

How the Gospel Changes Us

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[0 : 00] In Romans 1 we read, Great. Thank you, Victoria.

Will you join me as we pray? Let's come before our Father. And just, if you're new, this is something we do every week. This isn't me praying. This is us as a church praying. So agree with me. Join in me.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, gracious Lord, we come before you this morning to adore you and to worship you. We come before you to sing your praises, to remind ourselves, to remind one another of your greatness and your grace, of your majesty and your mercy.

We come to proclaim your worth, God, that there's no one like you. There's none in all creation that even comes close to being compared to you. God, you are majestic and sovereign and glorious and wonderful.

And God, you are tender and gracious and gentle and so patient and so forgiving and so kind. God, where could we go to find one like you?

[1 : 38] God, we come to worship you and adore you this morning, to find rest for our hearts and peace, God, in troubled times. Father, thank you for your word that speaks to our hearts.

God, thank you for the wonder of the scriptures that aren't just good advice, but it's your proclamation of good news to us, Lord. Lord, and as we look at this passage in Romans 1 again today, and as we consider the gospel, Lord, we pray that for us as a church, you'll calibrate our hearts or recalibrate our hearts with the truth of the gospel.

God, won't you realign our hearts to your hearts? Jesus, come and do a deep work in us, I pray. Fathers, over these weeks, we consider the good news of the gospel. We pray that you set us free.

We pray, God, that you arrest our insecurities and our fears. We pray, God, that you humble us of our pride. And Jesus, come and make us more like you. God, we really do want to be a gospel-centered church, and so we ask you to come and do that in our midst.

But God, as the gospel goes deeper into us, we pray also that the gospel will go through us to this great city, that many people will come to know you, come to know the life and the truth and the wonder of Jesus because of ordinary people like us.

[2 : 50] God, we pray that our friends and our family and our neighbors and our colleagues and those we play sports with and those we interact with, that God, some way we'll be able to share the wonderful news of Jesus with them.

We pray this Chinese New Year, God, as we get together with family and as we are reunited, we pray, God, for opportunities to share the wonder of Jesus. God, we pray that the gospel will go through us.

Father, we pray also for our great continent of Asia, billions and billions of people that do not know you. Father, we want to pray for churches and missionaries across Asia, those that are in China and Korea and Japan and Mongolia and Indonesia and Bangladesh and Pakistan and Myanmar and Malaysia.

God, we pray that across Asia a revival of the gospel will spread. We pray for those that don't know you, God, and we pray for our brothers and sisters across this continent that do know you. Pray this morning you encourage them and strengthen them.

We pray for this great continent of ours. Lord, we want to pray for Amelia, our sister in Taiwan. We pray today, won't you encourage her and strengthen her. Flood her with your love this morning, God.

[4 : 03] Finally, God, we want to pray this morning for our friends Chris and Fiona in the final weeks of sabbatical. As they come back at the end of this month, we pray for them. As they're spending good time with their family in the UK, we pray that it will be a rich time, a rewarding time.

So I want you to be with them. Pray for Chris and Fiona and little Etienne. Encourage them and strengthen them. We pray that they come back to Watermark so full of faith and courage, God.

And so be with our friends, we pray. We pray these things in your wonderful and your powerful name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Okay. We are in a series called Watermark Essentials.

And we are looking at the Watermark values, these things that we talk about all the time. And just like banks and schools and corporations and any NGO, it's very easy for the values, the things that we talk about, the things that are on the website and on posters and that, just to merely be theoretical or aspirational, things that we hope we will one day become.

But as a church, these values that we talk about, gospel, community, and mission, these are things that we don't just want to be theoretical. We want them to be actual. We want them to be the reality of our lives and our church.

[5 : 21] And so we're taking a couple of weeks to talk through these and to explain them and to dive back into the scripture and to look at these things. And we are starting off by looking at this thing called the gospel.

And the question we're asking is, what is the gospel and what's the big deal about it? Why is it that at Watermark, we are always talking about the gospel? What does gospel-centered actually mean anyway?

