

My name is Adam Thompson. For those of you who are here for the first time, I am a pastor here on staff at the Dallas campus. Welcome. It is indeed a privilege to present to you today. Today's message is not easy for me, as all the messages I preach are not easy. Because when you preach on God's Word, you see your imperfections. And this one has indeed been a hard one for God to filter my ugliness in light of His word. Nevertheless, God's power is made perfect in my weakness. Today's message is kind of like the movie *Liar, Liar*. Jim Carey's character was a guy who told lies, and then there was a point in the movie where he could do nothing but tell the truth. But he didn't just tell the truth; he told what I would call the honest, TMI (Too Much Information) truth. I'll give you an example. When I came back from Palestine, if you came up to me and said, "Adam, how are you doing?," I could give you a type of truth and say, "Okay." But if we're talking about the TMI truth, I would respond, "Other than the fact that I have explosive diarrhea and bad gas, I am okay." That's the difference between those types of truths. In light of that illustration, I believe that is the reality that God called me to while in Sudan when He revealed this message to present it over there, and it's the reality of the message that I want to present to you today. We will continue to see this glass ceiling on our relationships with the Lord and with other people if we continue to use vague language, if we continue to use safe language with ourselves and with our sins. If we continue to tell a type of truth but really not the truth that really speaks to what the Lord needs to hear in order to free us from ourselves.

This was flushed out in a conversation I had with a guy and long story short, we walked for quite some time, about a year, in a discipleship program. And it came to this conversation. There was a guy that lied, he cheated, he used women for sex and he blatantly took advantage of the servants of the Lord. There are some things I don't have patience for, but I really don't have patience for people who take advantage of God's flock blatantly. So we were on the phone having this conversation back and forth, and I call him out on these things and say, "You blatantly did this." And he says, "Well you know, I was struggling, and I was trying to find myself. I felt like I couldn't be honest, and I didn't know what I was doing." And I said, "Stop right there. You and I won't get anywhere, you won't get anywhere with the Lord and you won't get anywhere with people when you use vague language." And I told him, "You knew exactly what you were doing. From day one, I told you that you were either going to be the guy who confesses or he has to get caught. And you blatantly knew that you could sleep with this woman, you blatantly knew that this person would give you money and you blatantly knew that you could take advantage of God's anointed. Correct me if I'm wrong." He says, "You're right." I told him, "And so in your relationship, if you want forgiveness in people and be for the Lord, you need to use specific language. You need to come back to those people and go, 'I went towards you because I knew I could use you to get money. I'm a manipulator. I knew I could use you for fornication, and so that's why I picked up the phone and called you. I premeditated my sin.' That's different from, 'I didn't know what I was doing.'" That is the blatant language that God calls us to with ourselves. So He revealed that to me. He said, "Adam, you will get nowhere with your wife, with your child, with your relationships with people if you continue to use vague language."

If you have your Bible, open it up to Colossians 3, starting in verse 5. "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." If you're taking notes, I want you to circle the words "earthly in you" and "which is idolatry." Today I'm going to be asking and answering this question: what is the biggest idol in this text and in our lives? I hope by the end of this time we will be able to use direct language to be honest with ourselves. As we look at Colossians, it's not just a book of sanctification for the believer; it's a book that says, "Christ is preeminent. He is above all, He created all and He rose from the dead." So it means that all things go

back to Him. It's the idea of Matthew 28, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." So when it comes to chapter 2 and 3, He says, "Set your mind on things above, not the things below." And then we come to verse 5 and it says, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you." So there's this tension between seeing Christ as all and seeing and seeing the things that are earthly in you as all.

