

Acts 16:1-5

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[0 : 00] Please take your copy of God's Word and turn to Acts chapter 16. Acts chapter 16, our text for this morning is verses 1-5.

! Before we read this morning's text, let me remind you where we are in Luke's second narrative. We've got the Gospel according to Luke, and then this book we call the Acts of the Apostles most often.

I like to call it the Acts of the Risen Jesus Christ. We see that Jesus is working by the agency of the Holy Spirit in the lives of His disciples for the expansion of His church.

Beloved, this is our history. It's a wonderful thing to get to spend such a vast amount of time. It's going to be probably, I think, about two years that we'll be in the book of Acts. Considering this early church, these are our brethren.

At the end of chapter 14, we saw Paul and Barnabas complete their first missionary journey, returning to Antioch, where they were commissioned in the first place.

[1 : 07] At the beginning of chapter 15, false teaching reaches Antioch. People travel to Antioch, preaching this, Acts chapter 15, verse 1, But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.

So, Paul and Barnabas are sent to Jerusalem to seek clarity from the other apostles. These teachers, these false teachers have traveled from that region, So they go to make sure that they haven't erred in teaching that you must not be circumcised to be saved.

So they're sent to Jerusalem to seek clarity. At what's often called the Jerusalem Council, the apostles and elders in Jerusalem decidedly affirm that all that is necessary for salvation is faith in Jesus.

And then they give some further instruction in the form of a letter. And Clay came and spoke to us both about the decision they made, as well as the letter and the deliverance of it.

You can see in Acts chapter 15, verse 29, the further instruction. Abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality.

[2 : 29] And so we find in this further instruction, three cultural considerations. These were matters of offense to the Jews. Food sacrificed to idols, and blood, and from animals that had been strangled.

These would have been things that would have been offensive to a Jewish culture. So three cultural considerations, and one moral obligation, that is abstain from sexual immorality.

So this is the decision that's been made. The letter goes back to Antioch, and after some time, Paul and Barnabas decide to retrace their first missionary route to check on the churches established on their first journey.

We see that at the very end of chapter 15, beginning in verse 36. But conflict, in the form of a sharp disagreement, arises between them about whether or not to take John Mark along with them, which results in their parting ways.

Now we noted last week that the good result of this, what I would suggest, sinful conflict, was missionary multiplication. The one band of missionaries has now turned into two bands of missionaries as Barnabas goes west with John Mark to the island of Cyprus, and Paul heads north with Silas.

[3 : 53] Now Silas was one of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. He was both a Jew and a Roman citizen, so like Paul, he had the protection of the empire and could get entrance into the Jewish synagogues.

Silas was a perfect partner for Paul's second missionary journey, but Paul, and I'm going to guess, say likely due to his division with Barnabas, now seems to have a mind toward multiplication.

What happens when Silas and I part ways? What would come of that? So he seems to have a mind now toward multiplication. And so we see at the beginning of Acts chapter 16, verses 1 through 5, this bridge in our story.

Beloved, this is God's Word to us. It was written for His glory and our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

His promises are sure and His commands are good. Beginning in verse 1, Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra.

[5 : 03] A disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium.

Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

Now this morning, I just have two points. One, the first point we'll spend some time on, and the second will be very brief. The two points are, number one, the freedom to circumcise Timothy. And number two, the effect of circumcising Timothy. But before we get to those two points, let's first spend a little time on some textual explanations.

[6 : 09] We'll look at the first two verses. Now for your sake, on the back of the bulletin, I asked Andy this week to put a map of Paul's second missionary journey.

I don't know if you're like me, but it really helps me to be able to wrap my mind a bit around what's going on. I asked Andy to do this yesterday, and he did a great job of finding a map that the kids would enjoy coloring.

We think that it's in Italian. So if you're looking at the odd spellings across the map, I think you're smart enough to figure out the locations, but we're pretty sure it's an Italian map of these locations, which is why you may see some spellings a tad different, like check out Jerusalem down at the bottom.

Jerusalem is what it looks like. So anyway, that's what's happening here. So you've got, the island of Cyprus is not labeled on this map, but it's out there just up in that far right-hand corner, high right-hand corner of the Mediterranean Sea.

