



# SERMON SERIES STUDY GUIDE

## Philippians: The Surpassing Worth of Knowing Christ, Pt. 2

Pastor John Riggs

### Summary:

This sermon explores the profound difference between religious works and a genuine relationship with Christ, focusing on Paul's testimony in Philippians 3. The pastor emphasizes that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, warning against the deception of adding human works to the gospel. Drawing from Paul's experience as a zealous Pharisee who discovered the worthlessness of religious credentials compared to knowing Christ, the message highlights how true Christian faith is about intimate relationship, not religious performance. The sermon challenges believers to pursue deeper knowledge of Christ through all life experiences—including suffering—just as marriage teaches us about commitment, sacrifice, and love through difficult seasons. The pastor warns against interfaith compromise and religious tolerance that undermines the exclusivity of the gospel, while emphasizing the freedom, joy, and peace found in Christ alone.

### Video Breakdown:

- Chapter 1: Warning Against Religious Deception
  - 0:00 - 16:41
  - We are warned against the dangers of religious deception, particularly the false teaching that adds works to the gospel of grace.
- Chapter 2: Paul's Past Experience in Religion
  - 16:41 - 39:06
  - We examine the apostle's impressive religious credentials and how he came to count them all as worthless compared to knowing Christ.
- Chapter 3: The Surpassing Value of Knowing Christ
  - 39:06 - 56:20
  - We discover that knowing Christ is an intimate, growing relationship that deepens through all of life's experiences, including suffering.
- Chapter 4: A Call to Prayer for India
  - 56:20 - 69:27
  - We are called to pray for believers in India facing severe persecution and suffering during the pandemic crisis.

## Scripture References from the Sermon

### Explicitly Mentioned References

1. Philippians 3:1-16 - Main passage of the sermon
2. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 - Quoted at the beginning regarding Scripture's inspiration
3. Acts 15 - Discussion of the Jerusalem Council
4. Acts 15:5 - Regarding circumcision and keeping the law of Moses
5. Acts 15:10-11 - Peter's statement about the yoke and salvation by grace
6. Galatians 2:1-6 - Paul's account of going to Jerusalem with Barnabas
7. Ephesians 2:8-9 - Salvation by grace through faith, not works
8. Ephesians 5 - Marriage as a picture of Christ and the church

### Alluded to or Referenced Thematically

9. John 14:6 - "Jesus is the only way, the truth, and the life" (alluded to when discussing exclusivity of Christ)
10. Hebrews 13:5 - "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (referenced multiple times)
11. Hebrews 4:16 - Boldly coming to the throne of grace (alluded to)
12. Colossians 1:15 - Christ as the visible image of the invisible God (referenced)
13. James 2:10 - Breaking one law means breaking all (mentioned regarding 613 laws)
14. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 - Reconciliation through Christ (thematic reference)

### Relevant Verses for Main Themes

#### Theme: Freedom from Religion vs. Relationship with Christ

- Galatians 5:1 - "Stand firm in the freedom Christ has given you"
- John 8:32, 36 - Truth setting free; freedom in the Son
- Romans 8:1-2 - No condemnation in Christ Jesus

#### Theme: Knowing Christ

- John 17:3 - Eternal life is knowing God and Jesus Christ
- 1 John 5:20 - Understanding and knowing Him who is true

#### Theme: Warning Against False Teachers/Judaizers

- Galatians 1:6-9 - Warning about a different gospel
- Colossians 2:16-17 - Don't let anyone judge you regarding religious observances

#### Theme: Marriage as Picture of Christ and Church

- Ephesians 5:22-33 - Complete passage on marriage and Christ/Church relationship

#### Theme: Suffering and Knowing Christ

- Romans 8:17-18 - Sharing in Christ's sufferings
- 2 Corinthians 4:17 - Light and momentary troubles

**Key Points:**

- Religion imprisons people through works and rules, while relationship with Christ brings freedom and joy
- The gospel is salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone—adding anything to this makes it "no gospel at all"
- Paul counted all his religious achievements as "rubbish" compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ
- Knowing Christ is an intimate, relational experience similar to the intimacy between husband and wife
- We grow in knowing Christ through life experiences, including suffering and difficult circumstances
- Religious deception often appears very close to truth but adds human works to salvation
- The Judaizers tried to add circumcision and law-keeping to the gospel of grace
- True Christian faith cannot embrace other religions or participate in interfaith unity that compromises the gospel
- Marriage is a physical picture of the spiritual relationship between Christ and the Church
- We learn more about Christ through struggling and persevering, not just in comfortable times
- God never leaves or forsakes His children, regardless of circumstances

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**Discussion Questions:**

Paul describes counting everything as loss compared to knowing Christ Jesus. What are some things in your life that you might be tempted to rely on instead of pursuing a deeper relationship with Christ?

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The sermon contrasts religion with relationship, suggesting that religion keeps people in bondage while relationship with Christ brings freedom. How have you experienced this difference in your own spiritual journey?

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Paul warns about the Judaizers who added works to the gospel of grace. What are some modern examples of how Christians today might add requirements to salvation that go beyond faith in Christ alone?

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The pastor uses marriage as an analogy for our relationship with Christ, emphasizing that both require walking through difficulties to grow deeper. How has suffering or hardship in your life helped you know Christ better?

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Paul says he was blameless under the law but counted it all as rubbish compared to knowing Christ. Why is self-righteousness so dangerous to genuine faith and relationship with God?

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The sermon mentions that many Christians stop at regeneration and do not pursue growing in relationship with Christ. What practical steps can believers take to move beyond just being saved to truly knowing Christ intimately?

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How does the call to unity in interfaith dialogue compromise the exclusivity of the gospel message that Jesus is the only way to God? Why is this distinction so important to maintain?

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Paul describes wanting to know the power of Christ's resurrection and share in His sufferings. Why might embracing suffering be essential to experiencing the fullness of relationship with Christ?

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The pastor describes his past view of God as someone constantly erasing his name from the Book of Life based on his performance. How does understanding the finished work of Christ change our view of God's character and our security in salvation?

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Godwin from India urged American Christians not to take God's grace for granted. In what ways might prosperity and comfort cause believers to become complacent in their faith and miss the surpassing value of knowing Christ?

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## **Small Group Guide: The Surpassing Value of Knowing Christ**

### **Philippians 3:1-16**

#### **Opening Prayer**

Begin your time together by praying for open hearts, the Holy Spirit's guidance, and for believers around the world, especially those facing persecution and hardship.

#### **Icebreaker Question**

Share one thing you've learned about someone close to you (spouse, friend, family member) only after going through a difficult time together.

