

Habakkuk 1, starting in verse 2, "O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted." God answers Habakkuk's complaint. "Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own. They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves; their horsemen press proudly on. Their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour. They all come for violence, all their faces forward. They gather captives like sand. At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it. Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!" Now let me just simply bullet point this for you, and then I want to draw a comparison that will make you feel it. Habakkuk says to God, "Why aren't You doing anything about this injustice? Why aren't You doing anything about Your people defaming Your name? Why are You letting this go unchecked?" And God says, "Oh I'm not idle. I'm about to handle this. In fact, I'm about to send the Chaldeans, this bitter, hasty, morally perverse country, to reap judgment on upon Judah."

So if I could pull that in to where we could feel it, today across the U.S. is "Sanctity of Human Life Sunday." That means across the country, there are going to be pastors who get in the pulpit and talk about issues of life. When does it begin? What about the woman's right? What about the rights of the baby? And they're going to preach sermons based on life. It's honestly a good idea. We need strong grace in this arena. We also need prophetic words in this area. I guarantee you that more than one will use what happened in Philadelphia this week. If you didn't see the news, a doctor named Kermit Gosnell in Philadelphia has been arrested on ten counts of murder. He was lying to impoverishes immigrant workers and lower class women, telling them when they were eight months pregnant that they were only 24 weeks pregnant. He would sedate them till they were asleep, he would give birth to live babies, he would then take scissors, jam them into the back of the neck of the baby and cut the spinal cord. There were 80 complaints filed against the clinic. Do you know why the state didn't look into it? Because this is such a controversial subject. So now you don't think somebody is going to work that into a sermon? I worked it into mine, and I'm not even talking about it. Now let me try to let you feel Habakkuk 1. It would be like us going, "God, how could You let that happen? How can You sit by idly and watch this occur? Why won't You take care of this violence?" And God's response to us would be, "Oh, I'm not idle. In fact, right now Iran and North Korea are in talks. I'm going to use them to conquer you, overthrow you and destroy your country."

You see, this immediately puts us at an odd place with our culture. Let me try to explain. If we were to get in a very large bus and head down to the Shops at Highland Village and we went with our little spiral notebooks and just started talking to people about God, here's that I think you would find. You're going to come across some people who would call themselves agnostics, which means that they believe there is a God, but they're not really sure who He is. You're also going to come across people like the Navi in Avatar where they're going to be like, "Everything is god. The wind is god, the trees are god, my dog is god, I am god, you are god, we are all god. Everything is god." You're going to run into that. You're going to run into your Star Wars nerds where it's an impersonal force, an energy that's in the universe. You're going to hear a little bit about karma. You might come across some staunch atheists who will say it's a myth, it's silly, it's the cause of all wars. You're going to run into a lot of people who profess to be Christians. They're going to say,

"He's my Father. . . He's my Savior." You'll hear that. But nine times out of ten, if you're not talking to a staunch, jaded atheist, you're going to hear that God is love. Now there is some biblical truth to that, but the problem is that word cannot be defined in our culture. It is a junk drawer word. Do you know how I know that? Because you love your dog and you love your wife. You're not saying the same thing there. You love Tex-Mex, you love your sports team, and it has nothing to do at all with you; it has to do more with what they bring to you, what they give to you. So if I could more articulately define what we mean when we say we love, we mean, "Right now, in this moment, in this situation, this makes me feel good. And if the moment changes, if the situation changes or if my feeling changes, I no longer love it." This explains our bipolar swinging when something doesn't work out. Once again, don't hear me speaking as a theologian, because I'm speaking to you as one who reads The Wall Street Journal. Just look at our divorce rates. Do you know what that is? That is, "As long as you make me happy, I'm in. As long as you are a means to my end, I'm in. But if you let that change, I might just fall out of love." As if love is some sort of emotive firing off of adrenaline. It's a junk drawer word. It's why we turn so quickly on our teams, on our cars. We love our house till the plumbing breaks, then we hate our house. We love our car till it doesn't start, and then we hate our car. During the same game, we will love and hate our team. "They're going to do it. . . They do this to me every year!" This is because that word means nothing. It means, "I like it right now." So now you've got a word that's devoid of meaning being attached to ultimate reality. God is love.