This is the place that Barnabas was from. This is the place that the missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas started out. They crossed over and went to the island of Cyprus. And then from the western coast of Cyprus headed north into the region where they finally ended their missionary journey and circled back down and around.

[7 : 27] This time, though, Barnabas heads to Cyprus. Paul and Silas head north and then hook a hard left to head their way to Derbe and Lystra.

So that gives you some idea of where they are. If you think of the first missionary journey as going clockwise, they're going now counterclockwise. back the other way.

And it's possible, it's probable, they do this so that they could pick up Timothy. Paul now having this mind toward multiplication, picking up Timothy to accompany them on the rest of that journey.

We find out a little bit about Timothy in this text. Timothy was a believer in Christ. The text says he was a disciple. In the Greek term for disciple, there simply means believer.

In fact, other places in the text. Referring to his mother, believer is the exact same Greek word. Likely converted on Paul and Barnabas' first trip.

[8 : 25] So when they traveled into this region before, it's been a couple of years now, it was likely when he was converted. We don't know that for sure. Certainly Christian ministry has been going on in this community since Paul and Barnabas' departure.

But it's likely that that was the case because in Paul's first letter to Timothy, he writes, 1 Timothy 1-2, to Timothy, my true child in the faith.

We can't know for sure that that's the case. Certainly Paul played a very fatherly role in his life. But it's likely that he was the one that proclaimed the gospel to him and Timothy came into the faith family as a result of his tutelage of him.

We also find out that Timothy's mother was a believer. Her name was Eunice. We see in our text the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer.

We find out in 2 Timothy 1-5, her name is Eunice, as well as the fact that his grandmother was also a believer. 2 Timothy 1-5, Paul writes, I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice, and now I am sure dwells in you as well.

[9 : 40] We also find out that his father was not a believer in Christ and that he was likely dead. So we get a little phrase in verse 1, but his father was a Greek.

The conjunction, but, refers both to Eunice's ethnicity and her faith. So you could read it this way, but his father was not a believer and his father was not a Jew.

It refers to both things. Not a believer and not a Jew. His father was a Greek. And the imperfect form of the verb was, rather than the present tense of the verb, suggests that he was dead.

He's already moved off the scene. So Timothy, as a young man, does not have a father, and Paul, in some sense, adopts him and takes him on this journey. We also find out in verse 2 that Timothy was faithful.

Verse 2 says, he was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Diconium. Luke records this for us in the specific way to say of the brothers, because the brothers are speaking well of a man because he's a brother, not because he was good at some particular skill.

[10 : 56] Like his bow staff skills were not excellent, and so he was spoken well of. But he was a man full of faith. The brothers considered him faithful. And because Timothy's father was Greek, he had not allowed Timothy to be circumcised.

It's likely that his mom and his grandmother would have wanted him to be circumcised, but his father prevented this from happening, which brings us to our first point from our text this morning. Number one, the freedom to circumcise Timothy.

So we see in verse 3, Paul wanted Timothy to go along with him, this faithful follower of Jesus, to go along with him. And he takes him and he circumcises him.

It seems that Paul actually performs a circumcision, although we can't be too sure. He takes him and he circumcises him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

That is, they all knew that he was not circumcised. So these Jews would have been aware of this fact that he had not been circumcised on the basis of who his father was.

[12 : 05] And this fact is what causes Paul to circumcise him. But why? Why? Paul was an ardent defender of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

He stood firm on that. There were no works. His whole trip to Jerusalem, the whole Jerusalem council thing was about him affirming what he had been teaching Gentile believers.

Listen to some of his words to the Galatian believers. This is a group, a church, who were beginning to believe the false teaching that they must be circumcised to be saved. This is some years later when Paul writes his letter to the Galatian church.

Join me, if you will, in the book of Galatians. I think you'll appreciate being there and seeing these texts. Remembering that Paul was a defender of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

And the question before us is, so why did he circumcise Timothy? So let's start in Galatians chapter 2, verses 15 and 16.