If we turn to Genesis 2, we see a glorious character that I think becomes too common in our Christian circles. The glorious character is Adam. It says Adam was made in the image of God. Now when we look at creation, we see things that give birth and the offspring have to a maturity, a maturity in cognition, a maturity in their faculties. But we see with Adam that he was made mature. He did not have to grow. It says God made him in His image, He literally formed him, he didn't come out of the womb, God made him out of the dirt and breathed life into him and He says, "Adam, I'm going to put you into this garden to name the animals and yield the fruit." That's a glory that needs to be understood. This wasn't a backyard garden, this wasn't five rows of corn and beans. I went to San Diego and had the privilege of going to a wildlife national park. The beauty of the 1,800 acres of this park is you can see the animals from the kudu, to the lions, to the billy goats in their natural environment. I used to work on and mow a 1 1/2 acre farm once a week. I don't care how I did it, it always took at least four hours. That's an acre and a half. And when we look at that compared to 1,800 acres, when we compare that to the garden, God put one man in this garden and said, "You work it." That shows you the glory and maturity that Adam had. So when Adam fell, it makes sense that what he did stood for all of us. Because we weren't created with that type of freedom and with that type of maturity. We had to mature.

Why do I say that? When we come into Genesis 3 and we where Satan makes the attempt to Eve to distract her by saying, "Did God really say that? No, He means that when you eat of this tree, you would know good and evil." And this is the greatest temptation here. Satan tells Eve, "He knows that you would be like God." And the temptation is not with Eve, although she was deceived; the temptation is with Adam. Because if you continue to read on, it says that he was with her. So let me give you the tension. In Genesis 2:16-17, God clearly says to Adam who was a sharp dude, who was very witty and very strong, who was an intelligent man, "The day you eat of this tree, you will surely die." Adam wasn't confused about that, he wasn't scratching his head, he didn't need to go exegetical on that, he didn't need to go to a small group and he didn't need to see a spiritual counselor for advice. Adam understood exactly what God was saying. So when we get to Genesis 3:1-5, after Satan says, "You can be like God," Adam sees that conversation and goes, "Huh, that's clearly not what God just said to me." Hen he sees Eve eat the fruit, he says, "I clearly know she's not supposed to be eating that." And then she turns and gives it to him. He says, "I clearly know I'm not supposed to be eating this, but he just said I could be God. I want to be God. Give me the fruit." He ate it and there we have the Fall. Adam did not stumble into sin. It wasn't a happenstance. He clearly saw the conversation go down and he said, "I want to be God. Give me the fruit." And with that mentality, with that understanding, that was passed down to all of us.

I was talking to a guy, and we were just talking about idolatry. And one of the things we tended to do with idolatry is we tended to deflect, we tended to push idolatry away. We say, "If you take away that thing I idolize, it wouldn't be as much as an idol." Well, that kind of lets us off the hook. I think it does. Talking about mankind, Romans 1:21-23 says this, "although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking. . .and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things." One of the things I find interesting in society when we look at places like India. We always say that they worship these statues. But the reality is that they worship those statues really for themselves. Why do I say that? I saw a documentary called Good Hair by Chris Rock. He was talking about the plight of the African American woman's hair. He got to India, and they got on the subject of weaves. The reality is that the weave you see in the stores comes from India, but it's not just made in India from manufacturing, it's made because these women in India sacrifice their hair to this god. And what they do is gather up all this hair, package it and send it to America. But the point is this. In the interview with one of the ladies going to sacrifice her hair, they ask, "Why do you do this?" "Well, we see hair as vanity, and so we

want to cut it and give it to the god. But then we pray to the god in order for us to get blessings." And so it struck me that even in idolatry, aside from Christ, even the pagan makes it about themselves.

And that's the point coming back to Colossians 3:5. He says, "earthly in you. . . which is idolatry." What is the biggest idol in this text and in our lives? It's ourselves. We are our biggest idols. So we need to use blatant language, we need to hold the mirror up and start saying, "I am my biggest idol and I love myself." And that's the tension that we need to wrestle with moment by moment and day by day. And when God revealed this to me in Sudan, it was so good that I started laughing. I was like, "Man, I am so wicked." And He said, "You're right, but that's why the cross is so big." We are our biggest idols. In the text it says, "What is earthly in you. . ." So he's recognizing first that it's not these things outside of you. Stop trying to blame it on things outside of you. It's within you. It's what is earthly in us. Let's talk about somebody who is sexually immoral. You see, the person who is sexually immoral can easily say, "You know what? I idolize women (or men) or pornography. . ."