Why is it so special? And why do we not shut up about this thing called the gospel? Now, if you weren't here last week, we started off last week and we said that the gospel is the announcement of God's good news.

Not just his good advice about how to live your life. That's one of the most important distinctions. The gospel isn't just good advice how to become a nicer person. It's the announcement of God's good news.

And we said that this good news, it leaks from our hearts. Or we forget it. Now, we don't forget the data points. But its vividness, its potency leaks from our hearts.

[6 : 23] And when that happens, we lose some of the power of the gospel to transform us. And so at Watermark, one of the things we try to do is we want to be a church that isn't only referencing the gospel or considering the gospel.

We want to be a church that really, our lives and as a church, we are centered on the gospel. We are empowered by the gospel. So another way of saying that is, as a church, we really do believe that the commands and the instructions that Jesus gives us, all the things we find in the Bible, these are good things.

These are important things. We really do want to follow Jesus. We really do want to live lives that honor Him and glorify Him. Jesus said, Be holy as I am holy. We want to do that.

But at the same time, we want to be empowered by the gospel. And we've realized the only way we can live the lives that God has called us to is from deep meditation, deep reflection, and deep heartfelt response to who God is and the good news of the gospel.

And so that's one of the things that, as a church, we're passionate about. And that means that, as a church, we don't just want to consider the gospel the way into the Christian life.

[7 : 33] It's the way of the Christian life. It's not just the way you become a Christian. It's the way that you grow as a Christian and become the Christian that God has called us to be. And so today, I want us to explore that a little bit further.

And in order to do that, let's just go back and recap what exactly is the gospel. And so one of the things we said last week is this good news announcement of the good news.

And the reason it's good news is because there was prior to that some bad news. And the bad news is our sin, right? And sin is not just the bad things we do, like lying or stealing or being dishonest or having an affair.

Okay, that is a bad thing. We shouldn't do that. Okay, don't do those things. That's not good. But sin is actually far more than that. Sin is the orientation of our hearts that says, I want to be my own God.

I want to live for myself. At its essence, sin is a rejection of the one true God and His role as being Lord of the world and Lord of my life, God of the world and God of my life.

[8 : 39] And at its essence, sin is saying, I want to be my own God. I want to be my own Lord. I want to be in control of my life. And ever since sin entered the world, that has been the default position of every human being.

It's the root cause behind everything else that goes wrong. It's the infection behind the fever, right? It's the cancer behind the headache. It's the underlying issue. And so every horizontal and human problem we see in the world is symptomatic of a deeper real issue, which is that our lives are out of sync with the God that made us to be in relationship with Him because we want to be our own gods.

And to this problem, the stunning announcement of the good news of the gospel rushes in with incredible force that says, Jesus lived the life that we should have lived.

Jesus, by dying the death that we should have died, took the punishment for our sin upon Himself. God poured it out upon Jesus as our substitute. He took our punishment in our place.

And the reason He did this is because of His profound love for us. His incredible love for us. That's the essence of the gospel. Okay, did you get that? Does that make sense?

[9 : 53] Okay, this is going to be hard work. Okay. And so, in light of that, what I'm trying to persuade us of in these couple of weeks is that this stunning announcement of good news is not just the power to save us, it's also the power that changes us.

Well, another way of saying that is it's not only necessary to believe and respond to the gospel in order to become a Christian. Okay, that is important. You do need to do that. But if our lives are ever going to become anywhere close to the kind of lives that the Bible describes or anywhere close to the kind of lives that Jesus wants us to have, we need to be those that are continually being shaped and formed according to that good news announcement of the gospel.

And more and more and more as the years go by, not less and less and less. Okay, that's what I'm trying to do these couple of weeks. And that's why the New Testament is absolutely full.

The apostles are constantly hammering home to us that every instruction they give us, everything they ask us to do, always comes back to the gospel.

That's why Paul says in Romans chapter 1, what Victoria read to us this morning, he says, you Christians in Rome, I want to come to you, I want to strengthen you, I want to impart some spiritual gift to you, I want to remind you of the gospel.

[11 : 18] I'm not ashamed of the gospel, it's the power of God for salvation. But not only for salvation, but also to change us. It's why Paul writes in Corinthians, he says, now I want to remind you, brothers and sisters, of the gospel.

