continue to do in your life. You don't need to go build your testimony in the world. You go build your testimony on Jesus. Amen? So, that you can say with all authority, "I was, but God, and now."

I can tell my testimony in 10 seconds. I was a prideful, religious kid that went to church, but God got a hold of my life at Young Life Camp and saved me. And now I live for him. That's my testimony. And I can share that short or I can spend three hours telling you all the nuances of it. But you don't have to know a lot to serve Christ in his kingdom.

Think about the blind guy in John chapter nine. "What was your testimony?" "I don't know. All I know I was blind, now I see. He did it." What else do you need? You don't need to go to seminary to give your testimony. You need to repent and put your faith in Jesus Christ. Amen?

And if God is for us, the Bible says, who can be against us? You're his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. And God will always be ironing those works out until you meet him face to face. There will never come a time where it's all perfect. But the first reason, trust the gospel. He completely transforms lives because our God is powerful.

Anybody you see anywhere at any time, God can save and save to the full. I mean, we don't think about it like this, because we think we read our Bible because most of us grew up in the church, and we'd read our Bible like, "Okay. Saul, he saw Jesus on the way to Damascus. And now he's in the church and he's helping people. And he went through some really hard times." I mean, Paul, it would be like today, if the leader of ISIS got saved and started building the church, that's what it's like. That's who he was. That's why Paul is always downplaying himself. He doesn't want to talk about his past life. That's not his testimony. His testimony is that God would have mercy and grace on him. Amen?

Our testimony here at the church is not that we have some good people and some bad people, and we're all trying to get a little bit better. The testimony here at our church, is we're all dead apart from Christ. And some of us have turned our

brokenness over to Christ and are being saved. And some of us haven't done that who need to do that. That's the only group of people that are meeting here today. Amen.

And here's what God's able to do, in the same way he was able to take the Apostle Paul's life, he's able to take your life and completely transform it. And it's not just facts about the gospel, it's his life in you forever and ever. Amen and amen. Trust him. He transforms lives because he's powerful.

Second, I'll give you this reason you need to trust the gospel because the gospel continues to lavish us in abundance because God is present. He's present. The gospel continues to lavish us in abundance.

Notice what the apostle says, he says, he just keep talking about being a blasphemer and a persecutor, and a violent aggressor, "Yet, I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was more than abundant with the faith and love, which are found in Christ Jesus." What's he saying? "Even though I lived this way," here's what he said, "I lived that way ignorantly in an unbelief." What does that mean? Ignorant means, I didn't know. I didn't know. There are some people that come to our church that are ignorant of Jesus. Now, you've heard all about him, but you're ignorant of you don't really know that he exists. You don't have a relationship with him and you live in unbelief. So, you can't place your faith and trust in someone that you haven't really, truly believed in. You're ignorant of it.

Other people in the world, they're totally ignorant of Jesus. If there's anything in the world that you read on news or social media, and you're like, "That is crazy." It's

because they're ignorant and living in unbelief. That's why. Does God still want to save them? Please answer me. Yes. He wants to save everybody. That's his goal. You say, "Well, what about me? Because I didn't just act in ignorance and unbelief. I knew better and still did it. What about that?" What about those of you that are here today that know better, but you're not living for Jesus? Here would be my pastoral call to you, please repent and trust Christ. He'll meet you right where you are right now. He'll give you a do over right here in this moment. It's his conviction in your life saying, "You know better, so start living better." It's you saying to Jesus, "I need your help again." That's all it means, right?

Because we falsely teach a gospel sometimes that tells people, "Hey, as long as you prayed this prayer, walk this aisle, shook the pastor's hand, filled out a card, send it in, you're home free." Show me one verse in the Bible that says that.

Here's what the Bible says, just so you know because I don't want to give you any false understanding. In first John chapter three in verse six, it says this, "No one who abides in him sins. No one who sins has seen him or known him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you. The one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as he is righteous. The one who practices sin is of the devil, for the devil is sent from the beginning, the son of God appeared for this purpose to destroy the works of the devil." What's he saying? If you know Jesus, you will not continue to sin. There's only one amen in the whole church. See, we like the false gospel.

The false gospel says you can sin all you want and still go to heaven. No, you cannot. If you are truly born again, you will not continue in sin. Now, there are believers

who are born again, who have a habitual sin pattern, but you don't have to stay there. But there's a difference friends between being convicted by the Holy Spirit, knowing that you're struggling in a sin and not being convicted by the Spirit at all and just living in sin. If you say, "I'm a Christian." But you're dwelling in iniquity, let me tell you what I know for sure about your life, you are not abiding in Christ.

