

Living Letters

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[0:00] 2 Corinthians 2. 2 Corinthians 2.

We're going to be reading into chapter 3 and up to verse 6. Now, when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, I still had no peace of mind because I did not find my brother Titus there.

So I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia. But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.

For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one, we are the smell of death. To the other, the fragrance of life.

And who is equal to such a task? Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.

[1:34] Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody.

You show that you are a letter from Christ. The result of our ministry, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God. Not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts.

Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant. Not of the letter, but of the spirit. For the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.

Let's hear the preaching of God's word. Well, we're here in 2 Corinthians chapter 3 for this morning.

[2:46] I want to ask you, what kind of letter are you? Now, usually when we think of letters, we think of those paper things written with ink that come in an envelope in a mailbox.

But the Apostle Paul tells us here that there are such things as living letters. Indeed, if you are a real Christian, you are a letter from Christ.

A letter of recommendation that speaks well of his gospel and of his ministers. Now, wherever a true work of God is happening, Satan does not lag too far behind with his counterfeit works.

And so it was in the first century, as the gospel of Christ began to spread and bear fruit, charlatans appeared. Preachers who were no more than con men out to make money.

Here in chapter 2 and verse 17, Paul says there were many in his day who were peddling the word of God for profit. They were simply in it for the money.

[4:00] And Paul himself was being accused in the church at Corinth of being just one more traveling swindler who's in it for the money. And so much of his second letter takes up his own defense against that false charge being made against him.

Now, how would people know that Paul was a genuine servant of Christ rather than a self-serving minister? Well, letters of recommendation are one way of dealing with this problem.

Someone well known to the hearers could write a letter recommending and vouching for the good character of the preacher and say to them, listen, brothers and sisters, to the apostle Paul, he's the real thing.

I know him. I've seen how he lives. And we see Paul doing this sort of thing himself, sending letters recommending certain Christian workers. He does so for Timothy, for Phoebe, for Mark, Titus, and Apollos and others.

We're familiar with this sort of thing as it's done with books being written. How can I know if a book is worth my money or, even more than that, my time to read?

[5:24] Well, people write recommendations for the book. On the back cover, you see them. And the best ones are from well-known honored figures.

In the church, if you're reading a Christian book, and your book will receive a real boost in sales, if you can get a recommendation from J.I. Packer or R.C. Sproul or John MacArthur or John Piper, recommending to the public this book that you have written.

Once in a while, I'm asked to write a letter of recommendation for someone applying to college or applying for a scholarship or a job or for some ministry to serve God in.

And the screening committees want letters of recommendations or letters of reference. And so I write a letter recommending, vouching for your good character.

And the more money you pay me, the better things I can say about you. Letters of recommendation that put beyond question the character of the individual.

[6:30] So in Corinth, there were these who were undermining Paul's ministry, spreading rumors about him, casting doubts upon his motives, questioning his very apostleship.

And in response, Paul says to the Corinthian church in verse 1, are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Are we setting out a letter of self-recommendation?

That doesn't usually go far, does it? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you?

Surely, Corinth is one place on earth where I, the Apostle Paul, don't need a letter of recommendation. And the reason is, verse 2, you yourselves are our letter written on our hearts, known and read by everybody.

So that in seeing you, Corinthian believers, people have living proof of my ministry that it's from God and not from men. In 1 Corinthians 9 and verse 2, he calls the Corinthian believers the seal of my apostleship.

[7:48] You've proved me to be authentic, even though I may not be an apostle to others. Surely I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

Look at yourselves. Look at what you are. If you want to know if this ministry is of God, you yourselves are all the letter of recommendation I need.

Now, remember what they were when Paul first came to Corinth. What did he find in Corinth? 1

Corinthians 6, 9 through 11 says, Many of them were sexually immoral.

They were living in sin city. The most permissive place, perhaps, on the earth. Many of their homes were being destroyed by adultery. Some were male prostitutes.

Others were homosexuals. All of them worshipped idols. Some were thieves. Others were swindling businessmen. Some were drunkards being ruined by their addiction, unable to break free from it.

[8:54] Others were greedy, living only for themselves. And others were slanderers, tearing others down by speaking evil of them. That's what some of you were, he says to them.