That Jesus died as the scripture said, that he rose again as the scripture said he would. It's why when Paul in 2 Corinthians 8 wants to encourage the Christians to be generous with their money, he comes back to the gospel.

He says, remember how God left heaven and became poor for your sake and said you can be rich in Jesus. Your riches aren't found in your bank account, it's found that you're in Jesus.

It's why when Peter writes to the Christians and says, I want you to share the gospel with those that don't know it. But don't do it arrogantly. Don't do it like you're superior or better than them.

Do it humbly. Do it gently. Why? Because Jesus died for you and you didn't have it all together. Every single thing the Bible says comes back to this gospel. Okay, so that's what we're trying to do.

[12 : 22] Now today, I want us to look at this question, how does the gospel actually change us? And by the way, I'd produced some very beautiful PowerPoint slides. They were amazing.

And I uploaded the wrong ones to the website. And so, Henry and Christina put some slides together and so, I'm sorry, some of the quotes that aren't there today. You just kind of have to pay extra attention to listen to me.

Okay, so maybe I should do that more often. So, how does the gospel change us? Well, three ways. The gospel gives us a new identity that is not based on performance. The gospel drives, it gives us, how do I say, it gives us humility that drives out pride.

And the gospel gives us a love that drives out fear and insecurity. Okay, so firstly, the gospel gives us a new identity. 500 years ago, there was this German monk called Martin Luther and he was grappling with the gospel.

And in fact, the verse that Victoria read to us, Romans chapter 1, verse 17 and 18, was the verse that changed his whole life. He was meditating on this verse and he suddenly realized the gospel.

[13 : 32] And Martin Luther then went and was sharing the gospel with others and he lit a bomb in Europe. He didn't light a physical bomb. But as he shared the gospel, the whole of Europe was turned on its head.

Now, Martin Luther summarized the Christian life as this. Okay, you ready for a little Latin lesson? This is what he said. The Christian is simul justus e peccator.

Did you get that? Okay. Simultaneously, sinful, and yet accepted. The Christian life is somebody who is simultaneously at one and the same time sinful, broken, flawed.

They don't have it all together. And yet at the same time, loved, and accepted, and cherished by God because of who Jesus is and what he's done on the cross.

So Tim Keller very famously says a simile. He says, the gospel tells us that if I am in Christ, at one and the same time, I am both more broken and sinful than I could possibly think I am.

[14 : 41] In other words, my heart is more self-centered, self-orientated. There's more pride in my heart than I realize. And yet at the same time, I am more loved, more accepted, more acceptable to God than I could ever dare, possibly, even hope to be possibly true.

You see, friends, apart from the gospel, your identity and your self-worth is always going to be based on some kind of performance, on how well you think you're doing, either in God's eyes or in the world's eyes or in your parents' eyes or maybe in your own eyes.

But in the gospel, we are given an identity, a sense of self-worth that says you're loved and accepted and acceptable despite your flaws and your shortcomings.

And it is an identity which is not earned or achieved through hard work. It's not earned or achieved through some kind of performance. It is freely given to you because Jesus died on the cross.

And friends, that changes everything. It changes the way that you relate to yourself. It changes the way that you relate to God. But it also changes the way that you relate to every other person in your life.

[15 : 50] So Richard Lovelace, who is a seminary professor in the U.S., he said it like this. This is one of the quotes I'm meant to have up there. So you're going to have to listen. He says, for most Christians, we intellectually know that God's acceptance of us is because of what Jesus did on the cross.

Okay? We know that in our heads. But in our actual day-to-day existence, most of us still rely on our performance as good Christians to assure us of God's love and acceptance.

We rely on either our spiritual sincerity or our past experience of conversion or maybe our recent religious performance or the relative infrequency of our conscious sin.

Okay? So saying, we believe in our heads, yes, Jesus died for me, I know He loves me, but actually, in the day-to-day trenches of life, Monday to Friday, what gives me confidence or assurance that God loves me is that I think I'm not such a bad person.