It reminds me of a story in 2004 when I did a program in Texas. And to take a phrase from an associate pastor of mine, I was poor. I was so poor, I was "po" and couldn't afford the other o and the r. My budget in groceries for the week was about \$15. I could go get two cartons of eggs for a dollar each, I'd maximize the Ramen noodles 10 for \$1 and then if I was fancy, I'd get some tuna and that was gourmet. So the guy who was discipling me recognized how poor I was at the time and he says, "You know what? Not only will I disciple you, but I'll allow you to spend life on life with me." And so he had six children at the time, so this is big, living in his home. And so I made seven, and I'm a big seven. So he had this thing where he talked about the resurrection during Easter time and he told them what Easter really was about, but he had fun with it still. He did the Easter egg hunt, and he would hide two eggs: one gold egg and one silver egg. Not having any money, I asked, "What's in the gold and silver eggs?" He said, "Well, the silver egg has \$5 and the gold egg has \$10." So I'm thinking, "Adam loves the kids, but I need this \$10." Because what he would do is allow the youngest to go first and the oldest to go last. So I had to go last. So I'm praying, praying against the kids. I'm like, "Lord, blind them. Don't let them find the eggs." So it's my turn to go, and lo and behold I find the \$10. I'm like, "Yes Lord, You've smiled upon me." The point of that illustration is that when I found the gold egg, open it up, take the \$10 out, close it, put the \$10 in my pocket and put the egg on my dresser and pray to it. I didn't say, "Hey egg, please give me more money." Do you know what I did? I took the egg, opened it up, took the \$10 out, put it in my pocket and discarded the egg. Why? Because the egg was used to take the \$10 for the benefit of me.

When we look at idolatry, idolatry is the fact that we use these things in the world to take the small treasures or the things that we think can benefit ourselves and we deposit them into the pockets of our souls for the worship of ourselves. So to the person who struggles with sexual immorality, it's not that person, it's the thing that he or she finds in that person, pleasure, comfort, peace and rest. And so we take that treasure, put it in the pocket of our souls and we worship ourselves. John Calvin said, "Our hearts are idol factories," but I would take it a step further and say that our hearts are pseudo-idol factories, trying to displace the true worship of ourselves. And so we can let ourselves off the hook and say that we idolize this thing, or we can be honest and use graphic language and say that we use this thing to idolize ourselves. We are all pseudo or false kings and queens looking for treasures in the world to lay at the feet of ourselves for worship. And I'll be the first to admit now that I struggle with the idolatry of self.

And sometimes we like to sugarcoat things. Like we'll say we're frustrated rather than angry. You say you struggle with frustration rather than anger, malice, resentment or bitterness. But God says, "No, you struggle with anger." Or we used to use words like "stubborn" back in the 90's, but now we've graduated to "pride." It's like pride is the new stubborn, just like orange is the new black. And so we use "pride" because it sounds a little bit better. You go, "Oh, I'm prideful." And everybody's like, "Oh, he's just stubborn." When the reality is you're not prideful; you love your self. You're a self-idolater. Now that's a little bit harder to hear than pride, because pride is acceptable. We could go into the small groups,

and everybody struggles with pride. "You struggle with pride? Oh, I struggle with pride too." But let somebody say, "I struggle with self-idolatry," and everybody is like, "Ooh, I don't know about that. We need to lay hands on him."

