



Guarding the Gospel-Part 2

Grace & Works

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Well, if I were to say that sometimes in my popcorn I put in way too much salt. You might say, "Well, that's not good. That's not good." If I were an anesthesiologist and I said, "Sometimes in my patients I put in way too much medicine." I think you'd say, "That's not good, Dr. Fabarez, that's not good." I think you'd see them in a different way because some things have to be right, not just for the sense of taste, but for the fact that if they're not right, it will have a catastrophic consequence.

Galatians Chapter 1 verses 7 through 9, makes it very clear that there are some who out there who are distorting the gospel, putting a little too much of this and a little too much of that in it. And because of that, the Bible says, that's bad, that's wrong, that's not good, and it's not good in a distasteful sense, it's not good in a catastrophic sense. And thankfully, God has put passages in the Bible that help us with this and make it crystal clear. Passages like the one we've reached today in our study of the book of Acts, Acts Chapter 15. And you may say, "Well, I think I know what the gospel is, and I think I got it right." Well, we need to make sure. It is one of our values here at Compass Bible Church to make sure we're proclaiming a biblical gospel. That's qualified with the word "biblical." We want to make sure it's the biblical gospel because I can assure you, it's not the common gospel. It's not the gospel most people are preaching. It's not what most people believe, and it may not be even what is clearly situated in your mind. So we want to make sure.

So take a look at this text and remember where we are. Paul and Barnabas have been sent down from Syrian Antioch about 300 miles, 275, down to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, they're going to have a council, they're going to have a meeting. They're going to get the apostles and the elders of the church together. And they're going to discuss something that is clearly situated in verse 5, that there were some "believers from the party of the Pharisees" who said, listen, we're going to have people converted to Christ, Christ, the Messiah, the Jewish Messiah, the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Well, then they need to be circumcised, these Gentiles do. And "they need to be told in order to keep the law of Moses." And so they gathered together to discuss that.

So we're going look at a fairly lengthy passage today, and you're going to say, well, that's more passage than Pastor Mike usually talks about. Because here's the deal. We can't put this into more than one message because the whole of what we need to consider as it relates to grace and works, it's all in this entire section. So let's start in verse 6 of Acts Chapter 15. Take your Bibles, get your eyeballs on this text, because it is like us reading a manual about something that if we get it wrong, it will have catastrophic consequences. This is very important.

So here it comes. Verse 6 Acts Chapter 15. It says "The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter." That demonstrative pronoun it's backed by the antecedent of verse 5, which is the fact that they were saying, "Hey, yeah, you know, got new



converts here. You got to circumcise them. We got to keep a law of Moses." "And after there had been much debate, Peter," the fishermen, right? Standing against these guys who are robed and they're believing in Christ, but they're the seminary grads, the erudition, the minds of Judaism who now adhere to Christ and they say that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. "Peter stands up and he said to them, 'Brothers, you know that in the early days, God made a choice among you,' and that's interesting, "that by my mouth," the fisherman from up north with the accent, "the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe."

Now, think back. When did that happen Sunday school grads? When did the Gentiles believe through the mouth of Peter? Well, that was in Acts Chapter 10, when he had prepared Peter, God did, to send him to the house of one named Cornelius, who was a high-ranking centurion in the Roman army, certainly an uncircumcised Roman, a Latin, a non-Jewish person, to Caesarea Maritime there on the Mediterranean coast to go there with his whole entourage. All of these Gentiles circled around. He preaches the gospel to them, the good news of salvation and they believe, they trust in Christ. Verse 8, "And God, who knows the heart," it's about him, he's created these people who are his creatures, he's responding to them, "he bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit," now, this is important, "Kathos," "just as he did to us."

Now, that should bring us back to another passage in Acts, and you should say, "Okay. That's right. I remember studying Acts 10. In Acts 10 here the Spirit fell on them and it wasn't just some subjective, "Wow, I feel forgiven. I'm going to go up and rise up and live a new life for Christ." Right? That's the Second Corinthians 5:17 experience that we all have. But that's not how it was for them. There was a miraculous flash-bang. And what was it? A miracle. And what was the miracle? They spoke in languages they had not studied and they were saying things, these Italians, that they wouldn't possibly know how to say in a different language. They spoke in tongues, in languages, that they had not learned. Which is exactly what happened in Acts Chapter 2, when all the Jewish people in all their festive garb came to Pentecost to celebrate the feast.

And here comes these people believing in Christ. The Spirit is endowed on their life, just as Christ had promised in Acts Chapter 1 verses 6 and 7. And now here comes the fulfillment of God's promise that the Spirit would not just be with you, but he would be in you. And the manifest demonstrable evidence of that was them speaking in language they hadn't learned. And people were hearing, they were amazed, these Galileans, of all people, were speaking these things that they did not study. They were speaking in languages and they were all hearing the great mighty acts of God in their own language. Like, how is this happening?

The miracle of Acts 2 repeated now among Romans in Acts 10, and Peter stands up now in Acts 15 and says, "Hey, just think back. God chose me to bring the gospel to them." "God knows their heart. God gave them the Spirit in the same way he gave it to us," just like he gives it to us today. The problem is we don't have the flash-bang miracle that demonstrably evidences that in a way that God is making clear here, because we have New Testament truths being preached without a New Testament written. So we have this thing that Hebrews Chapter 2 verses 1 through 4 speaks of, and that is God's imprimatur, his attestation of that truth. We have New Testament truths taught by apostles and prophets in the New Testament,



and God's giving his supernatural signature to it all by having these miracles take place that were undeniable.

And Peter is saying, "Look, we saw that when Cornelius got saved and all the people there in his household. Verse 9, "And he made no distinction between us and them." The same way they got saved, we got saved, Spirit of God. And guess what? They didn't stand in line for circumcision. They didn't have to bring an animal to the temple. They didn't have any kind of ceremonial laws being kept. They just believed in the Messiah and the Spirit came in their life. And what does that mean? Well, that means "they had their hearts cleansed, here's the human agency, "by faith." They transferred their trust. Just like Jesus in his parable, talking about the two people who went up to the Temple Mount to pray. And here's a guy who says, "I'm a sinner. I know I'm a sinner. I'm beating my chest. I can't even look up to heaven. Have mercy on me, God, a sinner."