Now, friends, can I just say, up until a few years ago, that absolutely described my life. Absolutely. If I had a good week, I did my devotions, I led a Bible study, I led some meeting and it went well, I felt good about myself.

[17 : 05] God must really love me. He must be so thankful that I'm on His side. I mean, I wouldn't say that, but somewhere in the back of my mind, I thought that. And sure, a tinge of self-righteousness, right?

But if I had a bad week, some sin, didn't do my devotion so well, oh, felt miserable. What Richard Loveless is saying, how easy it is for his Christians to believe that we need the gospel to become a Christian, but from there on out, we operate by a different principle, which is that we look inside of ourselves.

Yesterday, I was walking in the street and I walked past a lady who wore a t-shirt and it said, look for the inner peace inside of yourself. And I wanted to grip her and say, no, no, no, don't do that.

That's a terrible idea. What Richard Loveless then goes on to say is this. Listen up, this is so important. It says, Christians who are not sure of God's love and that God accepts them in Jesus, apart from some spiritual performance, are subconsciously radically insecure persons.

Oh my goodness. Friends, am I the only one that that describes? I think not. Friends, until I understood the gospel clearly a few years ago, I was radically, radically insecure.

[18 : 20] Now, as a Christian, I would do all the right things. I acted like a fantastic Christian, but deep inside, I was so radically insecure because I wasn't assured of the, despite the fact that I'm sinful, God loves me.

So what does that actually mean? Friends, in the gospel, you and I are given the truth that while it's true, we are flawed and broken. At one and the same time, we are unbelievably loved. Not because of what we've done, but because of what Jesus has done for us in the gospel.

So what does that mean? Many, many years ago, there was a guy called Jonathan Edwards, one of America's greatest theologians and pastors. He was a theologian at Yale University.

And he wrote this book about 300 years ago called *The Nature of True Virtue*. Virtue means morality or ethic, the nature of good behavior. And in this book, he says that for most of us, the motivation that we have for it to be moral or ethical or virtuous is we appeal to either pride or fear.

And he gives an example. He says, how do we teach people to be honest or to be truth-telling? How do we teach our children to tell the truth? Well, we often say something like, you know, you really should tell the truth.

[19 : 35] Don't lie because one day somebody will catch you and then bad things are going to happen. Then nobody will trust you anymore. Okay? So we appeal to a sense of fear.

Don't lie because the consequences will be bad. Now, we do this in contemporary Christianity as well. We say to people things like, don't have sex outside of marriage. Don't sleep with your girlfriend because, you know, someone may fall pregnant and then, you know, you may drop out of college or out of high school and then you won't get the job that you want and your life will just be difficult.

So don't sleep around outside of marriage. Okay? Or don't sleep around outside of marriage. You might contract some disease. So we use fear as a motivation. Or, we use pride as a motivation.

We say, don't lie, don't be dishonest because one day somebody will catch you out and then everyone will know that you're a liar. No one will trust you anymore. You'll bring shame on your family.

Then your reputation will be gone. So we appeal to some kind of pride. We think, don't do that because you're better than that. That's not what Murphys do. Right? I remember my dad growing up saying, Murphys, we don't lie.

[20 : 41] Right? We're better than that. Those guys down there, maybe. But us Murphys, we don't do that. Now, motivating somebody out of fear and pride isn't necessarily wrong, but it's just ineffective.

It doesn't change the inner driver or the motivation of my heart. Now, it's not necessarily wrong to warn somebody of the consequences of their actions, but just think about this. If I tell somebody, don't lie, don't be dishonest because one day they're going to catch you out, that can stop me lying, but it doesn't make me love truth.

It doesn't make me love honesty. If I tell somebody, don't sleep around because there might be bad consequences, I might constrain or restrain their behavior, but that doesn't deal with the lust in the heart.

That doesn't deal with the addictions in my heart. It might restrain my behavior so I act like a good Christian and do the right things, but the sin and the self-centeredness of my heart is still intact.

In fact, if anything, it's strengthened because I appeal to my self-centeredness. I say, you want to live a good life? Well, then don't do this, don't do this, don't do this. You'll have a successful life.