Another one that I want to look at is it says, "coveting." It's not that the ones in between there aren't important, but I think coveting is one of the more deadly ones. Because when a person covets, what they're doing is they're saying, "You have something that I want and need to make my life better or significant." Coveting can be from looking at another person's wife to his his lifestyle to his job to image, to academics, to degrees, titles or platforms. If we look at all those things and we say, "I want that," the writer of Colossians is saying that leads to idolatry, the idolatry of ourselves. I think one of the shows on TV right now that glorifies coveting is *The Biggest Loser*. And the reason I say that is because the underlying theme of a show like that is saying, "I looked at that person's image, I looked at that person's lifestyle, I looked at what it brings them, so therefore I want to lose weight for me." It has nothing to do with the Lord, it has nothing to do with other people, but it comes back to themselves. That's coveting. "I see what you have, and I want it." It's coveting, which is earthly in us.

But I'm not just going to leave you hanging and tell you that you idolize yourself. I have three points that I want to give to you in the hopes of giving you freedom and to remove this glass ceiling from our lives so we can see victory in this area. The first point is we have to face the realities. If you don't face the realities or as 1 John 1 would say it, if you deceive yourself into thinking that this is not you, then the truth is not in you. And it can be two-fold. The truth is not in you from a Holy Spirit sense to recognize Jesus as Lord and know your need for a Savior. So you remain in your idolatry and have no relationship with the Lord. Or it can be that you are a believer and still deceive yourself to say, "You know what? I'm not that bad. I don't struggle with that," and the truth is not in you in this area of your life and you won't see victory. So you have to face the reality. James says it like this, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,'. . . But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire." But then he addresses the person who goes, "Oh, but I'm praying to Christ and I'm making it about Christ." He says, "You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions." We can still make praying to Christ about ourselves.

If there's anything in your life that God took away leaving you with only you and you would rather curse God and die, you struggle with self idolatry. Let me talk about myself. I love my wife and my daughter. Just like every dad, I think she's the most beautiful daughter in the world. The other day, she was crawling around on the bed, and I just felt this ache and pain in my soul of how much I love her. And even going to preach this message and thinking about this point, it would be a wrestle for me if God took her away. It would be a great wrestle. But the reality is, as the psalmist says, the nearness of God is my only good. Not the nearness of my wife, not the nearness of my daughter, but the nearness of my Lord is my only good. I pray that God keeps me from the mentality of Job's wife when everything was taken away from her. She would rather curse God and die than to say, "Though He slay me, I will praise the Lord." So if there is anything God took away and you would rather curse God and die, you idolize yourself. If you find yourself needing "me time" or veg time and not alone time that's about the Lord only, you idolize yourself. Why do I say that? Because we find so many people who say, "I need to get my time, time where it's just about me and I'm getting away." I hear a lot of Christians say that, and I ask the question, "How does that go back to the Lord?" And I don't know how many of you have been around people who do deliverance or who do healing or who are just speaking the word in knowledge, but you find Jesus in the Scriptures doing all these things for a whole day. And it says, "While it was still dark, He got up and prayed." He didn't pray for Himself but to get time with the Father to replenish Him for ministry. You see, we were created by God for God. We weren't created by God for ourselves. And so any down time should point back to the Lord. It's not about us, and if you think we can have any time about us, we deceive ourselves and we fall into the mentality of self idolatry.

If you find yourself getting frustrated (which really means you get angry with people because they are not getting it), you idolize yourself. If you think that they're not getting it, what you're really doing is saying that the words that you are saying are really your words and you're stealing the very words of God, which is idolatry. And so there's no movement. If God gives me the words to say to my wife or my brothers and sisters in Christ and they don't get it, that's between them and the Lord. That's not between them and me. But what happens is we take those words, we make them ours, we say them and they don't get it, so we get frustrated because we make it about ourselves. It's self idolatry.

If you find yourself getting frustrated at your weaknesses and don't see your weaknesses as an opportunity for God's power to be made perfect in you, you idolize yourself. There are times where I just get frustrated over and over again and I constantly get angry at little things. And God just responds with, "Well why are you getting angry? Are you trying to have the persona that you should be the one who is perfect in peace, perfect in love? Or is this an opportunity for you to confess to all that you are imperfect in this and that My power is made perfect in your weakness?" You see, there's only one perfect One, and that's Jesus. When we struggle with perfection, we really struggle with wanting to be God. He says to me directly, "You want to be God in more areas than you realize. You want to be your own savior; you want to be the savior to all. You need to relax."