#### **Key Takeaways from the Sermon**

1. **Religion vs. Relationship:** Religion binds us with rules and works; relationship with Christ brings freedom and joy through grace alone.
2. **The Danger of Adding to the Gospel:** Any addition to "salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone" creates a false gospel.
3. **Paul's Transformation:** Paul counted all his religious achievements as "rubbish" compared to knowing Christ personally.
4. **Growing Through Suffering:** We learn more about Christ and grow deeper in relationship through life's difficulties and struggles.
5. **The Marriage Analogy:** Just as marriage deepens through years of commitment and hardship, our relationship with Christ grows through faithful pursuit in all circumstances.

#### **Discussion Questions**

##### **Understanding the Text**

1. **Read Philippians 3:1-6.** What was Paul's religious pedigree? Why would this have been impressive to his original audience?
2. **Read Philippians 3:7-11.** What dramatic shift happened in Paul's perspective? What does he now consider "loss" and why?
3. What does Paul mean by "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (v. 8)? What makes this knowledge so valuable?

##### **Personal Reflection**

4. Have you ever experienced religion (rules, works, performance) versus relationship with Christ? What was the difference?
5. The pastor shared his story of growing up believing he could lose his salvation. Have you ever struggled with understanding God's grace? What helped you grasp it?
6. Paul says he wants to "know Christ and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings" (v. 10). Why would Paul want to share in Christ's sufferings? What can we learn through difficult times?

## **Application**

7. The sermon emphasized that we'll never fully know our spouse until we walk through hardships together. How does this apply to knowing Christ? What "seasons" have taught you the most about Jesus?
8. Are there any religious "works" or traditions you've been tempted to add to the gospel? How can we guard against this in our own hearts and churches?
9. The pastor said, "Don't take the grace of God for granted." In what practical ways might we be taking God's grace for granted in America today?
10. How does understanding that Christianity is about relationship rather than religion change:
  - The way you read Scripture?
  - The way you pray?
  - The way you view trials?
  - The way you relate to other believers?

## **Going Deeper**

11. **Read Galatians 2:1-6 and Acts 15:5-11.** Why was the issue of circumcision such a big deal to the early church? What modern equivalents do we see today where people add requirements to salvation?
12. Paul uses strong language: "dogs," "evildoers," "mutilators of the flesh." Why is false teaching about the gospel worth such strong warnings?

## **Practical Applications**

### **This Week's Challenge**

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

#### **Option 1: Pursue Knowing Christ**

- Spend 15 minutes each day reading through a Gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) with the specific prayer: "Lord, help me know You better through this passage."
- Journal what you learn about Jesus each day.

#### **Option 2: Examine Your Heart**

- Write down any areas where you might be relying on religious performance rather than grace.
- Confess these to God and ask Him to help you rest in His finished work.

#### **Option 3: Share Your Story**

- Share with someone this week about the freedom you've found in the gospel of grace versus religious performance.
- This could be with a believer who needs encouragement or an unbeliever who needs to hear the true gospel.

#### **Option 4: Learn Through Difficulty**

- If you're going through a hard time right now, journal about what God might be teaching you about Himself through this season.

- Ask: "What am I learning about Christ that I couldn't learn any other way?"

**Prayer Focus**

**Pray for:**

- **India and Pastor Godwin's ministry:** Protection, provision, healing from COVID-19, and continued boldness in sharing the gospel
- **Freedom from religious bondage:** Anyone in your group or that you know who is trapped in works-based religion
- **Deeper knowledge of Christ:** That each person would grow in intimate relationship with Jesus
- **Marriages in your group:** That couples would persevere through difficulties and grow closer to each other and to Christ
- **Those suffering:** Anyone in your group facing illness, loss, or hardship—that they would experience God's presence in a deeper way

**Closing Thought**

"Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ."

— Philippians 3:8

The Christian life isn't about perfect performance—it's about pursuing a Person. Keep pressing on to know Him more.

**Before Next Week**

- Read Philippians 3:12-21 in preparation for next week's discussion
- Follow through on your practical application choice
- Consider how you might financially or prayerfully support persecuted believers around the world

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## Sermon Transcript:

Philippians chapter 3.

We're going to continue on in our verse-by-verse study through the book of Philippians, the book of joy, as Paul writes this letter from four years of being imprisoned, and yet over and over again this book is just dripping with joy, the joy of the Lord.

Paul had learned what it meant to be content in each and every situation, and really only through his experience through suffering and

And seeing and understanding through the relationship that he had with Christ, coming to know him much deeper and better, even through suffering, Paul had learned these incredible truths.

And so no matter what was happening in Paul's life, he could experience the joy of the Lord.

And the main theme that we're going to look at this morning is a continuation of last week, and that is the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Paul was saying and meaning that for Paul, no matter what he had previously experienced in life or what he was currently going through, everything else in comparison could not be measured to the value of knowing, keyword knowing, Christ.

And so this morning, would you stand with me as we prepare to read the Word of God together?

And let's quote this verse again out of 2 Timothy 3, 16 through 17.

As we now approach the Word of God, this is not man's opinion, but we are going to open up God's sovereign and eternal Word.

All right, let's quote this together again.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof,

correction and instruction in righteousness, so the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Amen?

Amen.

So we are blessed this morning to have the Word of God here before us, and we're going to open that together.

Follow along with me.

I've got a few verses that we need to read, actually 1 through 16 this morning.

So follow along with me in your Bibles, and then we will begin to unpack what we started last week

that Paul was teaching these believers in Philippi.

Paul now is wrapping up trying to close out now his letter.

He says, finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord.

There it is again.

To write the same things to you is no trouble for me and is safe for you.

Look out for the dogs.

Look out for the evildoers.

Look out for those who mutilate the flesh.

For we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God.

and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also, I, if anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more, Paul says.

For I was circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin,

A Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, I was a persecutor of the church.

As to righteousness under the law, I was blameless, Paul says.

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ Jesus.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because...

I mean, for the sake of Christ.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish.

In order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ."

That is the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that by any means possible I may attain to the resurrection of the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me His own."

He says this.

He says this.

Let those of us who are mature or mature think this way, and if anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

You all may be seated.

Thank you.

Father God, we just pray, Lord, this morning that your Holy Spirit would be what he is always faithful to do, our teacher today.

And Lord, I pray, God, that you would help us to understand this incredible freedom that we have in Christ.

And God, that you have...

You have been drawing us and you have saved us for a purpose of having relationship with you through the reconciliation of what it means to be in Christ Jesus.

That God, you reconciled us to yourself through Christ and the cross of Calvary, his death, his burial, his resurrection.

And Father, today, for those of us who are in Christ, we do call you our Father.

And Lord, we are grateful for that today.

We thank you, Lord, for freeing us from the prison,

of religion and for bringing us into this incredible relationship of knowing you in Christ Jesus.

And Lord, we are so grateful for that this morning.

Thank you for your word.

We pray that you would teach us.

In Christ's name we pray.

Amen.

Well, this section of Scripture can be divided into really three different categories as we make our way into this final wrapping up of Paul's letter to the church in Philippi.