John 14 verses 23 and 24, tells me this, "Here's how you know who loves God. Anyone who loves God obeys his word. He who does not love God, does not obey his word." Obeying God's word means I want to align my life with Christ. And where it's out of alignment, Lord do a work in my heart. Lord, I was unaware about this. Search me and try me, oh Lord. See if there's any offensive way in me. Lead me in the way everlasting. If you're truly born again, God will bring you on that journey. If you're not born again, this message will offend you. It will be foolishness to those of you who are perishing.

"Hey, I was told by my pastor, I prayed that prayer and that was enough. And I don't really care about Jesus." That's because you're not saved. He lied to you. You need to repent and trust Jesus to make Jesus Christ central in your life. That's what it means. So, what does it mean here? That he continues to lavish grace on us. Because remember the gospel is not just getting out of hell and going to heaven someday. If that's all the gospel was, then when I trusted Christ at 18, I can just wait until my death date, and then it'll kick in again. The gospel is Christ in me, the hope of glory, his presence right now.

And most of us don't realize that God is with you right now, if you're a believer. He's right now in your life. You say, "Well, no, he's not. Our father who art in heaven. And Jesus Christ is at the right hand of the throne of God." Agree, great job. Where's the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is inside of every single person who believes. And everywhere you go, there God is. Amen. And sometimes we're looking for where God is when he's already in us wanting to come out of us. Because God, as I say, often, didn't come in just to be resident. He came in to be president. He came to take over your life. And the beauty of God's mercy and grace in your life is that God wants to take over.

Think about what Paul says. Why was Paul saved? Because of his mercy and grace. So, let's talk about those two words. What's mercy? Mercy is when you don't get the punishment that you do deserve. So kids, if you've ever been in trouble with your parents and they're about ready to punish you, but decide they're not going to punish you, that's called mercy. If you get pulled over by a police officer in I-25 and they walk into your car, and you just did 95, and they walk up and say, "Hey, I'm giving you a warning. Have a good day." That's mercy.

Grace is not mercy. Grace is the opposite side. Grace is giving you what you don't deserve. It's unmerited favor. It's lavishing you with something you didn't even know. Grace is when somebody comes up to you and says, "Hey, I'm just going to buy your dinner tonight." Grace is when somebody comes up to you and just gives you a gift like, "What did I do to earn this?" "Nothing. I'm just doing it for you." Right? That's grace.

And mercy and grace go together. We're saved because of God's mercy and grace. All of us because of our sin deserve death and hell, every single one of us. So, if God didn't have mercy and send every single living person to hell, and punish them for eternity, God would be totally justified. Nobody could stand against him and say, "Oh, that's not right. That's not fair." It's totally fair. But God had mercy and said, "I'm not going to hold that against you."

And then how did God dispense grace? Through his son, Jesus Christ. He says, "I'll give you the greatest gift I could ever give you. I will send my son who will become incarnate flesh. I will take all of your sin and I will put it on my son. And I will have my son slaughtered in your place for you, so that you can go scot-free, that you can live in total freedom. And my son will take all the punishment." That's the gospel. That's the gospel of mercy and grace. Mercy and grace means I didn't deserve it, but God gave it to me anyway. That's grace. That's unmerited favor. But this grace isn't just for the moment that you get saved is for the rest of your life, because God is continuing to sanctify you and make you perfect. Amen?

So, think about this. When Paul wrote to his other young protegee, Titus in Titus chapter two, verse 11, he says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men." And we would say, that's it, it's for by grace we're saved through faith. That's grace. That's grace, God's grace, but that's not all of grace, because notice what else grace does, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.

What also does grace do? Grace doesn't just save us, grace grows us. The same grace that was lavished on us at salvation that took all of your sin and washed it away, is the same grace in your life that grows you into newness in Christ. Isn't that awesome news? It means this, one of my favorite pastors likes to say this, talks about Christian hedonism saying, Jesus gets the glory and we get all the joy. When you live your life for Jesus and you're living for him, he gets all the glory. You get all the joy.

The greatest joy is to walk in the fullness of the spirit with Jesus. And why do we need grace? I want you to think about some of the roles that you have in your life. Some of you have a role being single right now. Some of you have a role being a husband, some as a wife, some as a father, some as a mother, some as a child, some as a student, some as a boss, some as an employee. And the list goes on and on, and on. It's rhetorical. How many of you are living perfectly for Christ in that role right now and have no room for growth? I know it's rhetorical, but I think I'd see the same amount of hands. I mean, all of us are growing in all those areas. So, what do I need? I need God's grace to grow me as a single. I need God's grace to grow me as a father, or as a wife, or as a mother, or as a daughter.