[21 : 53] I look to my own interests to think of myself as a better person and I strengthen the self-centeredness in my heart. I can stop somebody lying, but that doesn't make them love truth and honesty.

I can stop somebody sleeping around, but that doesn't dismantle the lust or the addiction in our hearts. So how are we really going to change? The Bible says that the gospel needs to get hold of our hearts.

The gospel needs to get hold of our hearts. In the book of Titus in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul writes to the readers and he says this, I want you to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to say yes to self-controlled, upright, godly lives.

Okay, so that's a good thing. As Christians, if you're a believer this morning, that's what we want. No to ungodliness and worldly passions. Yes to a self-controlled, upright, godly life. Okay? Now think about this.

Think about all the different ways that you can tell yourself to say no to ungodliness and worldly desires. You can say no because it'll make me look bad.

[22 : 58] You can say no because then I'll be excluded from certain social circles that I want to belong to. You can say no to doing the wrong things because then God will not give me health and wealth and happiness.

You can say no, I'm not going to do those bad things because then one day I'll go to hell. You can say no because then I'll hate myself in the morning and my self-esteem will go down.

All of those things appeal to a self-centeredness and they keep the self-centeredness of my life still intact. But look at how Paul calls Christians to change.

Paul says it's the grace of God in the salvation of Jesus that teaches us or trains us or coaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly desires and yes to self-controlled, upright, godly lives.

You see what he's saying? He's saying it's the grace of God in Jesus that coaches or trains our hearts that reorientates our hearts away from a self-centeredness to saying yes to God, yes to loving those around me and yes to the life that God wants me to.

[24 : 06] And how does he define this grace of God and salvation? Well in chapter 3 he goes on and says God saved us not because of righteous things we've done but because of his mercy. See another way of saying that is it's God's profound love for us expressed in the gospel that gives our hearts such a security such a peace and a confidence that it changes not only our behavior it changes the inner workings of my heart.

It makes me the kind of person that wants to tell the truth. It makes me the kind of person that wants to say no to lust and addiction. It makes me the kind of person that wants to be the person that Jesus wants me to be.

Not just somebody that behaves in a Christian way but actually reorientates the inner workings of my heart. Paul is saying friends if you want true change you must let the truth of the gospel train our hearts.

Say no to ungodliness yes to him let the grace of God that brings salvation train us to say no to ungodliness. Friends when we let our hearts to be trained by the gospel through deep meditation and reflection upon it two things happen.

The first is it gives us a humility that drives out pride. See the gospel gives us a new kind of humility. A humility that dislodges us from being the center of our lives because the gospel tells us Kevin you're more sinful than you realize.

[25 : 27] You're actually not all that you think you are. And that dislodges the pride in my heart. I remember a few years ago reading Scotty Smith if you've never read him he's an amazing blogger find Scotty Smith.

I remember a few years ago reading an article by Scotty Smith in which he talks about the way that the Apostle Paul updates his professional resume throughout the New Testament. Anybody here updated your resume recently?

If your boss is sitting next to you don't raise your hand. Water marks off don't raise your hand. Anyone? Okay. The Apostle Paul throughout the New Testament updates his professional resume.

Look at what he says. In 57 AD he says I'm the least of all the apostles. 1 Corinthians 15. 3 years later in 60 AD he says I am the least of all of God's people.

Ephesians 3. 3 years later 63 AD he says I am the chief of sinners. Now if you know anything about the Apostle Paul this humility that the gospel produced in him wasn't because he is a naturally humble person.

[26 : 34] Okay. In Ephesians in the Philippians it tells us what an arrogant self-centered person he was before he encountered Jesus. He was bent on destroying anyone that disagreed with him.

He went to the courts and said got a court order to arrest and persecute and throw in jail anybody that wanted to follow Jesus. Anyone that wasn't like him that disagreed with him he hated them he wanted them in jail he wanted nothing to do with them.

But when he encounters the grace of God in the gospel what happens? Something changes inside of him. He doesn't just put on Christian behavior he doesn't just say I guess I better act humble now.