But you were washed. You were sanctified. You were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. So what the gospel had done for the Corinthians could not be missed. It could be read on their faces. It could be heard from their lips. It could be noticed in their marriage and in their family relationships and in their financial dealings. And it could be seen in their transformed lives of holiness.

These who had been slaves of sin were set free. Self-destructive, wasted lives were now productive. God-forgetting lives were transformed.

Their idols were abandoned. And a new ethic now ruled their heart to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. And their neighbor as themselves.

[10:05] Such changes do not go unnoticed by neighbors and friends. Their lives were a letter known and read by everyone.

Those who knew them would say to them, you've changed. You're not the same man that I once knew. As one old slave to a master once said, you're the same man on the outside, but you're different on the inside.

Now, living letters are the best letters because even those who cannot read or write can read these letters. They can read people.

They are known and read by everyone. So such living letters of a new life said all that needed to be said about Paul's ministry.

That it was the truth. It was owned of God. Look at its fruits. Brothers and sisters, do you realize that wherever you go, you are being known and read like a book, like a letter as well?

[11:14] Your immediate and extended family members are reading you. Those living and working and studying next to you are reading you. Those at the places where you regularly do business are reading you.

They're reading you. What are they reading? In you. Well, verse three tells us what they were reading in the Corinthians.

He says, you show that you are a letter from Christ. As people looked at these Corinthian believers, something was shown.

Something was clearly made manifest. And it was this, that they were a letter from Christ. Now this is interesting. Even though these lives were changed through Paul's ministry.

Notice they're not called a letter from Paul. He says, you show you're a letter from Christ. Christ is the one who is actively working.

[12:18] He's the one writing. They are not changed. They are not changed. These are not changes that Paul himself had produced in the Corinthians.

But only that God himself could make. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was walking through London. And a drunk in the gutter grumbled to him and mumbled to him, Mr. Spurgeon.

And he said, do you remember me? I'm one of your converts. And he said, I can see that you are. You're clearly not one of Christ's converts. Because Christ has come to save us, not in our sins, but from our sins.

And all that he saves from sin, he keeps. And that not for a day, a week, a month, a year, but forever and ever, he is able to save us to the uttermost.

[13:22] It's Christ who had transformed these lives. They're his letter. They are his workmanship. And so he is the one writing the letter of recommendation for Paul's ministry.

How's that for an endorsement? A letter from Christ to say, this is my man. I've sent him with this message. Listen to him.

So, Christian, what are others reading in you? Does your life speak clearly and manifestly, unmistakably, of the transforming power of Jesus Christ?

That he has set you free from your sin. That a supernatural Christ lives in you, empowering a love that is unknown to this world.

Producing patience and kindness and gentleness and self-control. What are you saying, reading in the world's eyes?

[14:29] Notice in verse 3 that Paul calls this letter from Christ the result of our ministry. You are a letter from Christ ministered by us.

The result of our ministry. So, Paul was ministering. Indeed, as you go back to Acts 18 and you see him come to Corinth, he was preaching, he was teaching there in Corinth for a year and a half.

But there was something more than a man speaking words. That's what he's saying here. More was happening that cannot be explained by any man. Indeed, in Galatians 2 and verse 8, Paul says, God was at work in my ministry to you Gentiles.

The all-surpassing power of God was being released upon his hearers. And though Paul was ministering and preaching and teaching and speaking, it was the Lord who was writing.

It was the Lord, the supernatural Son of God, who was working in and through the Apostle Paul. But we're not to discount the human element.

[15:37] It was through the Apostle that Jesus was writing. The result of our ministry. So there's human instrumentality in God's work of salvation.

We see that. Paul was an instrument in the Redeemer's hand through whom he wrote, through which he wrote. I wonder if we're struck by that.

Are we amazed that God is stooped, that in saving men, to use human beings as his instruments to bring others to faith in Jesus Christ.

It's amazing that he comes and does through men's ministry what no minister can do. And setting people free from sin. First of all, bringing them to their senses, convicting them of sin, calling them, opening their hearts so that they're able to repent and believe the gospel, breaking the power of reigning sin, changing the direction of their mind, their affections and their will, making them hunger and thirst for righteousness.