The first part is the warning of religious deception, and we really began to unpack that last week.

We will finish that this week and move on to hopefully the second and third section, which is number two, Paul's experience, his past experience in religion.

Anybody here been a part of religion in the past?

Really?

Only three of you?

Wow.

Okay.

Well, the rest of you are still there.

No, just kidding.

Paul had a past experience in religion and was very inept at it.

In fact, he was very zealous for his religion.

The third thing we're going to look at this morning as we now wrap this up in finality, hopefully today, will be Paul's present new life in a relationship of knowing Christ.

There's a vast difference between the experience of religion and the relationship of knowing God in Christ Jesus.

In fact, you will never know God through religion.

You never will.

But only in the life that is found in the regeneration of a new life in Christ are we brought into relationship with a God in whom we were once enemies of.

We've now been reconciled to God.

And now the God that was actually distant from us in our understanding and our knowledge that we were enemies of, that we rebelled against, that God now has brought us into an intimate now knowledge of knowing him himself.

in Christ Jesus because Christ is the visible image of the invisible God and Christ demonstrated these incredible things of relationship for us and toward us in salvation so if you're here this morning and you are in Christ Jesus you have been now saved and redeemed regenerated and reconciled to the God of all creation that is very good news

Unfortunately, there are many Christians who stop at their regeneration.

They do not move on in growing in relationship.

How many of you have seen marriage relationships that are very similar?

We have a beautiful wedding ceremony.

There's a lot of money spent.

There's a lot of time invested.

There are lots of people who come and celebrate this wedding.

How many of you know, though, that the wedding is really just the beginning of a life of growing and loving and learning and sacrificing and, if you will, even suffering at times in this incredible relationship between a man and a woman?

I've counseled lots of people that started out with that, but that came to an end very quickly in marriage.

There was no longer any pursuing that person in relationship.

And what happened is there's a great division that begins to happen in a separation of relationship.

There's no intimacy anymore.

There's all kinds of issues that begin to show up.

So as Christians, we've been invited into this relationship of knowing God in Christ Jesus.

And this is a relationship that is intimate.

And Paul here is speaking of this very, very, very relational experience.

Excuse me.

of being in Christ.

And so the first part we're going to continue with is going to be looking at this warning of religious deception.

And I think this is very, very apropos or very important in our days because deception is at an all-time peak in our day and time.

And what makes deception even more difficult for people is that deception in the Christian religion can have the appearances of so many things being right, and yet when it comes to the gospel of salvation by grace alone, in Christ alone, through the faith alone, in believing in Christ...

all of that finished work of Christ on the cross of Calvary, in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that man cannot add one single thing to the finished work of salvation in Christ Jesus.

And yet, if they add anything to the work of Christ, we have now gone into a whole other universe from the truth.

And yet, the deception of Satan in religion is that he has it so close that

and yet just make it off when it comes to this finished work of Christ.

The Mormon faith, for example, if you study Mormonism, they're going to advocate and they're going to propagate this book right here, the Holy Bible.

In fact, if you watch their television commercials, you're going to see that what they put on the forefront of what they advertise is going to be what?

This right here.

And they even call themselves the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

There's a major problem though.

It's what they don't tell you that is the problem.

They have also the Book of Mormon.

The Book of Mormon comes from a vision that Joseph Smith had.

No doubt, I believe he probably had a vision, but what he was seeing and who was giving him all these things was not God whatsoever.

Why?

Because this is the infallible Word of God.

And now we have someone else has a whole other book that they add to this, and they keep it on the level with the Bible.

Nothing in the Mormon church is historic in any way, shape, form, or fashion.

None of the Book of Mormon is historical whatsoever.

It is really a figment of all kinds of imagination.

And yet the Mormon church holds dear the Book of Mormon.

They hold this vision from Joseph Smith.

They do not worship the same Jesus of the Bible whatsoever.

God was not a man in the beginning of flesh and bone.

God did not have a wife.

God did not procreate with his wife and have spirit children, Lucifer and Jesus, and let's go down the list.

God is not promising you a planet of your own where you and your wife will be married for eternity or your wives and you have spiritual children and one day you become a God of your own.

See how far off the mark we get?

We change the gospel.

We take another book and put it up, whether it's Traditions of Men.

Let me tell you something.

Tradition is not a bad thing in your family.

Tradition can even be something that is okay in the church as long as tradition is not held in this esteem.

There is no tradition that lines up with the authority of the word of God.

So when you take the traditions of man and you say we hold them at the same face value of the authenticity and the authority of the word of God, we've completely messed up.

Why?

Because much of tradition is basically hogwash.

So anytime you see that, we've got a problem.

That's why we're memorizing this scripture.

This is the only inspired word of God, folks.

Not because I say it is, because God says it is.

It's the inspired word of God.

And when we get off of this, religion happens.

Like I said last week, as soon as the word B-U-T is added to the gospel, you have left the gospel and it's no longer the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the gospel of grace.

Because men begin to work out religion, adding to salvation the finished work and thinking that they have to earn the merits of God.

And religion loves that.

Why?

Because they hold you prisoner.

The Mormon, if he leaves the Mormon church, he's in big trouble according to the Mormon church.

You've lost it, man.

No salvation for you.

And I can take you down through the cults that have the Bible.

They talk about Jesus.

They talk about God.

But let me tell you something.

They leave the gospel of grace and they add works to it.

And when you do, Paul says what?

That is no gospel at all.

This is why it's so important that we understand this.

It's very, very important because Satan is a deceiver.

And he doesn't deceive by making something so far-fetched that you wouldn't fall for it.

No, how do you do deception?

The same way we were doing this week in Beaver's Bend, or attempting.

We would take a fly, tied by man, with a hook on it, and it looks like a bot fly or whatever it might be, but it's not the real thing.

And what we were doing is we're trying to mimic what nature in God has really created.

Why?

So that we could deceive the fish, catch the fish, and eat the fish.

Right?

So that's what Satan does.

He's not going to deceive the masses by having something over here with six heads and looking like a crazy... No.

He makes it so very, very, very close.

He even puts this on the forefront.

But what does he do?

He completely trashes it all by adding the religious works of man to the gospel.

And that's no gospel at all.

How many of you have experienced freedom in your salvation?

The rest of you are uptight.

Yeah.

Well, let's get into this message or we're never going to get through it.

Notice last week he called them dogs.

He called them dogs, evildoers, and mutilators of the flesh.

Who's Paul talking about?

He's talking about the Judaizers.

The Judaizers were a sect of both Jews and Gentiles.

Now, I want you to think about this.

This is important.

It does apply to our day and time, very, very, very much so.

The Judaizers were made up of both Jews and Gentiles, and we still have Gentiles today that are still trying to be Jewish.

I don't understand that.

You're not a Jew, man.

Sorry.