I need God's help in the same way he saved me to continue to grow me in his grace. And that's why we can trust the gospel. Not only has gospel have power, the gospel gospel has God's presence. He's with you. He sees everything you do, and he wants you to grow into him. Amen? And God continues us to lavish us with abundance.

And I've told you from his pulpit, I'm not a prosperity preacher like, hey, just give

God a little, he'll give you a lot. That's not it. Prosperity comes from having Jesus in your life. And the more Jesus takes over your life, the more prosperity you're going to have, the more joy you're going to have, the more hope you're going to have, the more fulfillment you're going to have. It all comes from Jesus.

The world is looking around, just so you know, our world is desperate for hope. Everybody is trying to find it everywhere. There's only one place the world can find it, and it's in the person of Jesus. And for those of you that know him, you have the answer to the world for everything they're looking for. And you're going to say, "Well, not me. I'm not ready to share that." Yes, you are. You're a hundred percent ready to share that. You know Christ, you know Christ is in you, you know he's growing. You tell the world about that. Tell everybody in your sphere of influence about that. Let Jesus Christ be Lord in your life. Amen.

Let me give you a third reason why we need to trust the gospel, because the gospel compels us to be an example because God is patient. The gospel compels us to be an example. 2 Corinthians 5 says, "For the love of Christ compels us or controls us to be an example."

Notice what Paul says here at the end of verse 14, he talks about this faith and love, which are found in Jesus. You really can't get faith and you can't get love anywhere else in the world. I mean, where else are you going to get it? You say, "Well, Jeff, I know non-Christians that love." I'm like, "No, not by Jesus's definition. They don't."

No non-Christian can love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. No non-Christians can walk the extra mile. No non-Christians can get hit in the face and turn the other cheek. That doesn't happen to non-Christians. The only way you can do that, the only way you can love, the only way you can forgive somebody that doesn't deserve to be forgiven is if you have the love of Christ. And the only way you can have faith in your life is if you have Christ dwelling on the inside, because he's the one that's going to prompt you to take a step of faith. Any other step of faith is really not going to be a step of faith because it's going to be us choosing what we're going to do for God, not God choosing what he wants us to do. Amen?

And Here's what we see with Paul. He compels us to be an example. Now, I love this in verse 15, very popular verse in Romans, or I'm sorry, in 1 Timothy 1:15, he says, it's a trustworthy statement. Now, let me tell you something about the Bible, from Genesis one, through Revelation 22, it's all a trustworthy statement. The Holy Spirit penned it. The Holy Spirit wrote it. There's an not one jot or tittle that'll ever be taken away.

So, when you read in the Bible, "Truly, truly I say to you." Or this is a trustworthy statement, it means this is all true, but pay special attention to this one. And Paul says it is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came in the world to save whom? Say it out loud with me. Sinners, of whom I am foremost of all. Who did Jesus come for? Sinners. That's it. That's the only group of people he came for. It's the only group of people he came for.

If you in your mind are so clouded that you would say, "Well, there's those people out there, he doesn't care about them. He doesn't love them. And that group over there." Now, that's the group he came for. The only group he came for are sinners. Now, I have really good news for you, every one of you qualify in that category. And you all have a resume to prove it. So, who did Jesus come for? He came for you. He came specifically for your sin. And Paul says, it's a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance that Christ Jesus came in the world to save sinners. That's who he came for. And everyone in the world needs to be delivered of their sin by Jesus Christ. Going to church is not enough. Being in a small group is not enough. Giving money, not enough.

God's not looking for your good acts. Your good acts don't bring you closer to God. God is looking for you to recognize that Jesus Christ took all your sin and died on a cross in your place for you. And you can take that to the bank for all eternity. Amen? That's the good news of the gospel. And that's what we're seeing here in this text. I mean, even as Paul starts writing about himself, when he writes to the Corinthians and he writes to the Ephesians, I mean, listen to how Paul talks about himself. Paul doesn't have a high opinion of himself. He has a very high opinion of Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 15:9, he says, "For I am the least of the apostles and not fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God." And in Ephesians chapter three and verse eight, he has a similar tone, he said, "To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ." Paul has been saying, "Of all sins, of whom I'm foremost." Now, I want you to

think about this in your mind's eye and don't blur it out. Who's the biggest sin you know? Don't say anything, just who is he? Who is she? Think about the biggest sin you know in our world right now. I mean, who are they? Think about it. If you're not thinking about yourself, you have the wrong person in your mind. You really do. Because if you can talk about someone else's sin and a body you don't even live in, but you can't even talk about your own, you don't understand the gospel of grace.