Something inside the inner driving of his life changes. The gospel gave him a humility that drove out the pride of his life and continued to do so as he got older and older.

The more that he grew in the gospel the more humble he became. The gospel friends produces a different kind of person a genuine gentleness and a humility humility because such a person is seen inside their own heart and knows what it is that they've been saved from.

[27 : 43] Remember the famous C.S. Lewis quote? He says being humble isn't thinking less of yourself it's thinking about yourself less. Okay? So you might begin to think I'm a really humble person because I'm just I think of myself so miserable I'm such a sinner I'm such a loser no one could ever love me woe is me friends that's not a humble person that's a proud person you're still thinking about yourself all the time a genuinely humble person is someone that's forgotten about themselves all together and the gospel does that because it says yes you're a sinner yes you're broken but at the same time you loved in Jesus and you're perfectly acceptable by him so you don't need to think of yourself as a miserable loser you're loved by Jesus you have an identity that's found in him I'm sure my parents won't mind me sharing this but if they do maybe they'll never find out so let's just keep this between the 200 of us okay my parents are the greatest parents in the entire world honestly

I'm sure you have wonderful parents I've got the best parents in the whole world and growing up the greatest mom and dad my dad was a businessman for most of his life fairly successful and when my dad turned 50 my parents felt God called them to move to Asia so they moved to Asia first to Malaysia Johor Baru and then Singapore and then they were there for 6 or 7 years and when my dad was about 57 they felt God calling them to move to Vietnam and so they moved to Ho Chi Minh City and after a year coincidentally or by God's leading my dad became the pastor of this church and they led that church fantastically this church just grew massively led it for 6 or 7 years and then they moved back to Singapore and they were in Singapore for 2 or 3 years and they were and during that time they joined a church that was so crystal clear on the gospel what the gospel is and how it changes you and so for 2 or 3 years my parents were part of this church and then they moved back to South

Africa one of the things that was so incredible for me is to see my parents then in their mid 60s these incredible incredible people who had loved us so well and loved God so well these people who are my biggest heroes in their mid 60s soften become more gentle more gracious more generous more humble my friends what makes a 65 year old man that has been successful in business successful in ministry CEO of large corporations what's going to make someone like that grow in humility in their mid 60s most men get more agitated and more grumpy and more cantacorous as they get older ladies don't nudge your husbands you can talk about this at home but honestly most men the older we get the more grumpy we become what's going to make a 65 year old man more humble more gracious more generous friends I'll tell you what it was it was a deep heartfelt reflection and revelation and meditation on the gospel's penetrating proclamation that yes I'm simultaneously sinful and yet loved and accepted you see friends often we look at Christians people look at

Christians as judgmental and bigoted right and if I'm honest I look back on my life with such embarrassment and shame oh my goodness that was me I wish I could go back in the years and change that and when I look back at the kind of Christian I was I was so judgmental and bigoted arrogant I did all things that Christians were meant to do but man if I'm honest I was such a dork about it I knew how to act the part I looked down on those that weren't as good as me or I didn't think they could get their lives together friends what's the antidote to that kind of arrogance what's the antidote to that kind of judgmentalism it's not following Jesus less it's not becoming less committed to Jesus it's getting the truth of the gospel deeper into my heart it's more of Jesus not less of Jesus it's more humility and following him not less following him it's more realization of the sinfulness of my heart and the love of Christ that he poured out for me that's what's going to change my heart and if I dare am allowed to say I've seen it probably still arrogant and still judgmental but