If you don't have Jewish blood in you, you're not a Jew.

I don't care how hard you try, you're not Jewish.

We know who the Jews are.

The Bible is very clear on that.

And what they did is they would follow around like the Apostle Paul and those that were sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And they would come in now to the church that Paul had started.

And they did this over and over and over again.

And what they would do is these Jewish people and these Gentiles who had joined this Judaizer group, if you will, they followed Jesus.

the Jewish laws.

The Bible says if you break one of them, you broke all of them.

By the way, there's 613 laws.

Did you know that?

And not only that, they would keep all of the feasts that God gave the nation of Israel.

Nothing wrong with the feasts or the holidays that they have because they were all pointing to Jesus.

Not a bad thing, but they were keeping those and also the holy days, keeping the holy days.

And what they had done is they'd come to believe through the gospel in Jesus Christ that he was the Messiah, that he died for their sins and he rose from the dead and he ascended to the Father.

They heard the gospel of Paul's preaching, the gospel of grace.

But you know what they would do?

They would say, yes, I believe in Christ, Jesus, and this gospel, B-U-T.

You've still got to follow the Jewish laws, keep the holidays, and you still need to go along with the feasts and everything that happens.

So that's what they would do.

They'd infiltrate the church, and they would bring in deception and

And Paul had no stomach for this whatsoever.

One of the things that they would require of all those who came to faith in Christ as Judaizers was that all the men who were Gentiles, who were never given circumcision, by the way, that they had to be circumcised.

Don't care if you're 60.

Don't care if you're 70.

Don't care what age you are.

You have to be circumcised in order to be saved.

See, that's the but part.

They add on to the work of Christ.

The gospel of grace.

Now this was dealt with in Acts chapter 15.

Paul uses very strong language for these people.

And you say, oh, that's really not very tolerant, John.

Listen, I'm sick of tolerance.

Sick of it.

Churches are becoming very tolerant and what they're doing is they're not preaching the Bible anymore because you can't preach the truth of God in love and then say, you know, none of this stuff really matters.

It does matter.

It matters greatly in our day and time.

And in Acts chapter 15, some men who had come to where Paul and Barnabas were, they had started the church, and they came from Jerusalem.

And Paul's preaching the gospel of grace.

Aren't you glad it's not of works?

Oh, my word.

Unbelievable.

And he'd been teaching and preaching this gospel throughout Asia Minor.

But these Judaizers were coming into the churches, these new disciples of Christ, and saying that unless they're circumcised and they do not obey the customs according to Moses, that they could not be saved.

That's what they were saying.

So in chapter 15 and verse 5, it says, "...some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, it is necessary to circumcise them and order them to keep the law of Moses."

So what Paul and Barnabas are doing is they're going to go to Jerusalem, and they're going to meet with the apostles there, and they're going to get this thing solved.

They're going to get it taken care of.

And so they go to Jerusalem, and this is the Jerusalem council in Acts chapter 15, and this is what happened.

They hear this whole thing, the apostles, we got Peter and some of these other ones that are there, and Paul's giving defense for the gospel of grace, and these Judaizers coming in, these Jews who had come to faith in Christ, and these Gentiles that had joined their party, and they were making this big hubbub about the freedom that these new believers in Christ had.

They didn't like the fact that they had freedom.

They wanted them to be yoked down like a squeeze chute in religion.

We know how great that is, right?

And that's what they wanted.

And then the apostle Peter, he gives, after discussion with the other apostles, he stands up before the group.

And this is what he says in verses 10 and 11.

Why are you putting God to the test?

By placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear.

Why?

But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ just as they will.

That solved that issue real quick, didn't it?

No, they still went out and still did their business.

And the apostles agreed with the apostle Paul, right?

You're saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

No added work is needed.

Because when we do religious works for merit, what do we do?

We basically completely minimize and completely take power away from what Christ did.

As if to think you as a human being can do anything greater than what Jesus Christ did.

It's not possible.

You'll meet these people all the time because they've been taught and indoctrinated into the works religion.

Religion always adds the works of man to attain right standing with God.

True Christian faith, it's very important, cannot embrace other religions.

Why?

Interfaith compatibility and unity is what?

Impossible.

In regards to the true gospel, it's impossible.

Why?

Cannot happen.

Why is that?

Because what do light and darkness have in common?

None.

And what we are seeing before your eyes today, dear Christian, is a massive move to the new world order religion.

And what is it?

It is this insurgence and resurgence and this massive push to

of tolerance of all religions coming together in interfaith dialogue, discussion, and prayer.

That cannot happen in the true Christian faith, because what you have just seen is that we have said this to all of the pagan religions out there.

You all are good with God.

does that not just undermine the entire gospel message?

How are you going to reach someone lost in paganism if you do not share with them the truth of the gospel that Jesus Christ is the only way, the truth, and the life?

How are we going to reach them and tell them the truth of the gospel if we have this world religion telling them they're all right with God?

Even those who are calling themselves the Protestants and those that call themselves Christian, what are they doing?

They're saying all of us just come to the playground of religion and let's all just teeter-totter together.

Let's get on the swings together and do a little bit of the old spring coil dinosaur.

Let's have a great time together in religion.

That is the religion of the new world order.

And that will be the religion of what will take place when the church of Jesus Christ, the true bride, is taken out of here in the rapture.

It will be what's left.

It will be that.

Satan is building this quickly.

It's been around for a long time, but he is very deceptive.

So listen, I can have dialogue with a Mormon, but what I will never do is say that, you know what, you're right with God.

Not based on what I say, let's go to the Word of God.

The problem is we're going to say, well, John, that's been translated over years.

It's really not that very good.

Are you going to tell me a guy with rose-colored glasses looking into a stone put together a word that you're going to trust?

Yes, we do.

Why?

Because they're deceived.

They gotta know that this is the only way.

It is, period.

I know it's not very popular in our culture today.

It's just the way it is, but it's what it is.

So, anytime, Christian, you hear of this happening, this is not of God.

It's not of God, for there's only one way to God, and that is through Christ and through Christ alone.

Any other way is the way of Satan.

It's the way of the broad road.

Where does it lead?

Not to heaven.

It leads to hell.

And that's the truth.

So Paul shares this account of what happened in Acts chapter 15 with the Galatians now.

This is something he keeps sharing over and over.

Watch out, man.

Don't let these people come in and put a yoke of religion around your neck and tell you you've got to do A, B, C, and D. And if you don't do it here, and you don't keep this here, and you don't come to us here, and you don't follow this deal, you'll not make heaven.

That's a lie.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation.

That's it.

And there's so much peace.

There's so much joy.

There's so much freedom in the gospel.

There's freedom in the gospel.

In Galatians chapter 2, 1 through 6, this is what Paul shares with the church of Galatia that he started as well.

After 14 years, I went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.