So we've got to face those harsh realities. Secondly, we've got to fight for righteousness. The cross has to be infinite and not finite. Now that I have the revelation, I realize moment by moment that I want to be my own idol and I see moment by moment the glory in the vastness of the cross of Jesus. But when we don't see that we're that bad, then the cross becomes not that great. We go, "I really only struggle with this, so the cross really only needs to cover me in this area. . . My heart is not that bad, and I would never do those actions. So therefore, that person needs more grace. For Jeffrey Dahmer to be saved in prison, that was the real work of the cross. But for me. All I did was slander, all I do is gossip. I don't kill or molest or do those things." And we make it about the actions instead of about the nature. If we look at everybody's nature and take away the actions, everybody's heart is just as black. From myself to Hitler to my daughter, we are all equally far away from the cross and we need the vastness of Jesus. And if you don't believe that, the Bible says you deceive yourself and the truth is not in you. Because of this point, the cross now becomes vast. And in this past six weeks, I have seen the cross bigger than I have ever seen it because I have been able to get past myself and admit the realities of myself. And the cross becomes big, it becomes vast and I love it. I'm free from myself, grace is realized and imperfection is accepted. I can accept that I'm imperfect because there's only one perfect One and that's Jesus. God is saying, "You do not have to be perfect. You can strive for holiness, you can use your life in adoration, but the Bible says that a righteous man will fall seven times. And guess what. God knew that you would fall seven times. That's why He mounted the cross. He says He made a spectacle of our sins, past, present and future." And He says, "Stop trying to be your own savior, Adam. There's only one perfect One, and that's Jesus." So accept your imperfections and accept the cross of Christ.

The glass ceiling, it comes off. A lot of us are kind of like a dog who chases its tail in a circle. We say, "If I run faster, maybe I could really just get my tail." The reality is that you think you're creating all this movement and are using all of this energy only to find out that you went nowhere. And that's what we do with our sanctification. We have this glass ceiling and we say, "I should be able to break through this thing." And the reality is we keep hitting this ceiling because we keep deceiving ourselves that we can make the progress that only Jesus can. So now the glass ceiling comes off when we face that reality and the cross becomes what it has been but now we can see it for what it is.

Finally, we find freedom in relationships. You will find that the person who idolizes himself has a minimal depth of close relationships. If you find yourself isolated, if you find yourself struggling with relationships, I would ask you the question, "How honest are you being with yourself towards other individuals?" Because if we're perfect, then there's really no need for anybody else. "I don't need your gifting. I don't need you to speak into my life. I don't need you to call me out. I don't

need you to encourage me. I really don't need you. All I need is myself. I'm my own savior." So we must find freedom in relationships. Unless we face these realities and fight for righteousness, we cannot find freedom in relationships because we won't see any need for them.

I have six points, and then I'll be done. To be honest, the first five points come from a Restore that we had on Monday by pastor on staff, Beau Hughes. The Holy Spirit eloquently inspired him so greatly that there was no need for me to try to come up with other points. Now here's the honesty. Did I wrestle with wanting to come up with other points? Yes I did. Why? Because I wanted to be seen as the one whom the Holy Spirit inspired to come up with his own points instead of humbling myself to say the Holy Spirit has inspired Beau Hughes to bless the body with these points. So it's with that that I give you these next five points.

We need to confess to others. I'm not talking about a confession that's vague as we talked about earlier. I'm not talking about a confession like, "You know what? I struggle with the fear of man." I'm talking about a confession that is blatantly honest in saying, "You know what? I love and I crave what men and women think of me. And when they say that I'm doing great, that feeds my soul and that gives me a confidence in myself that Jesus could never give me." Confess that. Because it's vague to say, "I struggle with the praise of man," but it's direct to say what's behind that. So I'm talking about real confession to others.