I know I'm less so now than I was a few years ago friends when my identity and self worth are centered on how good I am on my performance I can't help but look down at those that I think are weaker than me or not as good as me of course I'm going to feel superior to others but when my identity and self worth are centered on the one who went to the cross for me who died for me because I was unable to rescue and save myself I can't look down to those who are different at me I can't look down on those who practice something different to me or treat or believe something different to me because everything that I have is by grace and grace alone see that the gospel gives us a new identity that isn't based on performance and it gives us a new humility that drives out pride third thing and final thing how does the gospel change us it gives us a love that drives our fear and insecurity I know we spoke about this a lot but the gospel gives us a real honest assessment of ourselves we're broken we're sinful our hearts are disorientated that's true but friends if that's all that you think the Bible says about you you haven't understood the gospel and you haven't understood Christianity because the gospel says that while that is true at the same time we are so extravagantly I'm trying to think of adjectives to describe this super extravagantly abundantly loved and accepted not because of what we've done but because of what Jesus has done over and against us the gospel screams at us it's a loud halo it says God's extravagant love for you and I his radical acceptance and pleasure at us God's love for us isn't based on anything that I've done but based purely on what Jesus done God's love for us friends isn't based because of what's found in my life or my heart or my performance it's based solely because of what's found in his heart and that's never going to change if I'm honest I think up until a year and a half ago I didn't fully understand this I remember about a year and a half ago saying I was praying a prayer and I remember saying God I know you love me because that's your job but I don't know if you really like me I don't know if you really please with me and as I was praying and I felt like God just say to me Kevin do you think I love you because of what's in your heart or because of what's in my heart and I realized God's love for me his acceptance of me is not based because of what's in my heart my heart is rotten and sinful it's based because of what's in his heart and his heart is rock solid and steadfast and it's never going to change friends that is going to change us forever

[34 : 46] I don't know if any of us have ever been in a relationship where the doesn't need to be a romantic relationship could be your relationship with your boss maybe your parents maybe a friend maybe a spouse a relationship where you never feel like you're good enough everything you do you just feel like they're going to criticize me I'm going to try my absolute best and for some reason it's not going to be good enough you know how that feels does that soften your heart does that make you want to be generous does that make you want to be gracious does that make you want to be servant hearted and loving friends when you're in a relationship and you are never good enough what happens our heart closes over we become hard-hearted to protect ourselves we become more defensive in the gospel Jesus tells us no matter what you do I love you and my love for you is not going to change Romans Ephesians chapter 1 Jesus says this his love for us or it says this God is in his love for us he predestined us for salvation before the foundation of the world before you done a single thing right or a single thing wrong God in his love chose to set his love upon you

Ephesians chapter 2 says because of his great love for us Jesus went to the cross for us friends in Romans in John chapter 15 Jesus says this as the father has loved me so I have loved you is that not astounding as God the father loves Jesus Jesus loves you and I Claire and I once knew a young lady in Cape Town who always struggled not to be in a romantic relationship she was forever in a romantic relationship didn't always last long but as soon as the one ended within a week or two she was in another one and these romantic relationships were always a mess she was always getting herself in trouble and just they didn't end well right I remember one day she said to us this is bad news I've got to stop this I've decided no more dating and no more dating good news but then pretty soon she started drinking quite a lot every day a bit more and one weekend she went away to a music festival with some friends and the week after she told us she said you know on Sunday often you know realized I couldn't remember anything of the festival it's just one big blur my drinking is really getting out of hand