[13 : 13] So the scene is, what was often called the Judaizers, have come into the Galatian church and they've led them astray saying, oh no, no, believing in Jesus is good, but you must also be circumcised to be saved.

And Paul writes, we ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners. Yet we know that a person is not justified, found right before God, by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ.

So, we also, right, these people being Jews by birth, we also have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law.

Because by works of the law, no one will be justified, right? So justification comes by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.

Further, Galatians chapter 3, verses 1 through 3. Paul writes, oh foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

[14 : 23] Let me ask you only this. Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish?

Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Again, this defense against them altering their physical being to be found right before God.

Galatians chapter 5, verse 1. Paul writes, for freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Strong language, right? It's for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore. He's saying refuse to be circumcised because if you are thinking that you'll be saved, you're submitting yourself again to a yoke of slavery.

Paul had gone so far as refusing to have Titus circumcised. If you turn back a few pages now to Galatians chapter 2, verse 1. Paul is telling the story of traveling to Jerusalem, to the Jerusalem council that we have learned about in chapter 15.

[15:37] So he's now, many years later, he's recounting what he did that's recorded by Luke in Acts chapter 15. So Galatians chapter 2, verses 1 through 5, he says, Then after 14 years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.

That's that trip beginning of chapter 15. I went up because of a revelation and set before them, though privately before those who seemed influential, the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.

So I talked about that briefly a minute ago. He's preaching a gospel of justification or salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. This is what he's preaching. And because these Judaizers have come from Judea and made their way to Antioch, he wants to make sure that the message that they're preaching didn't come from the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem.

He wants to go affirm that. Have I screwed this up? Am I preaching the right and true gospel? The answer to that is yes. But verse 3, he says, But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.

So Titus, they refused to circumcise Titus. In one case with Timothy, Timothy is circumcised. In the other case, Titus is withheld from him. He was not forced to be circumcised.

[17:03] Verse 4, Yet because a false brother secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus so that they might bring us into slavery, to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

So men have come in and they're teaching, you must be circumcised to be saved. Works of the law justify you before God. And Paul, I'm assuming Barnabas and Titus and many others in the church, refused for Titus to be circumcised.

They stood their ground. They did the very thing that he encouraged them to do in Galatians 5.1. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

So that's the scene. This is that Paul. So why did Paul have Timothy circumcised? Wouldn't it have been better to prove that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, and Christ alone by making Timothy a case study?

He could have traveled the region and said, point proven. This is Timothy. You may not know it, but he's not circumcised. To make the very case?

[18:20] Paul doesn't seem to think so. And so we find an example here of Christian liberty being exercised properly. Freedom in Christ properly being exercised.

Timothy was free not to be circumcised. But for the sake of the souls of Jews in the region, he was. False teachers would have had Titus circumcised for his salvation, and Paul refused such a thing. But for the unbelieving Jews of the region, Timothy's uncircumcision would have proven to be a barrier for the understanding of the gospel of grace.

They wouldn't have even wanted to hear what they had to say traveling around with a man whose father was a Greek who was uncircumcised. It would have been a stumbling block for them to hear the gospel of Christ.

While Paul was sent by God as the apostle to the Gentiles, he maintained in the midst of all of his missionary journeying, he maintained an unwavering commitment to the Jewish people.

[19:32] Listen to his words from Romans 9, verses 1-3. I am speaking the truth in Christ. I am not lying. My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit. It's great, like he's loading that up, right?

I'm speaking the truth in Christ. I am not lying. My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit. He's saying, I am telling you the truth, verse 2, that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart, for I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.

Oh, beloved, that we would have a heart for people like that. That we would gladly give up our position in the kingdom that others might have a standing, a right standing with the Lord.

So, Timothy exercises his freedom by giving up a little thing for the sake of others. By giving up a little thing for the sake of others.

Now, a little thing, of course I'm speaking relatively here. It feels pretty weighty to me, what Timothy was willing to do for the sake of others.

[20 : 49] And so, I want to just take you to an Old Testament example of this so that we don't have to talk about the anatomy of what happened, but to show you the extent of what happened. So, turn to Genesis chapter 34.