Now if you'll dig around, what people mean when they say that is that God is some sort of wrathless fairy like Tinker Bell who floats about sprinkling pixie dust on people. The quickest way to make a secular mind furious and an evangelical mind nervous is to talk about God as being wrathful, to talk about the reality that God is a just judge. That bothers people, and it's surprising that it does. It's surprising because our culture loves just judges. How many CSI TV shows are there? We love justice. If a show on television isn't about justice, it's about doctors. It's like there are no other topics in the American psyche. Give us law and give us medicine in any context. That's just what we want to watch. Change the characters, make them hotter and we'll watch it. So we love justice until someone starts to talk about God being just. Then all of a sudden we don't like it. Christians get nervous about that. They get nervous about the idea of hell. They get nervous about a God who would judge people. Secular people grow furious at this idea. As if to be just and to have wrath means you're not loving. You see, since we have no definition of love, this gets confusing. Here's what I would contend. If you actually love something, you're far more likely to have wrath. Because if you don't love something, then what could make you wrathful? It's when you do love something that judgment and wrath are possible. When you don't love, it's not possible because you don't care. So if you love this thing and it gets tarnished, abused, stolen and violated, you don't care. You don't love it. It doesn't mean anything to you. But if you love it, now there's violence, isn't there? Now there's aggression, now there's wrath and now there's judgment, because what is sacred has been violated. You see, this is just a part of American culture that is just so silly.

Now, when you lose the correct definition of love, you begin to miss out on all these really deep, thick, foundational elements of God's nature and His character. So we need to talk about some of those elements today, and it's going to collide with what our culture thinks and what our culture feels. Now, because of the time period in which you live, you're going to have to decide over and over again on a hundred different issues who sets what's true – culture or the Bible. And I know some of you are going, "You're beginning to sound like a fundamentalist." I am a fundamentalist; I'm just wearing jeans. I believe in the orthodox tenets of Scripture. I always have. It's why we preach through books of the Bible instead of doing a sermon series on "Nine Ways to Be a Better Man." Because I believe that by seeing the full nature and character of God, you'll become a better man. I don't need to give you, "Wake up early, eat a good breakfast, be nice to your wife. . ." I just don't feel like we need to do that. I don't think ultimately that transforms anything. So what you're going to find is that, on a ton of issues, Scripture is going to collide with culture, and it's going to be a violent collision. So you can look at this in terms of sexuality, in terms of abortion. On and on I could go, you're going to find our culture and the Bible colliding. Let me tell you three reasons why I always side with the Scriptures over our cultural leanings.

Number one: One of these is transcendent, and one of them is not. One is supreme. It can fit anywhere, and one cannot. Try to export Western culture into Iran. It would be like breathing water to them. It simply would not work. So some of you are like, "Well, I don't know that you could export the Bible into Iran and have it work." Um, in all the encouragement I can give you, please read your Bible, but also watch the news. The Iranian government has just started to crack down on a house church movement in Iran that's exploding. The gospel of Jesus Christ is beginning to explode into the Muslim world. It's always going to happen. The Scriptures told us it was going to happen. It's has been prophesied about since Genesis 12 that this would occur. Who's being persecuted in Iraq right now? Christians are. Why? Because this works in every culture. I've been to China where they preach out of this book, they do communion, they sing songs to Jesus and they walk deeply with one another. I've been to South America, and the same this is true. I've been to parts of the Middle East where the same thing is true. I've been to Europe and the same thing is true there. And on and on we could go. One is transcendent, and one is not.

Number two: One changes its mind constantly, and one doesn't. It almost becomes impossible to keep up with culture. It is constantly changing its mind about what is valuable and what is not valuable. The Bible simply doesn't change. If you're a skeptic, maybe you're like, "Well I don't know that that's true, Matt. Didn't people use the Bible to justify slavery?" Yes, and a guy used the Bible to convince other people he was Jesus Christ and got a lot of people killed in Waco. The problem is people, not the Bible. It was the Bible that convinced a great deal of men to lay down their wealth and their lives to see the slave trade ended once and for all. I preached a whole sermon on it out of the book of Colossians last year. In the end, one doesn't change and one does. I wish I had some pictures of how we dressed in the 80's. Someone should have stopped that. Someone should have said, "That's pastel and you're not wearing socks. . .and you're a man." But no one did. Everybody was listening to Phil Collins and wanting to be Don Johnson, and we all regret it.