And here is this crying out to God. Please forgive me. And there's forgiveness. Who went home justified that day? Jesus said, "It's not the guy who thought he was better than the other guy. It was the guy who knew he was a sinner and needed forgiveness." And now it's clear, since the gospel and since Christ died on the cross came into clear focus, you got to put your trust in Christ. "He's the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world." And you know whether it's an Italian or whether it's a Jew, no matter who it is, they put their trust in Christ, God's promise of the fulfillment of the Spirit in their life has been made evident in a couple of very unique, miraculous expressions of that in Acts Chapter 2 and Acts Chapter 10. And we know that their hearts are cleansed. We know that they are right with God. We know they're no longer at alienation with God. They're no longer separated from God. They're reconciled to God.

"Now, therefore," because of that, "why," Peter says, "are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples?" Right? They're in, they're disciples. They're with us. "That neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?" I mean, we can't even keep track of all the 400+ commands that are given to us about the ceremonial laws and in the dietary. Are we supposed to now treat them like they're Jews and have them do all the things that we have been doing and failing to do and trying to do and not able to do? This seems odd. Which of course, as the New Testament makes clear, starting with the death of Christ, when he said "It is finished" and the temple veil tore in half, it was clear that all of that, Hebrews Chapter 10 verse 1, was a foreshadowing of the reality that was Christ. And once Christ got there all the ceremonies were gone, all the ceremonies were rendered null and void.

And so it was that even before Peter went to go to eat with Cornelius and that Italian band, he was told, listen, "Don't call unclean something I've called clean." And here's a heart. He knows the heart. He's ready to repent and put his trust in the Messiah. The only satisfaction that can be had for the sins of humanity. He's putting his trust in Christ. Don't call him unclean just because he's not circumcised, because he doesn't eat kosher, because he knows nothing about the Levitical priesthood. Right? You need to know that it's the message of faith, "that is



the power of God unto salvation." What does that mean? Cleansing of my heart from sin. "To the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Now we got the Gentiles getting saved and Peter goes, therefore, we're not going to put this extra stuff on them. Why? Because "We believe," it's the conclusion here, verse 11, "that we will be saved through grace, the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will." It's the same, and that is God merits them favor that they did not earn by doing anything, just by putting their faith in Jesus Christ. So look at verse 11, "It's through the grace of the Lord Jesus." Look at verse 8, "There's no distinction between" the Jew and Gentile. Verse 9, because "their hearts are cleansed by faith."

Shorthand for this kind of thinking in contradistinction to what the Jews, the Pharisees of verse 5 are thinking, and that is, you can put your trust in Christ and you can be saved, but you've got to do this, which is, in that case, a ceremonial keeping of the law, which is going to include and start with circumcision and then move on to all kinds of other things that the ceremonial law commands. So they are saying, you know what? It's faith in Christ, but it's faith in Christ plus something else. And here, the Jerusalem Council, just with Peter, he's got the microphone here, verses 6 through 11. He is saying, listen, no, no, no. It's by grace alone. Okay.

Number one, if you're taking notes, I'd like you to sit here today like you were sitting there in the Jerusalem Council hearing Peter speak, and we don't have to go any further. You know where the rest of the New Testament is going. I'm going to ask you do you affirm that or do you not affirm that. I'm thinking you should affirm that. And of course, you'd affirm that. Number one, you should "Affirm that we get Full Forgiveness by Grace Alone." That it's something that you don't earn. It's not something you get because you keep a set of rules. It's not something you get because you've had some kind of lists that you've met and boxes that you've checked. You can't do anything to merit your forgiveness. This is by grace alone. And if you want to get more specific, you can look at verse 9, it's by faith alone, not by circumcision and faith, not by good works and faith, not by any ceremonial law and faith, not by anything but faith alone. Because it's an act of God's grace alone. Not grace plus some merit on your part.

Romans Chapter 4. Go there with me because we need to deal with this circumcision matter. Right? This is the issue on the table for the Pharisees of verse 5. Paul's later going to write to the Romans in Romans Chapter 4 and he says, let's think about Abraham and circumcision for just a minute. A beautiful expression of what we've got to affirm here this morning. And again, if you're sitting back and you're saying, "I know all this." Bear with me. Okay? It is so unique that our default in our thinking is to go somewhere else. And we can't. We've got to think this way. Let's deal with the historical situation of Abraham and circumcision, verse 1 Chapter 4 of Romans.

"What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?" or at least he's speaking for himself, of course, as an Israelite. "For if Abraham," verse 2, Romans 4:2. "If Abraham was justified by works," if he was right before God, had his heart cleansed

before God, if he was accepted by God, if he was saved before his Creator by his works, by something he did, well, then "he had something to boast about." And you know when I compare my life to his, I'm like, wow, you do have something to boast about. You're a better guy than I am. And that's true, "but not before God." Because before God, we've already established in Chapter 3 as all the rest of the Bible did, "we are all sinners and we all fall short of the glory of God." So he was a sinner. I'm a sinner. He's not as bad a sinner as I am but here's the deal. He would have something to boast about if he earned his salvation. But he didn't.

What does Scripture say, verse 6? Abraham, here's what it says in Genesis 15, "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness." It was as though he were righteous because he simply said, "I'm a sinner. I'm trusting in you. I believe you. I'm going to follow you. I believe that you are the one who takes care of my problem." And that we see throughout the Old Testament of godly people. They may do good things, but they do good things because they are people who have transferred their trust to God and they're not trying to be in with God because of the good things they do. They trust. And what happens? Verse 4. "Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as gifts but his due." You go get your paycheck in the old days and you would line up on Friday, get your paycheck and the guy behind the counter wouldn't say, "Here's your check. It's a gift from me to you." No. "It's not a gift. I worked all week long. I exchanged my hours for your dollars. Give me that. You owe it to me. If you withhold it from me," as James says, "it will cry out to God and there will be injustice in this because you owe me this. I worked for it."