It's the Lord Jesus alone who can so reorder the life, bringing it into conformity with God's laws, enabling them to put to death the misdeeds of the body, teaching rebel hearts to pray, to turn away from self-dependence and make us God-dependent.

[17:06] That's the work of Christ through his servants. So let's be encouraged to know that Christ has chosen to do his saving work through weak and frail instruments.

Indeed, Paul says, through jars of clay. What are we? Jars of clay. We have this wonderful gospel, but it's in jars of clay. Why? So that the all-surpassing power of the ministry might be seen clearly to be from God and not from men.

Let's be humbled that we're just secretaries through whom he dictates the letter, through whom he writes. We're just pens.

We're just instruments. Christ is writing. But notice as well in verse 3, he's writing through the Holy Spirit. He says in verse 3, you are letters from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.

Christ did not write this letter with perishable, fading ink, but rather with the Spirit of the living God whose writing is dynamic, it's living, it's powerful, it's enduring.

[18:27] It's not by might, not by men's might or power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord. And that's how Jesus was writing. It was through the Spirit, with the Spirit of the living God.

As chapter 3 and verse 18 says, that they now were all with unveiled faces contemplating the Lord's glory and being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

by the Spirit, Christ is writing more and more, shaping their hearts into His likeness. Paul says to the Corinthians in his first letter, my message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men, but on God's power.

So the gospel came, not only with words to Corinth, but it came with power, with the Holy Spirit, with deep conviction.

The same Spirit of God that hovered over the dark and empty and formless earth in the very beginning of creation, bringing order out of chaos and light out of darkness, that same Spirit of God is the one who brings light to the darkness of hearts and orders their lives according to God's will.

[19:56] God's will. So Christ is the one writing this letter and He writes through His Holy Spirit as ministered through the Apostle Paul.

Next we're told where this letter was written. Verse 3, written not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts or fleshy hearts.

So this writing of God the Spirit is not something merely external to them, but it's within their innermost being. The heart, not that muscle that pumps blood, but the heart, which is the control center of the person.

The mind as it thinks, the affections as they desire, the will as it chooses. There in the heart is where the Spirit of God is writing. Flesh feels whereas stone does not.

And there God writes His heart, His law. Now the language used here is a clue as to what is being written on the heart. What is Christ by His Spirit writing on the heart?

[21:10] Well, it's the law of God. Paul is contrasting God's law as it was given in the Old Covenant at Mount Sinai with God's law in the New Covenant in Jesus Christ as the following verses show.

And he's saying that on Mount Sinai in the Old Covenant, God engraved His law where? On tablets of stone. The only time God engraved anything on tablets of stone was the Ten Commandments. But now in the New Covenant, God is writing His law on tablets of human hearts. Same God writing, same law written, but in two different places.

Tablets of stone in the Old Covenant, tablets of human hearts in the New. In the Old Covenant, the law was written on tablets of stone outside of a man.

And so that law on those tablets came to man and it applied external pressure to the man. Thou shalt, thou shalt not.

[22:22] But it had no power. It gave man no power to change and to obey that law. But in the New Covenant, His law is written inside of human hearts.

Applying an inward pressure, an inward power, an urging to obey. And so, there is power to keep the law.

When it's merely an outside force, it comes with condemnation because we can't keep it. But as it comes through Christ in the New Covenant, it is put in our hearts where there is therefore power to keep and to obey God's commands.

Same law, but in Christ, a different heart attitude toward it. So what we have then is the outward law is met by an inward echo in the heart.

So the outward law of God comes saying, seek my face and my heart says, thy face, Lord, will I seek. The outward law of God says, thou shalt not covet in the inward hearts says, I don't want to covet.

[23 : 33] You're right, Lord. Help me not to covet. I want to do that. The renewed heart echoes back what the law of God says to do and not do so that the law is no longer burdensome, 1 John chapter 5 says.

And so now, with Christ in the yoke, his yoke is an easy and light yoke. Now we need to appreciate the fact that the spirit of the living God is still writing the Ten Commandments. He's still writing God's abiding moral law. But he's writing them not on tablets of stone, but on fleshly hearts, human hearts.

So the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant is not that it sets aside the Ten Commandments for some better law.