The gospel of grace will show you all that Christ has died for. When I came to know Christ at 18, I knew some of the behaviors that Christ had saved me from. And I knew some of the things that he'd forgiven. But as I've grown in my faith over the last 30 years, God has shown me the depravity of my own heart to a depth that I realized that man, he had to go pretty deep to save someone like me. When Paul is talking about being foremost, certainly he was persecuting the church. Certainly at the time the church was starting to expand, he was saying, "I'm the guy that was trying to stop all of it and all that." But I also think it goes deeper than that. I also think Paul had a great awareness of the sin for Jesus Christ died for in his own life, personally. Do you have that?

Have you ever spent time before the Lord's throne saying, "Lord, Hey, show me anything in my life, I might not be aware of that you've saved me of?" I've had those encounters with the Lord, where he reveals more and more, and more, and more that he had to save me from. Right? And what Paul was saying was this, "Hey, Timothy, you don't need to be afraid in your church to lead because if God can save me, he can

save anybody. You don't need to be afraid of your elders. You don't need to be afraid of the church. You don't need to be afraid of anybody else. You don't need to be afraid of these people that will never come to Christ. Just trust the gospel. God will do all the work, Timothy. Don't live in fear. God will do this, right?"

He's saying, "Timothy, if God could save me, he can save anybody in your congregation." I'll tell you as your pastor. I know me. My sisters happen to be in this service. I see them. If God can save me, he can save anybody. I probably didn't hear my sister say amen, but he can. I mean, I know me. And in this day of church where we... I mean, hear these words, I don't even know what they mean like celebrity pastor, what the heck is that? If we ever lose sight of everything that God has saved us from, we've lost everything.

The power in the gospel is Jesus Christ, not anybody else. There are no celebrities. There's no good characters in the Bible other than Jesus. It's Jesus. It's him first and foremost. It means this, if God can save Paul, if God can save me, he can save anybody. We've seen it in our church. God saves alcoholics. God saves drug users. God saves sex offenders. God saves prideful religious people that think they're already saved.

But even as you look out in the world, you're like, "That's BLM. Oh, that's Antifa. Oh, look at those terrorists over there." God can save all of them, if you won't give into a spirit of fear and just proclaim the gospel. And what would it do in the world, if some of the people that you're frustrated with, actually were born again? Think of some of the people you know in the political realm that instead of yelling at them and telling

them how bad they are, you prayed for them. And we prayed God would get an opportunity to save them. What if three or four of those actually got born again and said, "I was living this way, but now I'm doing everything under my administration to live for Jesus Christ." Would that change things?

See, I think that gospel has power. I think the gospel is present. I think Christ is with us. And I think God is so patient. God is patient with everyone, not wanting anyone to perish, but wanting all to come to know him. You say, "Well, how patient is he?" Take some of your own personal inventory. How patient is he with you? I mean, to the extent you're not perfect. How patient is he with you? I mean, how many times do you have to go before the Lord and say, "I did it again. Lord, I'm sorry. Lord, help me." I mean, how patient is he with us? He's so patient, he's so long suffering that he uses us as his examples, so that we'll be long suffering as well.

And see, the reality is we need to know that we're Christ's examples, that we truly understand that we've been born again from the dead into life with Christ, because it's only religious people that have categories for sin. Did you know that? Well, there's some people that are not that bad. They probably need Jesus a little bit. And then there's these people here, they're a little bit worse and they definitely need Jesus, but they're pretty good people in the world. And then there's these people here and they're not very good people. And then there's these people here and they're bad. And then there's people here that are awful. And there's people here, they're beyond help. Only religious people would talk like that.

Here's how God would look down and say, "I created every one of them and I love each one of them. And I'm able to save anyone to the full." Will you pray for them? And as you have opportunity, will you share the gospel with them? Because the power and the gospel can save their lives. Amen. That's the church. You can trust the gospel.

Politics will change. Opinions will change. School systems will change. Everything is going to change. The one thing that will never change is that Jesus Christ is Lord of all, to the glory of God the Father. Amen?