Well, if that were the case that would be how salvation works. You do good works, and God pays you back with salvation and forgiveness. "But to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly." Just like the guy on the Temple Mount in the parable that Jesus told saying, "I am a sinner. I recognize that I'm a sinner, but what I need are mercy and forgiveness. So God have mercy on me a sinner." Do you know what the guy next to him didn't think, the Pharisee? He didn't think he was a big sinner. Matter of fact, I can look at someone else like this tax collector trying to pray on the Temple Mount and say, "I'm not like him. I'm glad I'm not like him." One did not see his sin, did not cry out for God's mercy. The other one did. That's the transfer of trust from "I'm good before you because of what I've done" versus "I'm not good before you. I need you to credit me with righteousness."

"The one who doesn't work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted to him as righteousness." That's "logizomai," great word. It's accredited to you. It's transferred to you. It's as though now you are considered righteous, even though we know you're a sinner. That's the transaction. We're talking about sin because look at the next verse. "Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one," blessing, the relief, the happiness, that wow, it's great "to the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works." Right? David didn't have any time to do any kind of climbing some ladder of steps or praying some set of prayers or doing some set of good works. He saw his sin. He was confronted with his sin and he confessed his sin and he said and wrote this psalm, Psalm 32. Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, wiped out, forgiven "Aphiemi" let go of, and whose sins are covered, "Kfar," an Old Testament Hebrew word, kfar, covered, atoned for, washed. "Blessed



is the man whom the Lord will not count his sin." Oh it's there, but it's not counted. It is now somehow taken away from you. It's expiated. It's removed.

"Is this blessing only for the circumcised?" That's a good question. "Or is it also for the uncircumcised? For if we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteous, well, then how then was it counted?" Or more specifically, when? "Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after." All you do is read the book of Genesis. "But before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal," something that people could see, something that he could look to and say, "I am part of the covenant people of God. I am now the beginning of this great nation. You're going to make a great nation out of me. And we have this thing that's to be handed down as this external sign of the thing that has happened in my heart, which is I trust in God to forgive me my sins."

You see the "sign of circumcision as the seal of the righteousness that he had by faith when he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised," as Paul writes the Romans in the first century, "so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and make him the father," quote unquote, "of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised" in their flesh, "but also walk in the footsteps of faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised." Which means he was counted as righteous before he did anything that was in adherence or response, in regulation to do what God said and touching any of the bases or checking any of the boxes. I'm trusting in what you did. And I'm counted as righteous.

And if I put my trust in God, whether I am a Jew, circumcised, and wear the uniform, or whether I don't wear the uniform, if I trust in Christ for forgiveness, my sins are not counted against me. God's righteousness counted to me. I'm now acceptable before God. That can happen in a split second. You can be a thief on the cross. No circumcision, no sacrifices, no giving, nothing. And transfer your trust to Christ and say, like that parable, I'm a sinner, have mercy on me. Here's the means of the payment of my sins. "The Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." And Jesus can look at me at that moment and say, "Today you'll be with me in paradise." Critical.

Two more passages real quick. Galatians Chapter 2. Turn to Galatians Chapter 2 verses 15 and 16. Galatians Chapter 2 verses 15 and 16, "We ourselves," Paul speaking of course as a Jew, "are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners," quote unquote. He's already made the case in Chapter 3, everyone is condemned as a sinner, whether Jew or Gentile. But you're seeing it as I have some kind of protection because I'm wearing the uniform of Judaism. Right? I've got the fringes on my robe, I wear my hair long on the side of my head. You know, I got the phylacteries, I've been circumcised, all the things, I got the uniform. The Gentiles, they don't have the uniform. "Yet we know that a person," verse 16, "is not justified by the works of the law, but rather through faith in Jesus Christ, so also we believe in Christ Jesus," if I got the uniform or not of Judaism, "in order that to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law." Why? Because it doesn't work. Putting on the uniform does nothing. "By works of the law no one will be justified."



How is the man in Jesus' parable justified? He called out to God in faith saying, "I need God's mercy, I'm a sinner." Christ now, "the lamb of God takes away the sin of the world." God directs our attention to the Messiah and he says, "Trust in the Messiah. And at that moment you trust in the Messiah your sins now are forgiven. It's as though you didn't do them, and all the righteousness you don't have has been imputed and counted to you." That transaction takes place and it takes place instantaneously and you are, one more passage, Colossians Chapter 1, you are now fully "qualified." Look at the tense of the word "qualified" here. This verb is so important in Colossians Chapter 1, start in verse 12. In the middle of a long sentence, he's praying and he says, you know, we give thanks to the Father. "Giving thanks to the Father who has," note this word, Colossians 1:12, "qualified you." It's not "are being qualified" or "trying to raise yourself up to be qualified," "getting qualification," "will be qualified." It says, "Who has qualified you," a completed action, "to share in the inheritance of the saints in light."

How qualified was the man on the cross the moment he put his trust in Christ? Fully qualified. Qualified. Past tense. You're qualified. Jesus says, "Today you're going to be with me in paradise." "But I didn't have time to get circumcised." "You don't have to." "I didn't have time to do anything. I'm dying right here on this cross." Jesus says, "Great. Fully qualified." Why? Because, verse 13, "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son." From this group to this group. And how did it happen? Faith. Trust. I trust in Christ to forgive my sins. I'm a sinner. The only way I'm made right is to trust in Christ.

What does that mean? We have redemption. We've been purchased. Did you purchase it by your deeds? No. Did you do anything? No. Do you have any ceremony done over you? No. It's you trusting in Christ. You have redemption. What does that mean? "Aphiemi." Forgiveness of sins. Completely forgiven. Released from any payment that you have to make in the Lake of Fire. You don't have to at all. It's all been paid for in Christ.

That's the gospel of grace. And you may say you believe that, but do you really believe it? Because the world does not like it. Your religious friends don't like it. Your neighbors who you're trying to share the gospel with don't like it. Because if they start to understand it, they'll say things like this, "You mean to tell me I could be the worst possible cretin in our society, I could be the worst person, do the worst things and at the last minute, like the thief on the cross, I could transfer my trust sincerely to Christ. And you're telling me that I would be forgiven and go directly to heaven? Just like the guy who got saved as some seventh grader and lived as a missionary and died as a martyr. You're saying they're going to the same place?" And you're going to have to say "Yes," because that's what the Gospel of grace-alone is all about. There's nothing else I can say.