No, the reason the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant is that it puts what was once written on stone tablets into hearts. It puts it on our desires, on our very minds, our very affections, affections, so that we want to do what God's Holy Commandments command us to do.

[24 : 52] Now this is what Paul is referring to in this succeeding context here in chapter 3. This writing of God's law in the heart by the Spirit is a clear reference to the New Covenant.

And Paul says, my ministry is a ministry of the New Covenant, not of the letter alone which kills, but of the Spirit which gives life. And this is the surpassing glory of the New Covenant.

This is what makes it better than the Old Covenant, that it writes the law of God on our hearts. Now can you remember, Christians, the prophets of the Old Testament foretelling the coming of this New Covenant, that God is going to make a covenant?

He spoke through Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, many of the prophets. And he said, a day is coming when I will make a new covenant with my people.

When I will put my law in their minds and write it upon their hearts. When I will take out the stony heart and give them a heart of flesh.

[25 : 59] When I will put my spirit in them and move them to follow my decrees and to be careful to keep my laws. So there would not be just the outward command, thou shalt, but that there would be an inner impulse and power by the work of the Spirit to obey.

The work of the Spirit working in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. So the gospel does not abolish the law but enables us to obey it.

The Spirit filled life, the life transformed by the power of Christ is a life lived according to God's commandments. So this writing of God's law in the heart by the Spirit that Paul's talking about in verse 3 is a clear reference to the new covenant.

it was being fulfilled in the hearts of these Corinthian believers as from the heart they obeyed God's commands. And it is being fulfilled today as well in hearts where Christ by his Spirit is putting his law in the hearts of people transforming their lives bringing them from lawbreakers to law keepers. Now you know that letters are written to be read. what Christ was writing on the inside of their hearts couldn't just stay there. It was seen outwardly.

[27 : 31] It was shown. It was manifested. Everyone was reading and knowing it. And that's what gave Paul's ministry a note of authority of divine authority.

That's what gave Paul's ministry a commendation. That's what recommended it as the real thing. Now think of this. That's the same reason God gave to the apostles the gifts of signs and wonders and miracles.

Why did God give that to his prophets and apostles? It was that it might validate and verify their message. The message of these men, these apostles and prophets are from God.

How do you know that? Because they do what only God can do. They're doing these signs and wonders that show that they have the signs of those who are sent by God. So listen to their words. Do you realize, Christian, that your holy life of law keeping is to do for the gospel message what the miracles once did for it? Your holy life, your changed life, is to be a verifying, authorizing, recommending, influence, that this is the true gospel.

[28 : 53] Look at its results in my life. A sign pointing to a power more than human, a wonder whenever any sinner is saved and transformed by the grace of God.

Never underestimate the miracle of a changed life shaped according to God's moral law. It's a powerful influence, a powerful witness to the saving power of the gospel of Christ. Known and seen by everyone, why does he not cheat when he had an easy opportunity to do so? Why is he so unselfish in an environment where everyone is out for himself? Why is she so humble that she humbles herself and asks forgiveness when she wrongs other people? You see, the gospel claims to make men holy, humble, and loving. Holy. God's law is the transcript for holiness. Humble, confessing our sins, considering others better than ourselves, serving, not self-seeking.

[30 : 12] The gospel claims to make men loving, loving God with all the heart, and loving our neighbor as ourselves. For by this all men will know you're my disciples if you love one another.

You see, such a life is a letter that commends and adorns the gospel ministry. Rosaria Butterfield was a lesbian, feminist professor at Syracuse University. and when promise keepers came to town promoting biblical family roles, she wrote an article in the local paper in defense of homosexuality and blasted the Christian right. And as expected, fan mail and hate mail poured in. Well, in the mail was a letter from a reformed Presbyterian pastor who did not agree with her position at all.

But she didn't know which pile to put his letter in. Because though he did not agree with her, he clearly did not hate her in the way he wrote to her, but lovingly challenged her with questions that she had not considered before.

[31 : 31] Where should I put it? So she threw it in the waste basket. But then she went and dug it out and read it again. It haunted her. She just couldn't dismiss it.

She contacted the pastor thinking that an interview with him would be good for her research into the Christian right. And so he and his wife invited her for supper into their home.