Number three: The Scriptures can deliver what they promise, and culture never has been able to do that. So for twenty years now, I've been trying to follow the Lord. And if you know my personality, I'm kind of all or nothing. So for twenty years now, I've been putting the Lord to the test. I was under the biblical understanding that every command in the Scriptures was given to me for my joy and for the glory of God. So to be obedient to Scripture, even when it didn't feel right and even when it was bothersome, is in the end going to give me greater life and greater joy than what I thought I should do or how I thought I should live. So I wanted to submit to God as He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures. And here I am twenty years later, and He has not yet failed to deliver. With that said, there were definitely things at the time and in the moment that I sure wished would have gone another way. There have been disappointments, there has been heartbreak, but a couple of years removed looking back, there's just gratitude. Praise God that He did what He did back then. So God, over and over again, has delivered what He promised – life and the fullness of life in Him. Culture does not possess this ability. In fact, it has lied to you so often and for so long, most of us can't even recognize that it continues to lie. Let me give you a couple of promises that I consider bit ones. Technology was supposed to buy us time. Do you remember that? The idea was, "Hey, this Internet thing and e-mail! We're going to have so much time we can pick up a hobby and spend a ton of time with our family." Has it delivered? No. We're laying in bed at night answering e-mails. It hasn't delivered. We are more to a surface level than we have ever been. So the promise was, "Life is going to get easier, you're going to be far more productive and you'll have time for the things that matter." Instead, it delivered us the opposite. We don't have enough time, and all our relationships are surface level. You do know that a Facebook friend is not a friend, right? Just because someone follows you on Twitter doesn't mean you guys are tight. But this is that kind of false social construct that we live in now, and it deceives us into thinking you have a lot of good friends. But you don't have any deep relationship with most of those people. So we become these voyeuristic, weird stalkers. Technology has not made things easier. Here's the second one. Sex. If you're not aware of history, it has been the last hundred years in Western culture that sex has moved to the forefront of everything. So in the end, we can't even define ourselves without defining it a lust-driven society who continues to buy into the empirical lie that sex is this all-satisfying kind of thing that answers all of your problems. It's simply not. Even on all the debates about homosexuality, I just back up and go,

"Really? If you cut it off, you're still a man, aren't you? If it gets cut off, you're still a human. Is that really what defines us now? Our sexuality is how our personhood is defined? Since when? Since that last twenty years of human history." And culture is brilliant because it's driven by what's demonic, and since it doesn't work, culture just starts to tweak it. "Oh, since you're having sex and it's not working, you need sex with someone else and then it will work. You know what? It's your technique that's off. If you had better sex, if you had better technique, then you'd be satisfied." That explains why, if you go to the store and look at all the magazines on the rack, every one of them will have an article on sexual technique, even magazines that aren't in that domain. It's in Deer Lease Magazine, "How to Get Her in the Blind." So culture lies. It continually lies to you, and because we are deceived, we lap it up. We keep believing, "This is going to satisfy me. This is going to take care of me. That's what I need. That's what I have to get. If I could get to that, then I'm going to be satisfied." And it just has never been true. It cannot deliver what it promises. So even for all of those who fight for certain legislation, if you get outside the Word of God, you can get all you want, but it's not going to deliver, because it can't.

And this is why I'm always going to side with the Word. Is that going to make you look back-woods and stuff like that. "What about science, Chandler?" Maybe. But how culture defines me is of no concern of mine. Because I know I have to die just like them and stand in front of God. At the end of the day, no scientist worth his salt will say with absolute, "This is true." They'll say, "For now, this is what it looks like." Because science changes its mind all the time. Can you eat dairy or not eat dairy? What about eggs? Are they good for you or bad for you? Is coffee good for you or bad for you? It depends on the month, depends on the magazine, depends on the research. So I am a scientific agnostic. "This rock is 9 billion years old." "Awesome. Where did you find that? Was it just laying around? 9 billion! Are you sure." "No, 9 trillion years old. It's older than that." "Oh, okay. Wow!" And I know that may rub you the wrong way, but any scientist worth his salt says, "From the information that we have right now, this is what it looks like." So why all the rage towards Christians who say, "From what we know of the Scriptures, this is what it looks like." "Well, you're stopping the process!" What process? The same process you're working? It becomes this strange kind of, "We can do it, but you can't do it" ideology. It's a strange, strange thing. That's not even my sermon, so let's get to work.