Well, that's what all Christians teach, right? No. I'm glad you said that. There are a lot of people who bear the name Christian and they don't teach that. Let's talk about your aunt, the Catholic aunt of yours, your uncle, your second cousin, your neighbor. Here's what the catechism of the Catholic Church says. The official doctrine from Rome, the Vatican says here's what we believe. This is what we teach. And if you're a good Catholic, you believe what



we say because we have the authority to tell you what to believe and here's what they say. Catechism of the Catholic Church. Look it up online. You can get a copy of it, it's cheap.

Section 1250, 1-2-5-0. Ready? Let's just go through a few things. Baptism, the section on baptism. "Born with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, children also have the need of new birth," not just adults, "in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, which all men are called." We need to go from here to there. We need to go from being lost to being saved. "The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifested in infant Baptism. The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism," on their children, "shortly after birth."

So, I can read English. It's written in Latin, translated into English. The Church of Rome says, "Here, you want to become a child of God you need to be baptized. You need to do this work. If you do this work and you trust in Christ, that's great." You know, confirmation and all that, first communion, you do that. But here's the deal. You need this and if you get this then we're in good shape. You get transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the glorious Son, and you get qualified. But you're going to have some problems. Because you know what? By the time you get your first communion, you start taking communion, you're going to have a lot of problems. But here's the good news. The Eucharist is there.

Let's talk about the Eucharist, Section 1393, catechism of the Catholic Church, 1393. "Holy Communion separates us from sin." Listen carefully. Put the wafer in your mouth in a mass, the wafer in your mouth separates us from sin. "The body of Christ we receive in Holy Communion is 'given up for us,' and the blood that we drink 'shed for the many,'" for the remission of sins, it is "'for our forgiveness of sins.' For this reason the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ," which is what they say it does, "without at the same time cleansing us from past sins." So you take that wafer which has become the body of Christ, right? And through that ceremony, as that bloodless sacrifice, re-sacrifice of Christ, which they willingly say in the same section, you now are by necessity joined to Christ and separated from sin.

You say, "Well, I'm still going to do some bad things between mass." Well, you are. You're right. But here's the good news, 1422. There are some things you can do when you sin. It's called penance. And penance involves all these things, including you telling a priest, I know your aunt doesn't do that anymore, but that's what's required of Rome that you go and confess. And in that confession you're going to be given instructions to fix the problem. Let me quote 1422. Not my words. The words of the pontifical authority of Rome. "Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offenses committed against him." We've committed sins against God. But the good news is penance takes that away.

Section 1459. Last paragraph. "Raised up from sin, the sinner must recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for his sins: he must make 'satisfaction for' or 'expiate' his sins. This satisfaction is also called 'penance.'" So do your penance and take your communion and make sure you got baptized. And if you do these things, faith in Christ



that's good because we're all talking about the same Christ here. You do those things, though, and we'll be in good shape when you die.

Well, almost. Except this thing called purgatory. We might as well mention that, Section 1030, "All who die in God's grace." Well, that's me because I've been baptized, I've been taking the Eucharist, and, you know, I've been doing my penance. Well, that's good. You're dying in God's friendship it says. "If you die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified." Which, by the way, I've asked not only local priests, but I've asked people in Vatican Square in Rome, how many people and who is going to purgatory? And they answer definitively, "Everyone." They're all going because no one's perfectly purified in this life, no matter how much you do. "Indeed, you're assured of eternal salvation, but after death you must undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven." What do I need to do? I need to go through purgatory to get purified so that I can achieve the holiness necessary to enter into the joy of heaven.

I'm just saying, Romans 4, Galatians Chapter 2, Colossians Chapter 1, Jerusalem Council, Acts 15, I'm just asking the question does any of that comport with what the Scripture says? No. And this is the biggest organization wearing the Jesus t-shirt in our world today. And they're saying repeatedly, repeatedly, repeatedly believe in Christ. They may even talk about the same Christ we're talking about in terms of the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the humanity of Christ. All that's great. It's good. But what you're saying is trust in Christ is not by grace alone. You've got all of these other things you must do. And I just read from their doctrinal statement, not mine, here are the things you've got to do to be right.

"Well, those Catholics, I do know a lot of them. But, you know, they're not as good as those Mormons. They got it wired, those Mormons. I mean, family time on Friday night, they're doing good stuff, they're going on their mission, they don't cuss, they don't drink. Those guys are great." Well, here's the deal. They teach the same thing. Let's quote the president of the Mormon Church, President Woodruff, some time ago, but it summarizes in one sentence well the whole Mormon doctrine. Ready? President Wilford Woodruff said, "If I ever obtain full salvation it will be because of my keeping of the laws of God." It couldn't be more simple than that. You know anything about Mormonism when it comes to being a deacon, being a teacher and being an elder, and then hopefully attaining the priesthood and getting the temple recommend, getting married in the temple, engaging in baptism for the dead, all the things that we do. These are the things that make us now acceptable before God we hope at least to attain, I hope to the highest celestial heaven that there is.

I'm just saying, every religious system is going to say, Christ, yeah, we're in with Christ. We're even good with the Bible. But here's the deal. There's more to it than you just believing that you're going to be saved by grace alone. I mean, even if we add this faith-alone stuff, I don't know. There's got to be more to it than that in your religion. I've shared the gospel with so many Muslims over and over and over again. I talk to Muslims. And I love talking to Muslims because they think they have such a high view of God. But the problem is in their cries for mercy, as the Koran continually says, this merciful God. They know this that the only way



they're going to be right with their maker when they meet their maker is if they're good and they've got to do the good things that Islam provides. Right?