I went up because of a revelation and sat before them, though privately before those who seemed to be influential, which is the apostles, the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles in order to make sure that I was not running or had not run in vain.

But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised.

Titus was not a Jew.

He was a Gentile, though he was a Greek.

Yet because of false brothers...

secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus so that they might bring us into slavery.

I have never seen anyone in religion that is free.

Never.

Why?

Because religion is about restraining you.

restraining you.

That's what they're about.

To them, we did not yield, Paul says, in submission, even for one moment.

Why?

This is so important.

So that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you, Paul says.

And from those who seemed to be influential, what they were makes no difference to me.

God shows no partiality.

Those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me.

That's kind of a dig against the other apostles.

You all think there's something high and mighty, but Paul says they didn't add one thing to my message.

The message that Christ gave me, the message of grace.

Ephesians 2, 8, 9, we've been over this about four times in the last four weeks.

For by grace you have been saved through grace.

Faith.

Now, if you were saved through works, they would be there.

But you're not.

And this is not of your own doing.

Quit trying to earn your salvation is what Paul's saying.

Stop it.

You can't earn your salvation, man.

God in Christ has already made a way for you to be saved.

He's already finished it.

It is a gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast, Paul.

The second thing is Paul's experience, his past experience in religion.

Listen to what Paul says about this.

And some of you that I've met that have come to faith in Christ grew up in religion.

And some of you that I've spoken with, you have a very, very, very strong disdain for religion, as do I. I do not have a disdain for people.

I have a disdain for Satan and his false religious deception.

That's what I have a disdain for.

And it's not the people that are deceived or brought up that way.

It's simply that the system's deceptive.

And we need to call it out.

What's God say in his word?

He says we are to expose...

the darkness, and we're supposed to bring those things to what?

Light.

We bring them to light.

That's what we do, right?

So Paul here now, his past experience in religion, listen to what it says.

Paul says, "...for we," speaking of the mutilators of the flesh, which are these Judaizers, "...we are the circumcision who worship by," what?

"...spirit and in truth, the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh."

The thing about religion is this, there is no way you can ever experience God's love in religion.

I know that because I experienced that in my own life.

I tell you what I saw as God.

I was so twisted in my understanding of salvation.

The picture I had of God was simply this magnificent God, and in the throne room of heaven was a huge tablet, and he had that pencil that

was no longer in existence when I was in school.

That great big old meaty chief pencil, you know?

With that great big eraser.

Except God's was real big.

And in front of him was a book.

And then I would see my name.

And then I would see God almost in a sinister way watching every single move of what I did.

And if I sinned, guess what God did?

Flips the pencil over, the eraser's on the bottom.

No longer was I in the book of life.

See, I grew up believing because of what I was taught that you could lose the free gift of salvation.

The reason being is because the but was added to it.

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?

Yes.

Do you believe that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, came and took upon flesh, lived a perfect life, and died for your sin?

Yes, I believe that.

Do you believe that he descended and he took away your sin?

Yes.

Do you believe he ascended to the Father in his resurrection and his ascension?

I believe it.

But you can lose it if you don't do ABC.

So there was a checklist I had to go through.

Because I firmly believed if I died in my sleep with known sin in my life, I would wake up in the fiery reality of hell.

So I didn't have a love, and there's no way I was going to know this God.

You kidding me?

How can I know a God or love a God who's just watching and waiting for me to screw up one more time?

And when I would get things right with God, guess what he did?

Oh, I guess I'll write it in again.

One more time wrote my name in the Lamb's Book of Life.

And I promise you, my paper was worn out.

But you know what else was worn out?

me.

I knew nothing of the grace of God.

I knew a lot about religion.

I knew nothing of God's mercy.

I knew nothing of His love.

It was a simple set of what I did and it all hung on me.

That's why I have such a hatred for religion.

I hate it with every fiber of my being because it's all a deceptive lie of the enemy.

If you're here this morning and you can relate to my story, I pray that you come to know what Paul has figured out.

Listen to what Paul says.

You want to talk about somebody that had to be worn out.

Listen to this.

First of all, Paul, as he reads through this,

When I was in religion, Paul says, if anyone had reason to put confidence in the works of the flesh, Paul says, I was the guy.

I was at the top of the list.

I have more reason, Paul says.

Listen to what he says.

He's going to go through his pedigree.

This is his background.

I had God-fearing parents who, what?

Had me circumcised according to good Jewish principles and the law on the eighth day according to the law of Moses.

Paul says, I am no Gentile convert as some are, but of God's chosen seed, the nation of Israel.

I was born an Israelite.

I didn't just simply come to faith and become a Jew.

I was a Jew by blood.

I am also from one of the greatest of the 12 tribes, the tribe of Benjamin.

Paul's name, if you think about it, before his salvation was Saul.

Do you know the significance of his name being Saul?

Who was the first king of Israel?

He was from the tribe of Benjamin.

You remember his name?

King Saul.

Paul even was named after a Benjamite king from the tribe of Benjamin by the first king of Israel by the name of Saul.

That was Paul's name before his conversion.

And what did God do?

Changed his name from Saul to Paul.

Changed his name.

He says, you want to talk about heritage?

You want to talk about pedigree?

I am a Hebrew of Hebrews.

I'm no half-breed, by the way.

There were half-breeds.

I'm not unpapered.

I've got some unpapered stock.

I was papered, Paul says.

My pedigree was at the top of the list.

As to the law, I was a Pharisee.

The teachers of Israel were the Pharisees.

Paul knew the Old Testament forwards and backwards.

Could quote this thing.

Knew it backwards and forwards.

He not only kept the law, he taught the law, but he also examined others and defended it with passion.

In other words, if you're walking around and weren't keeping the law, he pointed it out.

You ever meet people like that?

They're still packed in churches today.

They're walking around examining you all the time.

That's what they're doing.

Then he says, as to zeal.

You want to talk about zeal here, Paul says.

I was so zealous for this religion, the law that I had chosen to destroy, that I had chosen to destroy the church who taught Jesus Christ was God and the Messiah of the nation of Israel.

He said, my very best, I was so zealous for the law and for this religion that I did all I could do to destroy the church that called Jesus Christ the Son of God and the Messiah of Israel.

Righteousness under the law, Paul says.

You wanna talk about self-righteousness?

I was blameless.

Now think about this.

Was he blameless?

Do you see how deceived you can become in self-righteousness?

I meet self-righteous people, and you know what's interesting to me?

They have no problem with what they're doing.

They just wanna look at everybody else's and point out what they're doing wrong.

I know a group that even says they can live above sin.

Well, they've got a great pedigree, way better than mine.

That's not going to happen until we get to heaven.

But they can believe that they do, and that becomes self-righteousness.

And that becomes snobbery, prude, and I can give them some other terms that we don't need to talk about.

No, Paul was not sinless.

but he rather understood the sacrificial system and the requirements of proper sacrifices need to be offered.