In the end, Habakkuk comes to God and says, "Do You see this?" Now think about this. If Habakkuk is seeing injustice, violence and destruction, how much more is God seeing it? If one man with two eyes, in one location of a nation can say, "Look at this," how much more can God, who knows all and sees all, go, "Look at this"? And He answers Habakkuk's prayer in the affirmative. Habakkuk didn't even get told "no." Isn't this what Habakkuk wanted? "Are You going to idly sit by and watch this?" "No. No I'm not. Here I come." And then we'll see next week Habakkuk is like, "What!?" But I want you to hear this until you hear it. In the end, God is a just judge who will judge everyone. Let me show you some Scripture. Job 28:24, "For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens." Psalm 69:5, "O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you." There's going to be this rhythm established here that there's no such thing as a secret. That is a myth. Everything you think, everything you do, every place you go is seen by God. One of the reasons we are so comfortable in our sin is because we have lost a respect for the presence of God. It's much harder to stare at a computer screen with your pants around your ankles if you're aware that God sees and is in the room. Isaiah 40:26-28, "Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing." So here is Isaiah's argument to Israel. "Look up at the stars. It is God who calls them out, it is God who places them, it is God who names them and tells them at what temperature to burn, where they are to stay. It is God's power and His might that has done such a thing." And then he asks them a question based on this power. "Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God'? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable." God sees everything, and those things you got away with when you were a teenager, you cannot get away with now.

I just tell you, I was a bit shady before I was converted. So if my parents dropped the bomb on me and told me I couldn't go somewhere, it was easy. I would just wait till they were asleep. I would wait till my dad started snoring. They're not going to hear the glass slide, me hop out, hop the fence and hop in the car with Jimmy to go party. They're not going to hear that or when I come home at 3:00 in the morning. How easy was that. All I had to do was wait for them to go to sleep. Here's another thing I would do if mom got overzealous and said, "You are going to be home by midnight." She went to bed early so I would call the house, and when my mom picked up all groggy, I would go, "I got it mom." "When did you get home?" "About fifteen minutes ago." And then we could just go. So all I had to do to get away with stuff is wait for my authority to go to sleep or be in an instant craftier than my authority. And Isaiah is going, "That's not going to work, man. He doesn't go to sleep. The One who governs the stars doesn't take naps. He doesn't close His eyes. He sees everything. And for all your justifications, you don't trick Him. He knows." Let me read you a couple more of these. Isaiah 47:9-11, "These two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day; the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments." There were some in Israel who were getting involved in witchcraft, and this next part is the weight of it. "You felt secure in your wickedness, . . ."

So we talked a little about this already today. You felt secure in your wickedness. It doesn't bother you that you're doing the things that are blatant rebellion against God. You felt secure in your wickedness, you said, "No one sees me"; your wisdom and your knowledge led you astray, and you said in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me." So the lie that you buy into, the lie that I buy into that leads us and walks into iniquity and rebellion against God is, "He does not see me and no one is but me." Let me read you one more from the Old Testament. Jeremiah 16:17, "For my eyes are on all their ways. They are not hidden from me, nor is their iniquity concealed from my eyes."

So when you start walking through these Old Testament passages, both secular and evangelical alike go, "That's the Old Testament God. He's surly. What about Jesus. He had product in His feathered hair. He loved everyone." You will always tie this idea of "God is love" back to Jesus (and some of it's true), but I'll let Jesus speak for Himself. Mark 4:21-23, "And he said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." Luke 12:1-3, "In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." What ruins, what destroys, what works over a community of faith? When people pretend that they are more than they are and begin to speak the right language when their heart is not there. Beware the yeast of the Pharisees, hypocrisy. "Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops." This verse is the antidote to self-righteousness. Because as long as we're talking external, you can boast. You can be so much more disciplined at reading your Bible than other people. Yea you. You can memorize verses. Yea you. You haven't missed a day of church in 30 years. Yea you. All these externals can puff you up, but think about what this verse just said. If what you've through this week and the motives behind your actions this week could be shown on this screen behind me, would you want to stay in the room and watch it? Wouldn't you be ashamed? Wouldn't you be embarrassed? There isn't anyone who is staying and wanting to watch that about themselves. For what you really think, what really motivates your heart and all of it's ugliness to be laid bare would be horrifically embarrassing for you, shameful for you. So this verse says, "Watch your heart." This is Jesus constantly going after the heart. Because if He gets the heart, then He gets the outside. He's not going after the outside; He's going after the inside. Our war is against those motives, our war is against those desires, our is against those thoughts because they control the outside action. So we go after the root, not the fruit. That's how we do it.