You got the five pillars. You got to start by reciting the creed. "There is no God but God." You know the Koran. And then the prayers, you got to have five times a day. I go there right away with Muslims. Are you praying five times a day as you're supposed to, aiming toward Mecca, doing all that? And some of them say yes. And we continue to talk. Well, you've got 2.5% of your income is supposed to be given to the poor. Right? You have to give alms. You also not only have to recite the creed and pray every day, but you've got to be engaged in fasting during the religious calendar, particularly through the month of Ramadan in the daylight hours. And then you need to make sure at some point in your life you take a pilgrimage to Mecca. You do these kinds of things. These are things that prop up what it is going to take for you as a good Muslim to get to the place where the mercy of God kicks in and you get to be in heaven. I've had this conversation countless times. Read the Koran. I mean, this is how religion works.

You can throw in Hinduism and Zoroastrianism or Buddhism or any Christian religion that says, "Yeah, we're all about that whole grace-alone thing, but really not completely alone because there's other stuff you got to do. And if you do these things plus Christ, well, then you can get right with God." I just got to say this is the standard. For every non-Christian I talk to, this is the assumption, get to heaven. Hopefully my scales will balance and tip in favor of my good stuff. That's not the gospel we're preaching. We're all committed to proclaiming a biblical gospel. You better get back to the fact that we believe in the fact that there is absolutely no merit that we're bringing to this at all, except for the fact that God saves us by grace alone, through faith alone. And the only person who adds to this is Christ alone. This is how it works. And the reason people deny that is because they don't believe what we used to say, five years ago, started to say, we better be really clear about the fact that the authority from this comes from Scripture alone.

Go back to our passage in Acts Chapter 15. Acts Chapter 15 beginning in verse 12. There's going to be some discussion here, very important, about knowing why we are saying what we're saying that you get saved by grace alone, faith alone. Right? That's the whole point that Peter makes. He drops the mic and now Barnabas and Paul pick up the mic and it says, "As the assembly fell silent," verse 12, "they listen to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles."

Now, immediately we get to James in Chapter 13. Well, why didn't Paul and Barnabas get in line? Because he's assuming, Luke is, that you've read Chapters 13 and 14, right? He told everything that happened on the first missionary journey. And what happened on the first missionary journey? Well, Paul goes and takes a missionary journey that not only shows what Peter just said, that the miraculous attestation of the invasion of the Spirit in the Jews in Pentecost is just like the Italians in Chapter 10, but in Chapter 14 he says, "Now, as we went through and got kicked out of the synagogues, we turn to the Gentiles, and in Iconium and Lystra we start sharing the gospel." They get saved, and guess what happens? Miraculous signs attest to this. So just like we had a miraculous attestation of Chapter 2 and Chapter 10,



we have it again in Chapter 14, where God is saying, "Yeah, they're really saved. Yes, they're really mine. Yes, they've really been transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of his beloved Son."

And then James picks up the mic, verse 13. "After he finished speaking, James replied, 'Brothers, listen to me. Simeon or Simon or Peter related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. And with the words of the prophets agree,'" there's symmetry between this, "'just as it's written.'" Now he's going to quote from the Septuagint, Amos Chapter 9 (quoted in Acts 15:16). "After this I will return, I will rebuild the tent of David." One of the prophets to the northern tribes is starting to see the Assyrians attack. And then come the Babylonians and it looks like bad days in the forecast is certainly bad in the Amos and Hosea. And now what we have is a promise that one day God's going to pull everybody back. "I'm going to rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I'm going to rebuild its ruins, and I'm going to restore it, that" here's the purpose clause, "the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old."

So the Old Testament there is speaking of, starting in Genesis Chapter 12, that all the nations of the world will be blessed through Abraham. Abraham is going to have a sign of his righteousness that is given by faith, through circumcision and all these Levitical rules that are going to come 600 years later. But the promise is that through that Christ who comes through the fulfillment of the ceremonial law, there will then be Gentiles who are called by God's name gathering together and being saved. And what about the ceremonies? *Passé*. How do I know they're *passé*? Because God miraculously attested to it in Chapter 10 and Chapter 14, saying you don't have to keep ceremonial law. Not to mention the miracle of the veil being split in the temple when Jesus died.

And why is that important? Because James is a writer of the Bible. Paul is a writer of the New Testament. Right? And Peter is a writer of the New Testament. And the problem is, if you're sitting there at the Jerusalem Council, you've got to rely on the fact that these guys are important prophets and apostles and that they have the attestation of the miraculous God who's affirming what they're saying. Today, people are getting saved. The Spirit is invading their life. And the miracle we have is one that's unseen, at least in some detailed sense. All you can see is the trajectory of a changed life and the subjective feelings of forgiveness and relief. And that's all true. But we don't have this BAM-flash that we had in Acts 2, Acts 14 and Acts 10.

So what do you have? Well, you have a New Testament doctrine being preached without a New Testament. So the apostles who are attested to. Hebrews Chapter 2 verses 1 through 4. We have to say God's clearly got his hand on them and we believe it, and then they're going to write it down and then the church is going to be built, Ephesians Chapter 2 verse 20, "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets," and their work then will forever be this judge and this gauge of everything else that anyone else says about being saved. If they say, "Well, it's not grace-alone, by faith-alone and Christ-alone, there's something else, we're going to say, "No, it's based on Scripture alone, as God then uses these miraculously attested authors



to put down in writing how the gospel works. And therefore we ought to be really grateful, even though it would be clear and we have testimony and evidence and eyewitnesses there in the Jerusalem Council that we're not in the Jerusalem Council, that the councils now that we have, we can open up a Bible and say, what does the Bible say? Because we have an inscripturated gospel.

Number two, you ought to be grateful for that. Number two "Be Grateful for an Inscripturated Gospel." Is it a word? No, it's not a word, but it ought to be a word. So it's there on point number two, "inscripturated." It's been written down. It's been put into codification, into black and white, into propositional statements, into nouns and verbs and adjectives. God has put his truth down through the apostles and prophets and we have it. Does it comport with the Old Testament? Sure. It comports with all the promises of the Old Testament, starting in Genesis 3 and reiterated in Genesis 12 and 15 and 17, and all the way through the prophets, all the way to Amos and beyond. God is going to include the Gentiles and salvation is going to come through the Jewish Messiah.