And this lesbian feminist was struck by their love and by his humility when in his prayer before the meal he confessed specific sins to God for which he needed mercy from the Lord.

And that began a long relationship. She began to read through her Bible attending their church where God's love again and humility and truth were on display.

And eventually she repented of her sin. and trusted in the Lord Jesus to save her. Such were some of you. But you were washed.

[32 : 45] You were sanctified. You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. You see Rosaria met some Christians who were letters from Christ saying listen to this message.

God's It's real. There's something genuine here. Don't dismiss it. They had the characteristic marks of holiness and love and humility and truth.

Their lives were commending and adorning the doctrines of God our Savior. and they became the instruments in the hands of the Redeemer that brought her to faith in Jesus Christ.

The very faith she once hated and fought against. She is now promoting and sharing whenever she can. She's embraced her God-given sexuality and role in life.

She married a Reformed Presbyterian pastor. Not that one that had talked with her but another man. And she's now raising her family to the glory of God.

[33 : 59] She has opportunity to share her testimony in many different venues. And she's written a book in which she describes her conversion. It's called The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert.

Rosaria herself, you see, has become a letter from Christ known and read by everybody. Written not with ink but with the spirit of the living God.

Not on tablets of stone but on tablets of fleshly human hearts. I want to say to every one of you Christians, you are such letters from Christ.

You say, oh, but I don't have such a fascinating testimony. You only say that if you don't realize how lost you were. just how hard your heart was, just how hostile that heart was toward God and His commandments, how dead in sin you were, how self-centered, how helpless and without strength. It is nothing less than a miracle that any of you or me are Christians today. Christ is now writing by His Spirit in our hearts that which was not found there before.

[35 : 19] That you love God? That you want to love Him more? That you love your neighbor? That you care about God's commandments?

That you are still repenting of sin and still trusting in Jesus to save you? Are you kidding? Something has happened to you. Something almighty, something supernatural.

It's like life from the dead. It's like resurrection from a grave. It's like a new birth. It's like a new heart. Yes, you are a living letter from Christ that commends the gospel to a world of lost sinners. Sunk in sin and guilt and shame. Tonight, we'll have the privilege of hearing the testimonies and baptizing two more in whose hearts Christ is now writing by his spirit. They were lost, but now they've been found. The Lord Jesus interrupted their lives with saving power.

[36 : 25] He washed and sanctified and justified them, and he's begun to write a new chapter, nay, a whole new letter. So come tonight and rejoice in the power of the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.

Used to be in our country that Christianity, the church, and ministers were highly regarded by society at large, but all of that is changing, isn't it? how does the world, the television, the media, the movies present Christians, church-going people, Christian pastors today?

Well, very often they're the bumbling idiots, they're the butt of jokes who are not to be taken seriously, or worse, they're raving madmen spreading hate and a menace to society.

And we must say to our shame that no doubt some of this is well-deserved. The hypocrisy and worldliness of the church at large cannot be hidden anymore.

The scandals of unfaithful ministers are a stench in the world's nostrils. And this has given the world the occasion to write us all off. All churches, all ministers, all Christians, as if they were a bunch of phonies.

[37 : 53] And brothers and sisters, we need to realize this is the climate in which God has put us and is now calling on us to let our light shine into that darkness.

Let us not miss this opportunity. We're not the first to face such a challenge where the gospel and Christianity is dismissed. Nearly 300 years ago, Henry Scougal, a minister, wrote a little book entitled *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*.

And the evangelist George Whitefield said, I never knew what true religion was until God sent this excellent treatise to me. And in the preface, Scougal speaks of the challenge of overcoming prevailing prejudices against Christianity.

He could be writing today. The world then, as it is now, prejudiced against Christianity, what will convince the world?

How will they be convinced of the truth and the excellency of our most holy faiths, Google asks. Will it be by more apologists coming forward with their reasons for the faith?

[39 : 08] No, he says, it's as those who profess and embrace the Christian religion live in a most holy, innocent, and exemplary way. The world needs to see the life of God in the soul of man, in the soul of Rosarius, in the souls of husbands and wives and children and parents and workers and students.