We need encouragement by others. One of the things that I've been realizing in Christianity is that we are always told that we're not good enough, that we can't do this and that it's about Christ. I get that, and you've got to have people in your life that are calling out your sin and holding you to the carpet. But the problem is we don't have people on the flip side that are calling us to encouragement. We don't have people walking with us so closely to where they can say, "I see this strength in you. God has sanctified this in you." We don't have people that are walking with us so strongly that they can put courage in us daily, encourage us. And so we walk around with our heads low, we walk around with no confidence in Christ because all we have is people calling out our sins and we have nobody that's encouraging us. Hebrews 10:24, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." But a lot of us don't believe that we can do anything because the only thing we have is people calling out our sin. We should have people calling us out, but you need to understand the power that you have in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit and the things you can do because you are a coheir to the throne. And that should be the strength that is supernatural. That should be the understanding that frees you from this world.

We need people who are comforting us. Romans 12 talks about the gifts that we should use to bless each other, and it talks about the idea that we should rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. But that comes from the idea that we have people in our lives that can comfort us, people we can put our arms around, people we can rest in because they are a picture or a snapshot of the Lord's comfort.

We need direction of those older than ourselves. For me, that's Brent Bowen. And I'm not talking about the person to whom you have a vague submission. I'm talking about somebody who you give the access to your checking account. At anytime he can say, "I want to see your purchases." Before I got married to my wife, he'd say, "Bring the girl by. I want to talk to her." And there were times he would say, "Adam, I think you should break up with that girl." And I would ask why. And he would tell me, and I would do it. Because I believe God inspired him to be in my life to be a direction over me. If we were honest with ourselves, we love ourselves and we preserve ourselves too much to even have that in our lives. But if you don't have that, you will not find freedom in relationships and you will not find freedom to walk towards the cross. And because of God putting Brent in my life, I have experienced a lot of freedom, although I have a long way to go.

I think it's important to have people in our lives that do not believe what we believe, that do not talk, dress and walk the way that we do. Why? Because it keeps us sharp, it keeps us in the Bible and it keeps showing us why we do what we do. It keeps us understanding that there is a kingdom to come and that they will not only miss out on the kingdom but they miss out on the true blessing, Jesus Christ. And so we get out of the language of Christianese, and we get out of the language that is just about ourself, our sanctification and our pious walks. We get out of the ivory tower mentality where we just sit and all we do is write, pray and hope that people climb up the tower and see us and we can share Christ with them. It's about having nonbelievers in your life that you're doing life with.

I have the privilege of walking with some guys, and we are going through the Bible. We are attempting to do 66 books in 66 weeks. So we just finished the book of Genesis in an hour and a half. We came to the story of Joseph. I like Joseph because he has this walk with the Lord, but it comes to him and Potiphar's wife. Potiphar's wife is trying her best to seduce Joseph, but he tells her, "Potiphar has given me control of his house. He has entrusted me with all these things." But he doesn't say, "How can I do this to Potiphar?" He says, "How can I do this great sin against God?" You will not experience freedom, you will not have the walk that God has called you to if He is not your first and primary accountability. You can set up covenant eyes, you memorize Scripture, you can meet with this person, you can meet with that person, but if you don't have a fear of the Lord, you could continue to find loopholes in Scriptures, you could continue to deceive yourself, you could continue to run around your accountability groups. A pastor who disciplined this into me early said to me, "I see pastors sleeping around on their wives, beating their children and doing heinous things." And he says, "Adam, you need to know here from day one, if you do any of those things and if I do any of those things, you need to honestly believe that the Lord can kill you on the spot." There needs to be a healthy fear. Yes He is friend, but He is Lord. The very breath that is in our lungs, He could take it just like that. So God has to be your #1 source of accountability and other things accent it.

Let's pray. "Lord, I thank You that Your word is true and that it does not return void. I pray that this seed indeed goes out to produce fruit for everyone in this room to not only glean for themselves but to bless the lives of those who come in contact with them. Lord I give You thanks. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."