And once the Jewish Messiah shows up and fulfills the law, he's going to say "It's finished." And all the ceremonies, Hebrews Chapter 10 verse 1, are going to be a foreshadowing of the reality. Now that the realities here, the uniform doesn't matter. What matters is, is your heart trusting in Christ alone? Is it by faith alone? Right? And if it is, then here's the deal. If it's based on Christ's work alone, there ought to be deference to and there ought to be validation from Scripture alone. By the way, that's not what your aunt believes if she's a good Catholic.

I talked about that. I've already dug a hole and if you don't like the message already, let me go on to quote some things that the Catholics say, Section 95 of the catechism of the Catholic Church. Listen carefully. Please listen carefully. Section 95, right at the beginning, 95 paragraphs in. "It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God," here it comes now, "he's taken sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected," it says, "and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls." So you got the Scripture and then you got the church tradition, what they've done for the last 2,000 years. This was published in 1991 or 89 or 90. And everything that they've legislated, all the Magisterium, all the leadership, all the people in charge, that becomes the authority.

We have a three-legged stool and they say, "Oh, you sola scriptura people, you Scripture-alone people, all you have is one stool and no one can figure out what it says." Well, I think we can figure out what it says. We just read Acts Chapter 15. We understand it. It is not keeping the rules. It's not doing something to earn the favor of God. It's by faith alone. Grace alone. That's exactly what it says. A fifth grader can figure that out. I don't need someone in a funny hat or traditions for a millennium telling me what it says. I can say, here's what it says. Here's what it says.

Let's keep going. Section 889 as it recurs the idea of authority. It says in the catechism of the Catholic Church, "In order to preserve the purity of the faith handed on by the apostles,"



which we would say, yes, we want that faith. Well, then, "Christ who is the Truth willed to confer on her," on the church, "a share of his own infallibility." Section 891. "The Roman Pontiff," the pope, "head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility by virtue of his office." Okay.

So now we're saying we got Scripture and an authority, and if you want to quote that, that's great. But what you have to put in your equation is what the church says. And if the church says baptism makes you a child of God and the Eucharist separates you from sin and penance expiates your sin, and that purgatory finally gets you through the final car wash to get you into the eternal state, well, then we got to believe that because they have infallibility, just like your Bible has infallibility. The problem is when you have two infallible sources of authority, when they conflict, you know which one they're going to choose. Right? And it won't be the Bible.

Which, by the way, that's where all the religions seem to comport with one another and agree. Let's talk about the Mormons. Right? Spencer Kimball, 12th president of the Mormon Church. He maintained, "This is the only true church. It is not a church. The Mormon Church is the Church of Jesus Christ. His church. It bears his name, and it is directed under the authority of his priesthood." Now there's the connection. We have the right group. You listen to what we say because we're under the priesthood, the high priesthood. Right? The Quorum of 12, the Melchizedekian Priesthood, as they put it, wrongly understanding that concept. It bears his name. It's directed under the authority of his priesthood. Its message will save and exalt souls of the children of men. There is no other way, because this is the only true message and the only true church upon the whole face of the earth. Those are not my words, the president says. These are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, as found in the revelations, Doctrines and Covenants, Section one.

So I've got now not just the Bible. That's cool if you want to quote the Bible, but we got, you know, the other testament of Jesus Christ, the Book of Mormon. We got Doctrines and Covenant we got the Pearl of Great Price. We got the living authority of the prophets telling us in Salt Lake City what it is. And as long as you have all of those things in place, that's fine. So don't go quoting Amos or the Bible or Acts 15 or Galatians 2 or any other text by itself, unless you consult with us as to whether or not we agree with that. And then we'll tell you whether or not that that's all it takes to be saved is transferring your trust to Christ.

J.W's. Jehovah's Witnesses. Do you know some Jehovah's Witnesses? Jehovah's Witnesses. Here it comes. The Watchtower and Tract Society. They believe that they are, here's closed quote now, the "sole collective channel of God's flow of biblical truth to men on earth. We are the channel of information." Keep reading. Here's what is in their authoritative statements about themselves, "We are God's channel of communication actively channeling," since the days of Rutherford. So Rutherford comes on the scene, Judge Rutherford if you know the history of the J.W's., and here he claims to have the authority from heaven. He is the one in the watchtower who's bringing God's information, channeling that to men and it's continued on ever since in the Watchtower and Tract Society publications.



J.W.'s. "Unless," listen to this, "we are in touch with this channel of communication that God is using we will not progress along the road to life, no matter how much Bible reading we do. So you can read your Bible, but you can't read your Bible unless you understand what we're saying. And what we're saying is what it takes to be saved." And they have a lot of things in their list by which you must be saved. It is not faith alone, it's not grace alone, it's not Christ alone. And it certainly, as I'm trying to make the point, not by Scripture alone.

I mean dare I even talk about Mary Baker Eddy. I mean, Christian Science. Which we often say is not Christian, it's not science, but it is something claiming to do what all these other religions do and that is "listen to us." Here's what she says about her own writings, which if you were a part of that and I know some people in our church were a part of it, science and health were the keys to the Scripture. That's their key text. She says, "I would blush to write of science and health with the Scriptures as I have, were it of human origin. And were I apart from God, its author, but I was only a scribe, echoing the harmonies of heaven. So really, the information I'm giving you is something different than what you've heard and I get that. But God was the one giving this to me. And so I'm giving you new information." "Humanity," here's what she says, "had the Bible for close to two millennia without fully understanding how to use its truths. But thankfully, I'm here and I've given you the information, and now whatever you've read, you can't understand it on your own. You need to listen to me, because now I'm the channel of information."

Just like the Tract Society, just like the living prophets of the Mormon Church, just like the Magisterium in Rome and Vatican. We either have a choice to make when it comes to grace alone, faith alone and Christ alone, whether or not we're going to defer and define that based on what the Scripture says alone. And if we are then you can have all those other groups criticize us for sitting here with our Bibles as individuals trying to figure this thing out, which I don't think is as hard as they claim that it is. Are there some things hard to understand in Scripture? Yes, but you know what's not hard to understand in Scripture? That Jesus can look at someone who is dying next to him on a cross who says, "You know what, I get it. I'm a sinner." And he rebukes the other criminal and Jesus says, "Hey, today you'll be with me in paradise, that you will be fully qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in life. You'll be transferred from the domain of darkness into the dominion of the kingdom of his only Son."