Paul Sandy took the right sacrifice and took care of it.

He was diligent.

He did this without fault.

He knew the 613 laws, and in his working out, no one could point to him and say, Paul, you're guilty because you haven't offered the right sacrifices, man.

No, he kept the law the best he could, understood it, forward, backward, did it.

Paul says righteousness under the law

was the works of man.

It was the works of man.

The next thing we're gonna look at, you see what Paul's life was under the law.

Now Paul says this, his new life in knowing Christ.

Then Paul met Christ Jesus on the road to Damascus and Paul's prideful balloon of religious self-works righteousness was deflated.

When he met the righteous and holy God, the second person of the Godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ, he knew how unrighteous he was.

Whatever gain I had, Paul says, I counted as loss.

Why?

For the sake of Christ.

Paul says, whatever former things were gains to me, as I thought of them, these things once regarded as advancements in merit in religion, I have come to consider as loss, absolutely worthless for the sake of Christ and the purpose which he has given my life.

Paul says all that religious stuff, everything that I did, all of the things that I prided myself in in religion, guess what?

They are nothing new.

compared to knowing Christ.

Knowing Christ.

Indeed, he says, I count everything a loss.

Why?

Because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ.

The word surpassing simply means to hold above, to rise above, to be superior.

It is beyond and above.

It is all the way, excellent, way more than what Paul saw in his religious works.

The worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, Paul says, there's one thing that is so far above everything else to me, and that is knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

Dear Christian, did you know you've been called to relationship with Christ?

God is such a relational God that he even came in the form, in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We can see the relationship and see how he loved and see how he forgave and we can see his grace, his mercy.

We can see all those things in relationship and we in Christ Jesus now what boldly come to the throne of God.

We enter into the very holy place.

We are to call God Father now.

Think of this.

And now we're in a process like Paul says of knowing Christ.

Isn't that incredible?

Paul says religion's void of all of that stuff.

You will never know God.

You might know about him, but you won't know God in religion.

But in Christ Jesus, this relationship, drawing us in, reconciling us to God, loving us, reading the word, he speaks to us, praying to him, he answers, he provides, he does all of these things in our own life, and it's so we can know Jesus Christ.

We can know him.

Do you know Christ?

Are you growing in your knowledge of Christ?

I've been married 28 years and I'm still learning more about my wife.

I thought I knew everything about her.

No, because as I grow with her in life as we age, guess what?

I learn more things about her.

It never stops.

Never stop knowing and learning about your spouse.

Never quit.

Keep pursuing.

Keep loving.

Keep forgiving.

Keep moving together.

Same thing in our walk with Christ, an example of the marriage, the bride and the groom, Christ and the church.

We are what?

We are growing together, learning together, and that's what Paul says, I have learned how through the experiences of all the things in my life, the better, the worse, the richer for poor, in sickness and in health, Paul says, in prison or in free, I have learned something more about my God.

You'll never know things all about your spouse.

You'll never know something about your spouse until you walk through a death experience with them that you didn't know before.

You're never going to know something about each other until you've walked the road of poverty and didn't have enough money to pay the bills.

You never learn those elements until you experience those things together.

That is what Christ and what we are doing.

We're working out what God is working in us.

And this is living life.

The good, the bad, the suffering, the good, the great, the mountains, the valleys, all of it.

And what are you learning?

You're learning more about your Savior is what you're learning.

You're learning more about what it means to extinguish grace when you need grace.

You learn about forgiveness when you need to forgive or be forgiven.

You learn about these incredible things that God says are all yours in Christ, but you have to go through experience to know intimately.

And Paul uses the word know.

It's the same word for a man to know a woman in marriage.

Intimacy.

Nobody has that relationship outside of you and your spouse in marriage.

It's intimacy.

You know things through relationship.

Are you walking that way with Christ?

Or you simply think it's all about one hour a week on Sunday?

if you think this is religious activity, it's not what God's called us to.

Because religion is dead.

It's void of life.

It's void of joy.

It's void of freedom.

It's void of relationship, man.

We are called to relationship, and Paul says that's what he's doing.

If it's suffering, guess what?

Oh, I want to take in the sufferings of Christ.

Why?

Because when I suffer for Christ, I learn something new about him.

I learn something about me, Paul says.

Oh, I want to know about the resurrection and the death and all of that.

Why?

Because I want to know more of Christ.

It's incredible.

People, some people miss this whole experience of walking with Christ.

It's the same thing with our spouses.

Do you know why that when I'm out or even the longer I've been married, and it's not all easy, folks.

Anybody that tells me that marriage is a cakewalk, you're a liar, man.

You're lying.

You're either deceived.

No, marriage can be very hard.

I don't know one couple out there that says, oh, sheesh, this has been the joy ride of my life.

We'll talk to the wife, and she's got a different opinion.

Amen.

Marriage is hard, why?

Because marriage is a physical picture of a spiritual truth.

Do you not understand Paul says that in Ephesians chapter five?

He's using marriage to paint a picture to the world of what it really means to be a bride of Christ and the body of Christ.

What does that mean?

That means no matter what comes, my wife and I are sticking this thing out.

I don't care how hard it gets.

I don't care how poor we get.

I don't care, sickness will come if you're married long enough.

But you'll learn something about yourself and grow and you'll learn something about your spouse as they grow.

And so many people ditch so early.

And I think that happens when Satan comes in a new believer's life and all of a sudden things get really hard

What's the believer say often?

I don't feel God.

Thank God it's not just a feeling.

I don't always feel married.

My wife for sure doesn't always feel married.

Probably nor wants to be sometimes to me.

But the reality of this is we are.

We're in covenant, baby.

We're in covenant.

And I'm learning more about my wife.

She's been sick.

She has a sickness she's had for years.

For years.

And you know what I've learned about her?

She's one of the strongest people I've ever met.

90% of people don't even know anything about it.

Why?

Because she's not out there telling anyone.

I've watched her struggle through things.

I've watched her trust God.

I've learned things from my wife through that.

I've learned things through rough times and difficult times.

Raising kids, come on.

You want to learn something about one another?

Woo!

Empty nest is coming.

It's coming.

But you know what you all have told me who have an empty nest?

It doesn't end.

Your concern for your kids, your love for your kids, and then they say, oh, these miracles of heaven, the grandbabies come.

Right?

But see, what we're doing is we're growing as people.

When I see an old couple that have been married and they're wrinkled and they're gray, and although at one time, man, they were probably the stinking captain of the football team and the cheerleader.

And they had the beauty, they had the youth, they had the athleticism, they had all of those things before them.

And I see them at the end of their life, sitting across the table from one another, looking into each other's eyes, holding hands, and they are communing with one another.

They know something of depth about love, about commitment, about suffering, giving, and sacrificing, and

That is the most beautiful thing on earth that I can witness is an old man and an old woman who have lived together in covenant, not because it's easy, but through all those experiences, they have grown.