So, Paul says, "Yet, for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate his perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in him for eternal life." Why did God pick you? Why is God asking you to serve? Because he's showing what an imperfect person looks like that's working to let Christ be center in their life, so that when the world looks on at every man, woman, boy, and girl that knows Christ, they would say, "Okay, that's what it looks like to be a believer. Okay, that's what it means to serve like Christ serves. That's why God is always in our lives, wanting to do more and more with us and take more and more over, so that more people can see the living Christ in our lives."

And friends, I want to tell you on the authority of God's word, you'll never be fully put together until you meet Jesus. He's the one who saves you. He's the one who sanctifies you. He's the one who's going to present you faultless with exceedingly great joy before the father to the glory and praise of God. He's the one that does all the work. So again, this is not about navel-gazing, "And what are the five things I need to

work on to be a better Christian?" No, no, no. This is how do I submit my life to the authority of Christ, so he can do a better work in me? It'll never be done until you meet Jesus.

Kim and I had a chance to be out at the Billy Graham Library some years ago in Charlotte. And we went not knowing what it was going to be. And we just didn't have anything else to do in Charlotte to be honest. So, we went to the Billy Graham Museum. And it was really cool. And we had a great time, and we toured. And at the end, we got to see Ruth Graham's grave, and she's buried there. I'm sure Billy Graham is now buried there as well. It was before he had passed away. But on her tombstone, it said this, "End of construction. Thanks for the patience." That's what our life will look like.

Again, the gospel is not a message that you try to be perfect. The gospel message is that Christ is already perfected in you and that we're trying to live out what Christ has already worked in our lives, we're trying to work it out of our lives. But all of us are under construction. Amen. All of us are depending upon the Lord. Amen. All of us are trying to submit our lives greater to the Lord. That's what it looks like to be a believer in Jesus Christ.

And if you get these three down, if you understand that God is powerful and that he's present, and that he's patient and you're walking with him, then it gives me the fourth reason that you should trust the gospel completely. It's my favorite, because the gospel causes us to erupt and worship because God is preeminent.

If you truly know the gospel, you will worship the Lord. That's the evidence of knowing Christ, is that you want to worship Christ because he is preeminent. That means he's the sovereign. That means he's the ruler overall. That means there is no other. And that's exactly where the apostle through the Holy Spirit goes here, he goes, "Now to the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. I mean, you want to unpack that for a minute. I mean, the end game of the gospel is worship.

The end game of sharing the gospel, the end game of evangelism is worship. It means when you go out and share the gospel with somebody and you ask this question, somebody ask you, "Did they get saved?" "I don't know. Maybe, maybe not." Here's how you'll know. Do they love to worship Jesus? "Well, no, they don't like that." Then they're not saved. I mean, it's that simple. I'm not saying that they know how to sing Christian songs. I'm not saying they know how to raise their hands. I'm not saying they know all about spiritual gifts. I'm saying if there's no hunger and desire for Jesus, then Jesus didn't save them. Because if you were dead and the reason you were made alive is because God came in on the inside, and the Holy Spirit's desire is to worship and bring worship from you to the son, and you don't have any desire to do that, let me tell you who is not in your life, the Holy Spirit. That's the truth.

Those who know Jesus, love to worship Jesus. Now, to the king, he's the king. That means there are no other kings. He's the only God. That means there are no other gods. I mean, worship is exclusive. There are no other gods. "Well, Pastor Jeff, I think there's a lot of ways. And that's your way, because you're a Christian." You're

wrong. God has one way. And this is his way. And anybody doesn't believe that way, will one day know that, because they will be hearing these words, "Depart from me you worker of inequity, for I never knew you." That's according to the word of God. And those who trusted Jesus will say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Enter into the rest." If someone is saved, they'll worship. If someone's not saved, they won't worship.

The king, Jesus is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. There is no other. He's eternal, means he's always existed. There was never a time where Jesus Christ did not exist. And eternity passed, he existed and he's always going to exist in the future. He's immortal, that means he's impervious to corruption and death. He's imperishable. He's incorruptible. There's nothing that can happen to him. He's not going away. So, we give him honor. That's respect and reverence. We give him glory, which is praise, splendor, radiance and brightness. How long do we do it? Forever and ever. That's always and forever more.

What's amen mean? It means like yes, yes, yes. I don't know how you do devotions. I don't know how you worship the Lord. I don't know what you do. It doesn't have to be singing. Oftentimes, I use a hymnal. I grew up Methodist. I have a Methodist hymnal. I have a Lutheran hymnal. Oftentimes, I'm going through hymns and I'm going through songs.