That I can know just by putting my trust and faith in Jesus Christ and not my resume. I can figure that out. And all these other groups are going to say, there's got to be more to that. And here are the apostles and prophets who are about to write this all down and give us the New Testament quoting Old Testament Scripture, saying, "Here's the authority." Be grateful that we have it inscripturated. Grateful we're not sitting at the Jerusalem Council, although we could figure it out even then because of the miraculous attestation. But we have a miraculously attested book called the Bible. Well, that's good. We don't have to do any good works.

Back to our passage, Acts Chapter 15 verse 19. James is wrapping this up. He's still got the mic, he says, "Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those Gentiles who turned to God." You have a penitent faith in Jesus Christ. Your sins are forgiven. You're cleansed



from your sins. You're in the family. You're a disciple. All the things that are used in this text. This is done. But here's the deal. Right? "But you should write to them." We should instruct them. We should tell them. You should give them something to tell them, "To abstain from the things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from what has been strangled and from blood." Put a pin in that and keep reading. "For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him," Moses and the laws of Moses, "for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues."

Okay. You've got to know this historically and contextually. You got four things there. Look at them again. Right? Things that are polluted by idols, which Paul is going to talk about in his letter. We'll talk about that in a second. Sexual immorality. Things strangled and from blood. You think about those if you know anything about the Old Testament, here are the Levitical laws regarding several things. In particular in Leviticus 17 and 18, you've got this list of things, including things you weren't supposed to eat, including things strangled and things with blood in them, and things that are polluted by the goat demons or the idols. Well, in the modern era in the first century, as a modern era from this perspective, all of this was going on in the Greco-Roman world. But the synagogues where you had the Pharisees and the people who knew the Old Testament prophecies were saying, here's what the Christ is all about and here is the Christ, we believe he's the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. Believe and trust in Him. And they were doing it. The question is, should you keep all the mosaic laws?

And here we had Peter, we had Barnabas, we had Paul, we had James all going, "Nope." But then they said, "Oh, but wait a minute. Now that we're going to commence with getting together and having, you know, our teachings and our fellowship and our communion and the Lord's Supper and baptizing people, before we go any further there are some things you guys should do and you should avoid some of these things. Now, later, as the Church continues to move from the synagogue-based Jewish culture teaching about the Messiah of Christ into a much more Greco-Roman context, right? When we have this thing go to the ends of the earth and we lose that veil, these things become much less of a concern and increasingly so all the way to today. No one's really concerned about where you got the meat that you ate for lunch yesterday.

But in those days, was it sacrificed to an idol in the marketplace? And if it was, Paul goes on to say later to the Corinthians, "Well, listen, you're a long way from Israel and you know what? There may be some Jews in your town who are concerned about it. And listen, I'm telling you, it doesn't matter. 'The earth is the Lord's and all it contains.' The dietary restrictions of the Old Testament are gone. But here's the thing. If it violates someone's conscience, be really careful and just don't ask questions for the sake of conscience. You got other people's consciences that are violated." And he says and Romans Chapter 14, as he writes to Rome, he says, "Hey, Christians there with Jews and Gentiles. Listen, if it's going to cause someone to stumble, listen, it'd be better for you never to eat meat again. I'd rather not eat meat ever again than to offend my brother because I care about my brother and I don't want to offend his scruples or his traditional kosher meals. I just don't want to do that, although that has nothing to do with salvation."



Well, you have that clearly with three of the four. The first one, the third one and the fourth one, you're going, okay, "I get that." Right? You got things strangled and blood and all that was in the Levitical laws there. But what about the sexual morality thing? That seems like a moral law, not a ceremonial law. And I'm saying on the surface, that's what it looks like. But here's the deal. If you read through the section that deals with things strangled and blood and things sacrificed to idols, you have a section in the middle of this on the Levitical laws regarding who you can and cannot marry. And you weren't supposed to marry someone outside this list. And there was this set of things that were said there, and it was considered sexual immorality by the people who led those synagogues. And so I believe this is not the broad offense that God takes any time we see a dissolution of a marital covenant or fidelity in marriage, we're talking about the specific things given in that list regarding who you can and cannot marry.

It's like times I've been asked. I've had cousins come to me and say, "Would you perform our marriage ceremony?" And I go, "How close of a cousin are you? And then I'm like, No, that's illegal in the state of California." And they go, "Yeah, but it's not in Arkansas, so well then go to Arkansas or whatever." Because I can't do it here. Now, that's just a thing that may ick some people out. But in reality, the rules are different in some states than they are in this state and it has nothing to do with my religious practice. But what if that was a part of my religious practice? What if the point was it doesn't matter who you married? You can marry your first cousin if you want. But here's the deal. You can't do it here because this is part of what we have been conditioned in for years in our religious devotion to God. Well, then the point would be that you shouldn't do that. That's considered immoral by those people based on the rules that are related to their religious devotion in the Levitical law. So don't do it.

So I think this has to do with the rest of it. You'll find it all in Leviticus 17 and 18. And all of this is a picture of the things that the Jews were going to be offended by. Now, should I do anything that offends God? Never. What is he offended by? Moral violations. What are my neighbors offended by? Well, sometimes moral violations, but oftentimes they're just the scruples and the conditioning of their conscience. And those are the things I shouldn't do. And so for the sake of love, I lay aside those things. But all of those, think about it, are motivated by the same thing. And that is, I love God and I don't want to offend him. Right? And I also love my brother and I don't want to offend him. One is an egregious thing before God because God is holy. And I know that anything I do that's on his moral list I shouldn't do because I love God. And anything that's on your list I should be really careful about.

Now Paul says *this time*, it doesn't matter. You're in the right context. But here's the deal. The concerns and the sensitivities you have, right? Better for me not even to eat meat. It was like Timothy not even drinking wine in the first century. Right? And it's like me. I don't drink alcohol. I don't drink alcohol not because I can't, but because I know that people have some scruples and some sensitivities in that. So I give that up and I have no problem with giving that up. And the point is we do that out of love for each other, depending on what it is, but out of my love for God, there are a ton of things on his clear moral list.