Here's another New Testament example. 1 Corinthians 4:4-5, "For I [Paul] am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God." There is a pedestal that only One belongs on. It is not your daddy, it is not your spouse, it is not your favorite preacher. It is God who belongs on that pedestal. He is the object of worship, He is the object of exaltation. Because men are going to fail you. Hebrews 11 gives us permission to have heroes, but they are heroes only inasmuch as they are tools in God's hand. We talked about this last week. We don't celebrate the hammer; we celebrate the wielder of the hammer. We don't celebrate the trowel; we celebrate the wielder of the trowel. So if you'll look at all these moral failures of giant Evangelical figures. You don't think their congregations thought they were legit? You don't think their congregations thought they were lights out? If you look at the Haggard ordeal from a couple of years ago with a church of 20,000 people, you don't think that the men and women in that church thought he was legit? You don't think pastor appreciation month was big for him? You don't think that people are going, "Man, this guy is powerful in the way of the Lord"? And it comes out he's doing meth and having sex with male escorts. This is an example of what Paul is saying. He's like, "Hey, nobody gets exalted to that point. You let the Lord exalt. You worship the Lord. You encourage the saints, but ultimately it will be the Lord that hands out those commendations." He's even even saying that about himself. He's like, "Now I'm not aware of anything in me that needs to be confessed, but that doesn't mean I'm clean. That doesn't mean I've had the right motives. I'm going to have to trust the Lord. The Lord will judge, the Lord will determine and the Lord will hand out commendation."

Hebrews 4:12-13, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account." So now you've got two ideas colliding here. You've got the fact that God sees everything, actions and intentions, and you've got this idea that you're going to give an account for those actions and intentions. The Bible says clearly that you'll be naked. Because you can justify and you can hide here. It's not hard to justify yourself here. And nine times out of ten, if you're saying, "I'm not trying to justify myself here," you're justifying yourself. It's easy to do here, but it will be impossible in front of God. Because there's no slight of hand with God. He knows. You will be naked before Him.

I'll give you one more. Revelation 20:11-15, "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." And all of secular culture, all of a great portion of Evangelical culture shutters at this idea that there's a literal hell that God will justly judge and send people to. Because that's not loving. And then you start getting into really silly conversations. "So you're telling me that just one white lie sends me to hell?" First of all, you're far more guilty than that. I have never met the guy who just has that on his résumé. "One time, my wife wanted some popcorn, but there was just a little bit left. So when she asked me if there was any left, I was like, 'No, there's not.'" First of all, you're far more guilty than that. Secondly, let's talk, because what really matters is who the offense is against, not what the offense is. Here's the easiest picture I can give you. If you lie to me, who cares? I mean, I'll care and think you're a liar. But there's no weight on that for you. I won't speak ill of you outside of, "I wouldn't trust that guy with that." Lie to a federal judge and that's called perjury, and you get to go to jail. So if you follow that up the chain of command, even in our government, you can get yourself killed, you can get yourself put away for life. You see, it's who the offense is against that makes the rebellion so atrocious, not what the offense is.

Even in our own culture, a lie can put you away for the rest of your life. What then is a lie against the sovereign governing Creator of everything?