This is the only argument that is lacking, he says, to convince the world of the truth of our religion, holy lives carry more weight with men than any discourses and reasonings. He says, the early Christian apologists writing in defense of Christianity would appeal to the lives of the Christians to prove their doctrines to be holy and true.

Behold how they love one another. Where do you find that in the world? And even the heathen writers said, they take care not only of their own needy people, but even of our people better than we take care of our own.

And so the apologists would say, this is the true gospel, look at the fruits of the gospel, look what the gospel does when it comes to any man, woman, family, society, town. Look.

And nowadays we say, don't judge Christianity by its followers. That's lame. If they can't judge it by us, who will they judge it by?

[40 : 35] Did Jesus not say by this, all men will know that you are my disciples? If you have love for one another. are they not to learn of the reality of true religion by the lives of those professing it, by reading the living letters sent by Christ through the Holy Spirit writing on men?

Schugel says, no small cause for the world's prejudice against Christianity is that they simply do not see professing Christians living as if they really believed it were true.

true. And so I had to think about that. John, you claim to believe that hell is real. Do you live that way?

Do I evangelize the lost as if I really believed there was a hell? You claim to believe that there are treasures in heaven.

Would anyone looking at my pocketbook say, I really do believe that? Do we really believe it's better to give than to receive?

[41:47] What do I have to prove it? Do we really believe that his commandments are not burdensome? Is it seen in my joyful obedience? Do we really believe that loving God is the greatest duty of all?

do I love him without a rival? Do I believe that the second is like unto the first, that I love my neighbor as myself? What neighbors have had me love them like I love myself?

No small part of the prejudice against Christianity is that as they look at us, as the world looks at us, they see Christians, professing Christians, living as if these things were really not true.

What is needed is nothing short of real religion, the life of God in the soul of man. So there's a great need in our day for these living letters from Christ, whose lives adorn the doctrines of God our Savior and commend to the world a Savior who alone can save from sin, who reflect in their lives a holiness producing power, its love and truth, its humility and generosity.

Brothers and sisters, I cannot tell you enough how much your lives have commended the gospel, the work of Christ in this place, as I have been out and about and people have seen and heard and you are known and read and how that commends the gospel that is preached in this place.

[43:40] Oh, how Christ deserves to have clearer letters. What if no one in your neighborhood knew anything about the work of the gospel at this place other than that they knew that you go here?

You're a part of this work. would that be another reason to take interest and to visit or just another reason to stay away and to dismiss it all?

You see, you're a living letter. Another page is being written today. What will be written this week? Oh, bless God that he by his spirit is writing in our hearts.

So whatever happens, conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel. And I want to ask you, are you still lost this morning? Are these things not true of you?

You're not a letter from Christ. The law of God is outward. It just comes and condemns you. But you don't have it in your heart. You don't have the Savior. You don't have the spirit, the power to keep.

[44:49] Such a life is impossible. It's as impossible as a branch that's severed from a vine ever bearing fruit. You're disconnected from the source. And so your life can only produce the fruit of the flesh and not the fruit of the spirit.

You need to get into Christ by faith. And then from that fruitful vine you will bear the fruits that commends the Savior and the gospel that has saved you.

this is the testimony that God has given us eternal life. And this life is in his son. He who has the son has life.

But he who has not the son of God has not life. Let's pray. Oh our father in heaven we thank you for the Savior.

We thank you for what he has done in the place of sinners to make us right with you. We thank you for the Holy Spirit whom you have sent in the hearts of every one of your people to give us new hearts.

[46:04] Hearts on which your laws and your commands are written to empower us, to move us, to enable us to will and to do the very things that please you.

And oh we believe that our Savior is worthy of having lives that are like letters of commendation to the gospel. Forgive us Lord where we send the wrong signal to this world about you.

About the truths of our religion that you've revealed to us. And oh send your spirit to our hearts.

Remember those new covenant promises to put it into our minds and to write it on our hearts.

And come and write it deeper upon our affections and into our minds that it might be a very part of us that the world might see something more of that transforming grace that's found only in Christ.

Use Rosaria Butterfield to bring glory to you in lives that are broken and shattered by sin. And use us to point a needy world to our great Savior and to this glorious gospel that Jesus saves from sin.

[47:21] We ask in his name. Amen. Amen.