Number three, we're all for those good works. As long as we know they're not meritorious, they don't earn our salvation. Number three "Push Good Works Motivated by Love." That's the point. It's the royal law. By the way, who's saying this? James is saying all this. James writes in James Chapter 2, beginning in verse 14, all these things about faith and works. If you really have saving faith, you are going to do good works because you love God and love each other. Matter of fact, like four verses ahead of that, he talks about the royal law. The royal law is "You love your neighbor as yourself." The same guy taking the mic in Jerusalem and saying, hey, you got to be careful about the things you do around the Jews.

Paul is going to get Timothy circumcised in just a couple of passages ahead. We're going to see Paul take Timothy and get him circumcised just so he doesn't offend the people he's sharing the gospel with. And yet he'll write the Galatians and say, if you're trying to do that to be right with God, you've missed grace altogether. You got a different gospel. What's the deal? I guess it's not about, you know, cutting off the foreskin. This is not just the act. It's not about wearing tassels on the side of your robe or putting long, you know, not cutting the hair on the side of your head. It's not about that. And Paul knew to the Jew, a Jew, to those under the law as under the law. Right? There's that contextualization of those things. And so we want to push good works. You ought to be zealous for good works. Moral law? Of course. Unyielding. Because God cares about that. Right? But those other things that we often times take for granted because we're maybe in a homogenized culture here. But the sensitivity in the early church was big, and so they had to be very careful. It's all about good works, which we could say more about that. I'm out of time.

I will tell you that yesterday I went to Subway for lunch. Which, as you can tell, I don't do very often, although they do have stuff there that could get you portly, I suppose. But when I go to Subway, usually if I ever tell you I'm going to Subway or I went to Subway, it's because I was being calorically good that day because I don't put cheese and I don't get the bad stuff, the meatball sandwiches and all that stuff that you get. I get ham, no cheese or turkey. I do get the white bread, sorry. But when I'm going through the line to get it and I'll never get a soda because it's like that defeats the whole purpose of going to Subway in the first place. I'd rather go to Del Taco, but I'm in line at Subway. And, you know, you go down the line and you're telling them through the glass what to put on and they're putting all the stuff on there and bell peppers and olives and all that stuff.

And there's that row of chips right in front of me. Right? I get the same chips every time, don't you? Same chips, same bag of chips every time. Do you know what bag of chips I get? The best ones. Do you know what I get? Barbecue. That's right. I get barbecue. Now I want the one full fat, but I'm there and I don't want to defeat the purpose of going to Subway because I don't really like Subway, but I go there so they don't have a lot of fat even in thought there's probably 200 calories of fat in those baked ones. I get the baked ones. I get the baked barbecue chips when I'm at Subway. So if you ever have to pick up lunch for me, that's what I get. Turkey six-inch. I get the BBQ. Okay. Does anybody else get the baked barbecue chips when you go to Subway? (some in the audience raise their hands) Okay. See? And if I say, "You're right, I'm right. Everyone else is wrong." If I said that, you'd go, "Oh, you're a punk



man. You're a junior higher. How immature you are." Right? "Hey, we're right. Me and this dude right here, we get the same chips. We're on the right team."

One of the reasons some of you didn't like this sermon and some of you who are going to listen to this on the radio don't like this sermon because you might moan, "You might be vegan and all those religions, man." Right? "He can't handle anyone who gets the sour cream and chive chips. He's got his own little preference." Listen, Christianity is not my preference. You understand that. Some say, "Yeah, well, Mormons are good people too." It's not about who's good and who's not good. It's about the gospel of grace alone. Right? Through faith alone. Based on Christ alone. That comes from Scripture alone. That's what matters. Because that one, if you mess with it, the Bible says, Galatians Chapter 1 verses 7 through 9, you going to be lost. It's not like and I agree, you can get any chips you want at Subway, have at it.

But if I sent you across the parking lot because I had it at the one over by Home Depot, if I said go over to Home Depot and get us something to drink. Just get a can over there and get yourself a can and pick up something for you to drink and for me to drink. If you went over there and just picked up any old can, a can of paint, a can of turpentine, a can of weed killer, it would be like, no, no, no, no. Now I really care. And it's not like, yeah, it's like, hey, we picked the same soda. No, there is a case, it's by the checkout, by the candy, I know where that is at Home Depot. They have a little case and you can get yourself a Gatorade, you can get yourself a Pepsi or a Dr. Pepper, whatever. It's right there. Now you can pick any can of soda there. If you want a church where a guy wears a tie or whatever, you can find church like that, it's great.

Find a Bible-teaching church that teaches salvation by grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone based on Scripture alone. That's the only arrangement that brings glory to God alone. And God is the purveyor of this. God is the author of all of this. And you take anything else. Right? Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Islam, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, I don't care what it is. If they're claiming that it is grace plus something else or faith plus something else or Christ plus some other merit. Right? You're drinking Round Up, is what I'm saying. And you're in big trouble. And so it is out of love that we say these things. We care about people enough to tell them the truth. And I know some of you don't like when we start talking about Catholics, right? We talk about Mormons. They're good people, those Mormons. I'm not saying... You can be a good person picking up turpentine and wanting to drink it but it's not good for you. Some things have to be right or there are catastrophic consequences.

Let's pray. God, we want to promote a biblical gospel, which means that we are saved as you've taught us in Scripture. As we read it and meditate on it and memorize it and give ourselves to study it. It's a gospel that comes and is based on because of grace alone. It is through faith alone. It is based on the meritorious work of Christ alone, and it is based on the information and the authority of Scripture alone. And we know that's one that you do from start to finish. You are the author and perfecter of our faith. And so it is to the glory of God alone. And so we don't want to be ashamed. We want to be unabashed in saying to our neighbors and friends and coworkers, listen, you can pick any bag of chips you want, but you



can't pick any religion you want. There's a religion that saves, that binds us to the gospel of grace and there is a religion that damns us because it's filled with other things. We cannot add to it. So God help us to be vigilant, to guard and protect. And even as it says in Jude 3, to contend earnestly for that "faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." Help us in that regard.

I pray in Jesus name. Amen.