This is one of my favorite Old Testament Bible stories. I can't tell you all that it means because I don't know. But this one rivals the she-bears, if you're familiar with the she-bear story.

Two things I want you to get from this. I am actually going to read it because it's always good when there's a long story to summarize it. I think it's best summarized here. I want you to appreciate the Old Testament.

If you're not an Old Testament reader, I hope you just go, whoa, what? And you appreciate that, so it's like a side hope for this. But then I also want you to know that what Timothy did as an adult man was kind of a big deal.

So, beginning in verse 1 of chapter 34, now Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the women of the land. And when Shechem, the son of Hamor, the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he seized her and lay with her and humiliated her.

[22 : 10] He raped her. Verse 3, And his soul was drawn to Dinah, the daughter of Jacob. He loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. So Shechem spoke to his father, Hamor, saying, Get me this girl for my wife.

Now Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah, but his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob held his peace until they came. Adult sons. And Hamor, the father of Shechem, went out to Jacob to speak with him.

The sons of Jacob had come in from the field as soon as they heard of it, and the men were indignant and very angry because he had done an outrageous thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing must not be done.

But Hamor spoke with him, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him to be his wife. Make marriages with us. Give your daughters to us and take our daughters for yourselves. You shall dwell with us and the land shall be open to you.

Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, Let me find favor in your eyes and whatever you say to me I will give. Ask me for as great a bride price as gift as you will and I will give you whatever you say to me.

[23 : 17] Only give me the young woman to be my wife. The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully because he had defiled their sister Dinah. This is where it gets really good. They said to them, We cannot do this thing to give you our sister to one who is uncircumcised for that would be a disgrace to us.

Only on this condition will we agree with you that you will become as we are by every male among you being circumcised. Then we will give our daughters to you and we will take your daughters to ourselves.

We will dwell with you and become one people. But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, we will take our daughter and we will be gone. So they asked the entire city, like Hamor and his son rule over to be circumcised, all the males.

All right, verse 18. Their words pleased Hamor and Hamor's son Shechem. And the young man did not delay to do the thing because he was delighted. I love that, to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob's daughter.

Now he was the most honored of all his father's house. So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, These men are at peace with us. Let them dwell in the land and trade in it.

[24 : 24] For behold, the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters as wives and let us give them our daughters. Only on this condition will the men agree to dwell with us to become one people, when every male among us is circumcised as they are circumcised.

Will not their livestock, their property, and all their beasts be ours? Only let us agree with them and they will dwell with us. And all who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

And here's the punchline. On the third day, when they were sore, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and came against the city while it felt secure and killed all the males.

They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with a sword and took Dinah out of Shechem's house and went away. I don't know what it means. But, a bunch of men who had been circumcised, adult men who had been circumcised, were slain by two guys.

It could not have been pleasant. So Timothy gives this up for the sake of others. Are you with me? Like, Paul says, hey, I want you to come with me, but there's this thing I need you to do.

[25 : 43] And Timothy lays that down. For the sake of others. He was free to say no. He could have refused. The gospel allowed that of him.

But he was willing to do this for others. Beloved, the grace of God to us is free, or else it would not be grace at all.

But the call to follow Christ is a costly call. He requires all of us. Every bit of us. Timothy's sacrifice was a little thing.

But it was only little in comparison to the eternal state of unbelieving Jews. Paul makes sacrifice as well in the same and many various ways.

You can read about this in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 verses 19 through 22. Paul said this, verse 19 for though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all that I might win more of them.

[26 : 49] You see what he's saying? Even though the regulations that people want to place on me, the rules that they want to follow, I'm free from those things, but yet I submit myself to them that I might win more of them.

Verse 20, to the Jews I became as a Jew in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law, though not being myself under the law, that I might win those under the law.

To those outside the law I became as one outside the law, not being outside the law of God, but under the law of Christ, that I might win those outside the law.

to the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

So what Paul is saying is for the sake of weaker faith people, we make decisions, we practice our Christian liberty in a way that's good for their soul.

[28 : 00] There are many examples. You can go almost an endless list of gray areas that we have to navigate as followers of Jesus Christ. I just want to give you two in brief.