In Alameda, California, I went to vacation Bible school of this small Baptist church when I was little. We were singing a song at VBS about how God hated liars. And even when I was little, I remember thinking to myself, "I am in a lot of trouble here. I am singing a song about God hating me." That's somewhat ironic at church. So when God began to stir up my heart and I wanted to know what He was like, how He worked and who He was, the thing I had to get to the bottom of is why Christians liked this God, loved this God. Because to me it seemed like, "Here are the rules. Obey the rules or there's damnation." And I wasn't any good at following the rules. Here's what I knew – neither was anyone I knew who said they loved the Lord. Sometimes they were the ones driving after I hopped over the fence. 1 Peter 1 will help us understand why it is that we would love, worship and follow this God who will judge, who does walk in justice. We're going to pick it up in verse 13. "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." Now that's impossible, is it not? Does anyone want to roll the dice on perfection? If we're honest, what we're saying in here is, "I've been trying that for years and falling short." Which explains why your hope had better be set on grace. Let's keep reading. "And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." The term "ransomed" is a military term. We were held hostage by our former ignorance and by the former ignorance of our forefathers. We are held captive, unable to get out of, weakened as we are by our flesh, unable to live perfect, unable to live holy, we are rescued. We do not rescue ourselves; we are rescued. You are not Jack Bauer, you don't untie yourself, kick the guy, pull the pistol and kill thirty people. That is not you. You're in the fetal position crying, in your own urine and you are ransomed. And you're not ransomed with gold and silver that can be spent and then require more. You're ransomed by blood. And this ties us back to the Old Testament sacrificial system that says that the way to remove sin is through the shedding of blood. So Christ comes and give His life so that you might be spotless and blameless in His sight on the day of judgment. Am I guilty? Absolutely. Will I be saved? Why? Because I've got a good personality? No. Because I did good things for God while I was here? No. He saved me before any of that. He saved me while I was at my worst. You're seeing twenty years of following Him. You'd be mortified to see me in my first year of faith. And this is why we celebrate. It's why we sing. That's why there's this joy in us about God. This is why, when we stumble and fall, we get back up and keep walking.

Now I'll end with two things. If you're an unbeliever, please don't mistake the patience of God with God's acceptance of your rebellion. We live in a politically correct world, so there are those who would rather you sit here than hear the truth and who will tickle your ears. And I love you too much for that. You are storing up for yourself wrath that will be revealed. What ends up happening to us all when we begin to play in sinful areas is, because there are no repercussions, we feel like we're getting away with it. Isn't that what Isaiah told the witches? "You think that no one sees you. You think that you're getting away with it. You think that God doesn't see. He does see, and you are storing up for yourselves wrath." Please don't mistake the mercy and patience of God with you as God signing off on your rebellion. It's coming. And the Bible uses one word repeatedly for what happens when God shows up. It's the word "terror." The Bible says that there will be men who ask God to throw mountains on top of them to hide them, but there will be no mountains. Why? Because the earth and the sky flee from His presence. You see, Jesus for all His fairness, comes back in Revelation with a tattoo on His thigh and a sword that He uses to make the streets run with blood. Why? Because He's just. If you are a believer in here, my hope is that you would dial back into this reality that God sees you and that you would be appalled at how often you, with your life, say, "You're not enough for me." Because every little stray night into pornography, every bit of drunkenness, every bit of laziness, that stuff is you saying, "You aren't satisfying enough to me. So I'm going to help

You out." Every time you know and rebel against it, you're saying, "I know better than You." And then in the middle of God knowing that about you, He still loves, still sends mercy, still gives grace. It's my hope that that kindness leads you to repentance. But whether you ever come back here or not, this is what is absolutely true. You and I are an hour and fifteen minutes closer to being face to face with Jesus Christ than we were when we walked in here. And on that day, we'll be judged through the blood of Christ or through our rebellion. And there will be Matthew 25, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master." Or there will be, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting torment."

Let's pray. "Father, I know these things are heavy. I know they are not popular and that they're seen as old school or backwoods. I just thank You for the truth of them. I'm just humbled by Your grace extended to me. I'm humbled by Your grace extended to us. That You would know everything, that there would be no secrets, that our motivations, intentions and thoughts are known by You and that You would still love, You extend grace and You would not destroy us is overwhelming. It's overwhelming that we are far more guilty than Kermit Goshnell up in Philadelphia, that we have thought wicked things, that we have done wicked things, only ours is private and hasn't been unearthed yet. So Father, help us. Let us see Your grace. Let it land on us in heavy ways. We love You. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen.

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