God has chiseled off what?

Their selfishness.

We're selfish people.

If you don't think so, get married and have kids.

You're going to find out how selfish you really are.

What's that for?

Oh, man.

It's going to knock your edges off of being selfish.

Why?

Because you have to have something that's dependent upon you.

And guess what?

What you want really doesn't matter at that time.

It's what they need.

So what's going on in your marriage?

It's the same thing that needs to go on in your walk with Christ.

Husband and wife, stop pursuing one another.

When things get hard, don't just look and say, it's time to bail, baby.

We don't love each other anymore.

Well, you may not feel love, but love's not a feeling.

It is an action of commitment to one another.

Whoa.

You see that?

Boy, you're fast, boy.

Woo.

I developed that from my wife, trust me.

I get out of the way real fast now.

She's not here so I can have fun today.

She'll probably watch it and I won't be getting the door when I get home.

This is this beautiful thing.

And so many people, they miss this.

They miss it.

They go through a difficult time.

They say, oh, God's left me.

No.

What does the Bible say?

The same thing you tell your spouse.

I'll never leave you.

I won't forsake you.

Unfortunately, we're human.

I let my wife down at least once a day.

God will never let you down because he's a perfect God.

He's a loving God.

He's all those elements that are so important.

Are you pursuing Christ in relationship?

Don't turn your nose up, Paul says, to the sufferings.

Listen to what Paul says here.

He says, for the sake of knowing Christ, I've suffered a loss of all things and I count them as rubbish, really as horse apples, as dung.

All that religious stuff, all that works of man, all that self-centered motivation and all self-centered on me, all focused on me, Paul says, that's all stinking rubbish.

in order that I may gain Christ.

Paul's whole focus was that he would keep gaining more about Christ.

And you know what he's teaching you through marriage, and I know marriages are messy, and I know sometimes a spouse leaves, they flip out and go, and I know there's all kinds of problems that happen in marriage.

And if you're here today and have gone through divorce, I know your heart breaks for that, and it's a reality unfortunately sometimes.

But the real purpose and intent of marriage is also to help us understand that as we live this life together, as hard as it can be, as difficult as it can be, some of you have lost children.

You talk about a difficult thing to go through for a married couple.

When you stood before God that day, you didn't say, yeah, I'm signing up so I'm going to lose my third child when he's born.

Maybe I'll lose him in an accident.

Yeah, I'll sign up for that.

No.

You signed up because of the love you had for them.

You were excited about it, but then that happens and then what do you do?

The two of you begin to struggle through all of this stuff.

God lets us struggle sometimes.

Do you know that?

You're never going to grow if you don't struggle.

You won't do it.

Growth happens when things are difficult.  
Paul says, listen, I wanna gain Christ.  
The way we should look at this is, okay, Paul says, I've learned something here.  
He's maturing now.  
Some of you are more mature.  
You men know when to shut up, know when to speak.  
You've learned.  
But the point is, that could be the wife's fault.  
No, moving on.  
The point is, think about this for those of you who've been married for some years.  
Have you ever just told your spouse,  
When I married you on August 7th, I really thought I loved you and I did.  
But I didn't even know what love was.  
And I love you now way more.  
Because what you've shown me about love is not just about a romantic feeling.  
Show me that you'll love me up here, down here, over there, over there.  
You'll love me through it all.  
You'll love me through it all.  
And you know what Christ is teaching us?  
Through the struggle, through the difficult times when he feels miles and miles away, when things in life aren't going exactly like you thought they'd go,  
When you question your own faith and you struggle, man.  
You ever struggle in your marriage thinking, man, I don't know if I'm gonna be able to stick this one out.  
You ever been there?  
It'd be a lot easier if I could just ditch this thing sometimes, man.  
And this is what God is teaching you through your marriages and he's teaching you in Christ through life and through difficult things.  
You're learning more about God.  
and more about him in your life, about who you are.  
And that's what Paul says here.  
Oh man, I want to take in the sufferings of Jesus.  
Not because I love suffering, but you know what?  
I'm going to learn more about him through the sufferings.

I want to know the power of his resurrection, man.

I want to know the death, the power of his resurrection.

I want to know everything there is to know that Christ endured for me because he's taken a hold of me, man.

I press toward that.

So when something happens and Paul's in prison writing this letter, why is he right with joy?

Because only through the sufferings of Paul's life did he learn that there's one who never, ever left him alone.

Paul said, everyone in my trial at Rome, they have all left me but one.

Jesus stood with me.

Do you see the beauty of what I'm saying?

Your marriage is gonna be hard, folks, because you're both selfish people.

You're sinful people.

The walk in Christianity is hard.

It's not easy.

Doing the right thing.

Saying no to the flesh.

Turning away from sin.

Denying myself of those things.

Loving people that I can't even stand to be with.

Not defending myself when someone says something wrong.

Or maybe they don't know the whole story and they defame you.

Not running and saying, whoa, whoa, whoa.

Not defending it.

Your marriage is teaching you something so great.

And the walk with Christ in this life is doing the same thing.

But this you can be sure of, dear Christian.

He will never, ever leave you nor forsake you.

Never gonna happen.

He even gave a covenant in the shedding of his own blood to establish the promise he made with you

No matter what.

My wife packs up and goes, guess what?

She's so unfortunate, I'm going to go with her.

And you know what?

There's no place that you can go that God is not going to be there.

Oh, you can pout, throw a fit, do all those things.

It's okay.

God still loves you.

You can even be snared in sin or even by your own fruition.

God's still going to be there.

Consequences hurt, yeah.

God's love never changes.

Well, I know we've got to wrap this up today.

Do you understand a little bit what Paul's getting at?

This is my prayer for each of us.

That like your marriage, it's going to happen.

When it's difficult, when it's hard, understand that there's something happening here that actually will become beautiful in the end.

Is it painful, is it difficult, is it hard?

Yeah.

But you're gonna learn something about your spouse, you're gonna help them grow, and they're probably gonna help you grow.

And then when you get through it, there's something that happens that is just worth the surpassing value of all the trinkets of the world.

It is that you're going to know them better and know yourself better.

And I know this isn't a perfect fit for every marriage.

I understand that.

But it is a perfect fit for every Christian in Christ.

So I don't know what you're going through.

Some of you, like Gary, Brother Gary.

Where's Gary at?

Here's Gary.

Just found out he has cancer.

Just found that out.

Been walking this road now of cancer, I guarantee you.

Two years ago, probably never even entered his mind.

But I can promise you something, Gary.

Our God is faithful.

And you're gonna learn more about your Savior through this.

It's not what you want, I know that.

It's not what you desire, I know that.

But God is faithful, brother.

Those of you in your marriage right now, you're struggling.

Hold on to each other.

Walk together.

It ain't easy.

Maybe you're married to an unbeliever.