The first one is the matter of alcohol. Much talked about in Southern Baptist denomination. There's always a new article, there's always some new motion being passed.

You almost can't go to a Southern Baptist meeting without some talk of just saying no, to alcohol. alcohol. The Bible doesn't do that to us.

It doesn't do that. It doesn't place that as a law on us. So those of you who are under 21, this is not permission to drink. Obey the law of our land. But for those of you who are over, you have the freedom to drink.

Alcoholic beverages, right? Not to become drunk, but to drink. This is permissive. And there are many people in our age that in order to practice their Christian liberty, make a real big deal about a drinking alcohol, right?

[29 : 00] As if they're trying to show how glorious the gospel is because they get to drink lots of beer. Ridiculous. And in fact, I think a lot of the strong response within the Southern Baptist Convention against alcohol is because of those idiots.

I know someone who has stated, and I hope he's grown past this, but that his mission is to redeem beer drinking. What does that mean? What does that even mean redeem beer drinking?

So we're given permission, but oh, we should be careful about the how. There are many people who will sit in rows in our churches who would be offended by me even suggesting that it's okay, who would say, I can't even listen to this guy.

I'm sorry. All I know is to preach the Bible. But we ought not rub things in other people's faces because we can. You are practicing your Christian liberty in not drinking as well.

In deciding that a circumstance is not the best circumstance for such a thing. We're deciding altogether that you may not. And so we practice Christian liberty in many varied ways, but it's always aimed, rightly practiced, at gospel proclamation, at gospel advancement.

[30 : 27] So we don't feel like someone has their thumb down on us because they're weaker in the faith than we are. But we pick that up and we accept it for the sake of their soul.

The way I dress on Sunday is much simpler, much less complicated, right? Topic. I have the freedom to preach in flip-flops and shorts and a t-shirt.

God does not look at what I'm wearing on a Sunday morning and then empower my preaching because I'm wearing a jacket or a tie occasionally with my shirt's tucked in.

I could be much more comfortable on a Sunday morning. I have the freedom to do that, but I am legitimately concerned that someone comes in amongst us and can't even hear the words coming out of my mouth because they see me as disrespectful to the position that I hold.

We live in a culture that thinks in those terms. We live in a culture where many people grew up in churches where the pastor always had on a suit. Usually an ill-fitting suit because he doesn't get paid enough to buy nice suits.

[31 : 34] I would wear a suit every Sunday morning for the sake of your soul. And I hate wearing suits, but I would do it for the sake of your soul because I don't think that this is a crowd that typically cares about such a thing.

I don't. If I began to think that that was the case, I definitely would. So we consider, we practice liberty, and I'm not practicing my liberty when I put on a jacket Sunday morning.

Did you guys notice I have one jacket I wear on Sundays? Because I like it. But I'm practicing my Christian liberty when I put it on. Right? I've been set free.

I've been set free from the law. So putting on this jacket is a practice of liberty, not a neglect of Christian liberty. So, Paul circumcises Timothy for this reason, for the sake of people's souls, so that Timothy would not be a stumbling block in their traveling and in their entrance into the synagogues.

Timothy would not have been allowed in the synagogues having been uncircumcised. So he's able now to participate fully in that tradition and share the gospel with people.

[32 : 47] So he circumcises Timothy and then verse 4 says they went on their way through the cities and it's so fascinating that the way Luke records this, that what they're doing is they're delivering to them for observance the decisions that have been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.

The thing they're going and doing is teaching all of the churches that they don't have to be circumcised. It's the very thing that they're teaching them. Hey, don't be circumcised, but be culturally sensitive. Wasn't that the drive of that message?

Remember, abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what has been strangled and from sexual immorality. These cultural considerations, matters of offense to the Jews and this one moral obligation.

You see, Paul understands the spirit of the letter. Paul doesn't accept it as just a mere list, a new law, but he understands the spirit of the letter. And he applies this idea of cultural consideration of not being stumbling blocks for the Jews to the very matter that the letter sought to unburden the Gentile believers from.