I've got to stop this drinking so she signed up for AA join the club got clean got sober right but when she stopped drinking she couldn't stop spending money she always get herself into debt credit card debts she buy expensive bags and shoes and nice clothing and accessories she get herself in credit card debt she then realized this is bad she'd save her pay off her debts and as soon as she paid off her debts she'd spoil herself with a big splurge right go and buy a nice handbag as a reward for paying off her debts what was happening there what is happening friends all those things were symptoms of a far deeper insecurity you see what is happening was even though she'd call herself a Christian and served in church in many ways unfortunately she had no concept that she was loved and accepted by the one person in the universe whose opinion really counts and so initially she'd throw herself at boys wanting to be loved and wanting to feel loved and lovable wanting to feel acceptable by the boys in her life she'd throw herself and give herself foolishly to these guys and they would just take advantage of her and then she realized this isn't good and so she'd try and numb the pain with alcohol and then realized this isn't good and so she'd try and buy expensive bags and shoes and clothing to make herself feel loved and lovable friends all those things were mere symptoms of a far deeper insecurity Richard Lovelay said this Christians who are not sure that God loves and accepts them in Jesus are subconsciously radically insecure persons friends do you know the deeply profound profound love of God has it arrested your hearts has it brought about a deep security which is not only humbling you but also drawing you near softening your heart friends that's what the gospel does and that's why we must be a community which is continually being shaped by the good news of Jesus now there are a thousand applications of this but I want to just land with one of them pointing out the obvious when this gets in our hearts this will make us a completely new kind of community of course this church won't be perfect of course we will still make mistakes why because we still sinners we still flawed right the gospel doesn't deny that so we won't be a perfect community we will let each other down there'll be misunderstanding of course but you know what the gospel will make us a community which is gracious and not judgmental because we know that we're just as flawed as the person next to us and so we'll have to offer grace to them just as we've been offered grace when we see someone has let us down we're not on a high horse judging them but we see ourselves just as much in need of grace as them friends this will make us a forgiving and not a resentful community because as we meditate on the forgiveness of God towards us our hearts will be softened with love to forgive those around us it'll make us a vulnerable and not a defensive community you'll be able to come to church and don't have to have this squeaky clean image of perfect lives you'll come and we can just be real this is who I am this is the kind of week I've had because we know that everyone in the church is in the same position we don't have to show up put our best foot forward we can be full of weakness and fear and we people challenge us we don't need to get defensive because we will be secure in God's love friends those will make us a community which is real and not fake because the gospel gives us a security that allows us just to be ourselves can I just say one of the things that I love the most about watermark church as we've been here two years this is an incredibly real church one of the things that actually amazes me I've never encountered a church that is as real as watermark people can confess sin really people are just real this is who I am this is the kind of week I've had it's an incredible thing and that's the gospel that's at work

within us the reason watermark is like that is because of for 10 years Tobin for six years the elders for years off that have been sharing the gospel with this community it'll make us real and not fake and finally it'll make us a community which is giving and not taking we don't need to look to others to get a whole lot of stuff on affirmation we're securing God we're able to give ourselves away friends we're only beginning to scratch the surface of what the gospel is and what it means to be a gospel center church Paul writes to Romans and he says I long to be able to come to you to share the gospel with you to encourage you and you to encourage me I long to come and share the gospel to you for indeed I'm not ashamed of it it's the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes friends whatever we do let's continue to make sure that we are church that doesn't just talk about the gospel but loves trust obeys the Jesus of the gospel and as a result of that are being changed into his image from one degree to the next let's pray together

Lord Jesus we so thankful for so many things God we thank for God for simply who you are that you're glorious and majestic thank you Jesus for your for who you are but God not only who you are but also what you've done for us on the cross Jesus thank you that when we were far gone from you when we were at our worst you loved us enough to go to the cross and die for us God I pray for each one of us as a church each one of us here this morning God I pray Lord Jesus that the truth and the reality of the gospel won't just be things that we talk about but it really will get deep inside of our hearts it really will change us and transform us God I pray that we father will become more humble more gracious more gentle more generous more loving and kind as the gospel changes and transforms us God I pray that at the same time we'll be more secure Lord God oh father God come and wash us and flood us in the good news of

[43 : 27] Jesus God I pray that our identity be rooted in this and that though we are sinful and flawed that God your love for us covers over a multitude of sins Jesus I pray that these won't just be words father but these will be the deep reality of our hearts God come and cause revival to take hold of each one of us revive us we pray God revive our hearts Lord father come and renew us I pray father for those of us that still look to our spiritual performance for some kind of confidence or assurance God won't you humble us won't you humble us God God for those of us that feel unloved unlovable for those of us that feel God insecure Christ come and change us come and give us a new identity come and let your love change our hearts God father we don't just want to be religious people going through the motions we don't just want to do the Christian thing we want to be those that are in the deepest recesses of our hearts being changed by you are becoming more like you because we secure in our relationship with you we are obeying you and trusting you and loving you

Christ come have your way I pray God bless you we are ■ mate for'?

Jesus Christ come and wondering how is his Father you and having done our relationship is with you He ■■ need you to be in the guild was this wholeäm ■■■■ old Oh He has a heart■■■ Lord, can we take care of you?

For the tej into saya Lord, can we take care of You can let Him rebuild you drink it Seth and Lord of theIVIS