This week, I was going through my favorite Methodist hymn, which is And Can It Be. And the second verse said, "Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound by sin in

nature's night, than I diffused a quickening ray. I woke the dungeon flamed with light. My chains fell off. My heart was free. I rose, went forth, and followed thee." Love that. If your saved, you have a story like that. You have one where God has grabbed your life and made him yours, made you his. You did not choose him. He chose you. He brought you to himself and it should cause our heart to worship. That means that without Christ, you have no hope in this world. Even those of you that would say, "I got a lot hope. I mean, my bank account is looking pretty good. My job future is looking pretty good. I got tons of friends."

Here's what I would say to you, what does it profit you to gain the entire world and forfeit your soul for all eternity? You ever thought about how long eternity is? It's eternal. I mean, count up the biggest number you can have, like trillions, billions. I don't even know the biggest. I mean, whatever day you would pick, I mean, eternity would just be getting started on that day.

Eternal hell is just as long as eternal life. And you were heading for eternity apart from Christ, and God stepped in, saved you, forgave you, washed it all away, wrapped you in his arms, told you that you belong to him, that he loves you. He'll never ever let you go no matter what you do. He empowered you with his Holy Spirit. He walks with you in the present. He gives you power to accomplish his will. And all he does is continue to lavish you with grace. Every time you make a mistake, the there's more grace to cover that. The more you sin, the more grace you get. I mean, when you die, you know you do not need to fear, because to be apart from the body is to be in the presence of Christ.

The moment you breathe your last breath will be the most glorious moment you've ever experienced as a Christian. It means if you're a Christian, you can send back a telegram, maybe you send it before you die because you won't be able to send it back, say, "Don't cry for me, I'm way happier than you." People can lament death on this side of heaven because we miss people that are gone. But the people that are gone, aren't missing you, because they're with Jesus, the goal of their faith. Nobody is up in heaven, looking down saying, "I can't wait till they get here." They don't have time for you. They're with Jesus now. They're healed. They're whole. They're full. They're joyful. It's the goal of their faith. Amen. That's why we say, thank you Jesus for the blood. So we say, thank you Jesus for the cross.

I mean, we can talk about a lot of things and we can have opinions on a lot of things in the church, and we can have differing opinions. I think we've been very clear on that in this last year and a half. We have a Christian liberty to think differently and love each other deeply. Don't we? But the one thing we can't have a difference of opinion on is the gospel. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through him.

So, here's my question for you, do you have a relationship with Jesus Christ? I'm not asking, are you churchy? I'm not asking, if you prayed a prayer. I'm not asking if you walked an aisle. I'm not asking if you felt a tingle go off in your heart. I'm asking, when did you individually turn from your sin and tell Jesus Christ, "I want you to come in and be the Lord of my life. And I want to live for you." When did that happen? Because if that hasn't happened, I'm telling you on the authority of God's word, that's the most

urgent decision that you'll ever need to make.

And I'm telling you, you need to make that decision right now in this very moment. And if you've made that decision, let me tell you on the authority of God's word, just how much he loves you. And even if you find yourself convicted today of some sin, he loves you, and he wants to grow you through that. And he would tell you this, "Hey, at the cross of Calvary, I already forgave it. And I knew you're going to be struggling with that. But why don't you come back to me and I'll help wash you clean again."

Thank you, Jesus. That's who our God is. Amen and amen. So, I'm going to ask you to stand. And as we close in prayer, I'm going to ask you, if you've never invited Jesus in your life, why not make this very moment the time that you do it right now?

So Lord, we give you praise, glory, and honor for who you are. And Lord, as we gather here in this place, wherever people are listening, here's what we're praying. If you've never trusted Jesus, if you don't have a relationship with God, make this moment your time by praying like this, "Dear Jesus, I know I'm a sinner and I'm separated from you. But I believe that you're God and that you died for all my sin. You took it all, and rose from the dead. Lord Jesus, I want to turn from my sin." That's called repentance. "And I want you to come into my life." That's called faith. "I believe that you're God. Come in my life. Live with me forever. And let me walk with you. Let me experience the depth of your love, I never knew before."

And for those who are gathered, who know him, maybe this is the way you pray today, "Lord Jesus, you are my God. Take over completely. Fill me afresh with your

spirit and remind me of the great love with what you have for me. And Lord, even as I sing this final song, let me sing this worship to you as a response to how grateful I am for all that you've done for me. For we give you glory and honor, and praise for you are our God. And we love you with our whole heart, in Jesus name, amen and amen." Can we praise God today as we sing to him?