He takes along a young man who will be a leader in the church and a missionary companion for him and has him circumcised to aid in bringing people to faith in Christ.

[34 : 04] On your bulletin, the quote from A.W. Tozer, who was a 20th century pastor and author, he said this, Be hard on yourself and easy on others. Carry your own cross, but never lay one on the back of another.

Paul preached in delivering this message for observance. Paul preached salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone.

And all of that lived out in love. It becomes the grateful response to what God has done for us in Christ, that we then turn and love others.

And we lay down our own will for the sake of others. So this is the freedom that was exercised in the circumcision of Timothy.

And then second and brief, the effect of circumcising Timothy. It's not really an entirely fair second point because the effect we see in verse 5 is not just because Timothy is circumcised.

[35 : 13] So I hope you'll catch what I'm trying to say. Paul's missionary troop is traveling about. They're delivering a message. It's a gospel message. And the gospel preached and practiced always results in fruit.

The gospel preached and practiced always results in fruit. Verse 5, so because of, right? Not just because of Timothy's circumcision, but because of his circumcision and the message being preached.

So, the churches were strengthened in the faith and they increased in numbers daily. So the gospel preached and practiced always results in fruit.

The fruit of what? The fruit of increased faith. The church is being built up in faith. And the fruit of new faith.

Faith. They're increasing in numbers as well. Not only are they growing in their depth, but they're also growing in their breadth. as the gospel is both preached and practiced.

[36 : 29] I hope it's becoming familiar to you. There it is up on the screen. The vision statement of our church, which is not unique for our church, shouldn't be anyway, that our church exists to glorify God, to magnify His name, by experiencing, proclaiming, and displaying the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things, to all peoples.

And that derives at the very point that I'm making now. That we both know that Jesus Christ is supreme to anything else, to anything we might be able to do under Christian liberty.

Christ is better. And all that I have should be leveraged to have more of Him. To experience Him deeper. To be known by Him greater.

All of this should be leveraged at that very point. That we would know Christ as supreme in our experience. And that will move us, it will drive us out to both say that to be true and to live it to be true as well.

Practiced and preached. And I am so challenged by verses like verse 5 of chapter 16. As they're doing these very simple things, traveling around, preaching the gospel, Timothy is now circumcised, and they're strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

[37 : 53] What a phenomenal thing to have happen in the life of our church. So here's some simple application for you. First, are you saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone?

beloved, I fear that we live in a day and age where people have been sold a cheap grace gospel, a crossless Christianity, Christianity, and a crossless Christianity, it's a Christless Christianity, and it's not Christianity at all.

That you have been told, growing up, young, likely, possibly, in churches, that simply, going through some motions, taking some steps, doing a few things, repeat after me, sign a card, get dunked in water, and you're a follower of Jesus.

And all of those things may have been part of your story of coming to faith in Jesus Christ, but I fear that there are countless people who believe they're Christians and are not Christians at all.

So you have to ask yourself an honest question. When I think about why it is I'm a Christian, is that because of things that I did or because God saved me by His grace?

[39 : 14] The picture is, those of you who like good rap music, Shilin, we're not drowning in the ocean, and God throws us a rope, and we reach out and grab it.

The picture is that we are dead on the bottom of the ocean, and Christ leaps in, and He swims down, and He pulls us up, and He breathes life in our lungs, right?

As that's your experience, right? I was a wretched enemy of God, and God woke me up in Christ. He saved me.

Are you saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone? Is your righteousness in Christ's person and work or in your working?

Secondly, if you are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, I hope you have a confidence of that this morning. What might God be requiring of you in order that some might be saved?

[40 : 19] How could God be suggesting to you that you reorient your life so that some might be saved? Is there anything you can think of now that you would be unwilling to give up?

Anything. Would you be unwilling to give up in order to see the church strengthened in the faith and increasing in numbers daily? I would suggest to you that there are things like that.

That if you would ask God to search your heart and take some time to consider what you might hold on to that's not Jesus, things that you worship instead of Him, and if you would by grace let those things go, we would see things begin to happen.

The church strengthened, increasing in numbers daily. Wouldn't that be a wonderful blessing? Let's pray together.