That's even harder.

But you can show them Christ.

God will never leave you, forsake you.

That's why it's the surpassing knowledge.

Everything else, none of it matters.

In comparison, Paul says to knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

He says, I'm going to embrace whatever it is.

I forget what's behind and I just press on toward the goal of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

I'm pressing on toward what God took hold of me for.

I'm pressing on to take hold of God.

I'm going to go for this thing, man.

I hope that makes sense to you today, that you can grasp that and understand it.

God's working that out in your life.

We have a video we want to play here, and I'll have them put it up, but thank you for your time.

I'm a little lengthy today.

Last week, I got a call from a Christian brother and pastor of mine in India.

He spoke here once before, maybe a year or two ago.

I can't remember now how long it's been.

He called me and asked that we as a church would pray for them.

His name is Godwin, and he and his ministry there and their seminary that he's started there and works there, they have over 300 and almost 350 churches and 350 pastors.

But in India right now, a country of over a billion people, nearly 500,000 a day are coming down with coronavirus.

They're a third world country, don't have the infrastructure like we have, don't have things in place, and so they're really, really struggling there.

And he didn't ask for anything other than that we as a church would pray for them.

And the one thing he wanted me to mention to you is this.

He says, in America, you all have received an incredible outpouring of the grace of God as a nation.

He said, please do not take the grace of God for granted.

Don't take it for granted.

And so I think they have that video.

I asked him, would you just shoot a video, Godwin, and send it to us?

So this came all the way from India.

And what I'm going to ask you to do is this.

We don't ever ask for stuff here because that's between you and God as far as money goes.

That's your business between you and God.

But if you want to help towards the work they're doing there and helping them have money to get groceries and things that they need for their pastors and their people of their churches because everything is so shut down there.

If you would like to be a part of that, guess what?

Write a check, whatever, put it in the bucket out there.

We're going to make sure that that stuff gets to God one in India.

He didn't ask for that.

But I'm asking if God burdens you for that or lays it on your heart, we want to bless them as well.

But this is a brother in Christ living in one of the most hostile countries in the world.

for the gospel we're only two percent of the entire over one billion people only two percent a Christian and he's got a just a message for us I haven't even watched it yet so go and roll that thing would you?

Dear people of God, Christian greetings from Angripas of Christ, India.

I am Pastor Godwin Madhusudan.

I thank God for this privilege

And also I thank God for Pastor John.

I remember the day that I spent with you all a couple of years back in Texoma Cowboy Church.

That was a blessed time.

I still cherish the time.

Dear God's people, I know you are all aware of the hard time that we in India are going through.

The pandemic is hitting very hard here.

People are suffering.

People are dying.

I'm standing here to urge you all to pray for us.

Please pray for us.

We need your prayers.

We need God's mercy.

We need God's healing.

We need God's protection.

We need God's comfort.

Above all, I strongly believe we need God's forgiveness.

Dear people of God, this is a high time for God's people to pray for one another.

I strongly believe these are the days that is highly, highly important for God's people.

We have to be doing three things, I believe.

Number one is drawing nearer to God.

These are the days that we have to consider ourselves in giving totally to draw nearer to God.

Number two, spreading the good news without any excuse, without any delay.

Spreading the good news is very, very important.

Number three, making disciples is very, very important.

In this juncture, we as God's people here, we are praying that in midst of all this problem, in midst of all this crying in India, we want it to be, we are very much praying to be hands of Jesus, feet of Jesus.

We want to be

in the place where we can execute the love of Christ in the time of need.

Please pray for us.

Dear God's people, we are praying for America.

I know we all need Jesus.

There is no other hope.

We are praying for you all.

We are praying that every church, particularly Cowboy Church there, will grow

closer to God and will immensely engage in spreading the gospel and also making disciples.

The coming of God is near.

Please pray for us.

Here in India, people are not having basic needs.

They are not having the beds in the hospitals.

They are not having the oxygen in the hospital.

They are not having even a place to bury in many areas.

Sometimes, in certain places, they are not having a place to cremate the body.

At one particular day, in the capital of India, we were not having enough firewood to burn the bodies.

It is sad.

The bodies are floating in the rivers.

People are suffering.

Turn your knee side, people are crying.

Please pray for us and please pray for our ministry as we are going out and trying to reach out to the people.

Help them in the times of need.

Comfort them with the love of Christ.

Comfort them with the good news and pray for them.

And we are trying to go out to be in action for God's glory.

We need your prayers.

We need your support.

Please keep us all in your prayers.

And I thank God for your life.

I thank God for your church.

You as church, please remain faithful and thankful for the Lord for what God has done to you.

Let us not take the blessings of the Lord easily.

This is the time for us to join hands and pray.

Please pray.

We will always remain grateful for that.

Thank you.

Thank you all.

God bless you.

Amen.

Well, we're going to pray for Godwins right now in their church.

And as we close today, for those of you that would need just to visit and pray with someone, the lodge is open and we'll have some folks there that would be waiting for you to pray.

I don't know what your need may be.

Maybe you just need to talk with someone about something, but we'll be there.

So let's close in prayer.

Whatever God lays on your heart.

You would just be obedient to him.

That's between you and him.

Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we come to you today with such grateful hearts, Lord, for your incredible gift of salvation.

Lord, I want to thank you for my brothers and sisters in Christ, Lord, that are here this morning and watching and listening.

Lord, I just thank you for them.

And Lord, I pray that the message of your word this morning would penetrate their heart, God, that

Lord, they would grow and learn more about you and just desire that more than anything else in their life.

Lord, thank you, God, for Godwin and for the ministry that you have called them to in India.

Lord, he's living in a very dark place with so much wickedness, Lord, in the darkness of religion there with so much of the world in where he lives that are living in paganism, in Hinduism, in witchcraft, in all of the darkness there.

Lord, you've placed them there with the light of the gospel.

And Lord, I know that there are millions of people there that are suffering right now.

Lord, as we are here in this nice air-conditioned place and have the freedom to come and worship together without any type of issue at all.

Lord, thank you for the grace to do that today.

But, Lord, we pray protection over God one and for those believers in Christ that are there, Lord.

We pray, God, that you would sustain them and that you would be their provision, Lord, and provide their daily needs, Father.

Thank you for the privilege, Lord, of praying with other brothers and sisters in Christ in whom we're going to spend eternity with, Lord.

Right now, halfway around the world, Lord, we're able to pray for them and to lift them up before you and ask that your Holy Spirit would bring encouragement to them, Lord, even now.

Father, I do pray, Lord, that for each of us here, Lord, if there's anything that we can do, Lord, that we would love to be able to invest, Lord, in your kingdom that way.

And, Lord, I pray that you'll put on the hearts of those to do so for those that would.

Lord, we love you today.

Thank you once again for your salvation.

We love you in Christ's name we pray.

Amen.